ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians Tribal Community and Fee-to-Trust Project

San Diego County, CA | December 2025

Lead Agency:

Bureau of Indian Affairs
Pacific Region
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825

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Section 1 | Introduction

1.1 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to assess the environmental impacts of the acquisition by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) of approximately of 48.7 acres (Project Site) in unincorporated San Diego County into federal trust status for the Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians, California (EBKI or Tribe) for Tribal community and housing purposes (Proposed Action). The BIA is the federal agency charged with reviewing and approving Tribal applications to acquire land into trust. Following acquisition of the Project Site into trust, the Tribe proposes to develop a Tribal office, library/community center, and two single-family houses, to maintain an existing re-purposed single-family residence as an emergency Tribal center, and to establish a conservation area along Viejas Creek (Proposed Project).

The statutory authority for acquiring this land in federal trust status and proclaiming it to be part of the Tribe's reservation is provided in the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA; 25 U.S.C. §§ 5108, 5110), with regulations codified at 25 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 151. Pursuant to 25 CFR Part 151, the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, who has delegated authority from the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary), is charged with reviewing and approving Tribal applications to place land into federal trust status. This EA has been completed in accordance with requirements set forth in NEPA (42 USC § 4321 et seq.); the Department of the Interior's (Department) Procedures for the Implementation of NEPA (43 CFR Part 46 [2008]); and 516 DM 1 – U.S. Department of the Interior Handbook of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures.[1,2,3] The BIA will utilize this EA to assist in determining whether the Proposed Action would result in adverse impacts to the environment. The EA will be released for a 30-day comment period.

[1] Executive Order 14154, Unleashing American Energy (Jan. 20, 2025), and a Presidential Memorandum, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity (Jan. 21, 2025), require the Department to strictly adhere to NEPA, 42 USC §§ 4321 et seq. Further, such Order and Memorandum repeal Executive Orders 12898 (February 11, 1994) and 14096 (April 21, 2023). Because Executive Orders 12898 and 14096 have been repealed, complying with such Orders is a legal impossibility. The BIA verifies that it has complied with the requirements of NEPA, including the Department's regulations and procedures implementing NEPA at 43 CFR § 46 and Part 516 of the Departmental Manual, consistent with the President's January 2025 Order and Memorandum. The BIA has also voluntarily considered the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) rescinded regulations implementing NEPA, previously found at 40 CFR § 1500–1508 (2020), as guidance to the extent appropriate and consistent with the requirements of NEPA and Executive Order 14154.

[2] During the course of the preparation of this EA, CEQ rescinded its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500–1508. CEQ has directed that agencies should consider voluntarily relying on those regulations in completing ongoing NEPA reviews. Consistent with this direction, the BIA is voluntarily considering the CEQ 2020 NEPA regulations, including where a page "means 500 words and does not include explanatory maps, diagrams, graphs, tables, and other means of graphically displaying quantitative or geospatial information."

[3] Although revised regulations at 43 CFR § 46 as well as 516 DM 1 – U.S. Department of the Interior Handbook of NEPA Implementing Procedures became effective July 3, 2025, the associated Federal Register Notice (FR Doc. 2025–12499) states that "…revised agency procedures will have no effect on ongoing NEPA reviews, where the DOI, following CEQ guidance, will continue to apply the preexisting procedures to applications that are sufficiently advanced…" (43 CFR § 46 [2025]).

Comments will be considered by the BIA, and either a Finding of No Significant Impact will be prepared or additional environmental analysis will be conducted. After the NEPA process is complete, the BIA may issue a determination on the Proposed Action.

1.2 LOCATION AND SETTING

The Project Site consists of 48.7 acres in unincorporated San Diego County, California (Figure 1 and Figure 2 of **Appendix A**). The Project Site is comprised of three parcels as described in **Table 1.2-1** and shown on Figure 3 of **Appendix A**. The Project Site is largely undeveloped and is surrounded by residences with San Diego County General Plan designation of village residential and land use regulation of limited agricultural, including uses of residential, agricultural land, and animal husbandry. The Walker parcel contains Viejas Creek and consists primarily of grassland that has been historically mowed or grazed by livestock. The Walker 2 parcel has an existing residence as well as several associated outbuildings and access drives. The Salerno parcel is dominated by grasses and oak trees and bisected by access drives.

Table 1.2-1: Parcel Names and Acreages

APN	Parcel Reference Name	Acreage
4040802600	Walker	16.7
4040901300	Walker 2	13.3
4040900700	Salerno	18.7
	Total	48.7

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The federal Proposed Action is the acquisition of the 48.7-acre Project Site in trust for the Tribe pursuant to the Secretary's authority under the Indian Reorganization Act, 25 USC § 5108. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to strengthen tribal self-determination and sovereignty, ensure that the Tribe has protected homelands where its citizens can maintain their tribal existence and way of life, and consolidate land ownership to strengthen tribal governance over reservation lands and reduce checkerboarding, thus satisfying the Department of the Interior's (Department) land acquisition policy as articulated in the Department's trust land regulations at 25 CFR Part 151.3. The need for the Department to act on the Tribe's application is established by the Indian Reorganization Act (25 U.S.C. § 5108) and the Indian Land Consolidation Act (25 U.S.C. § 2202) and the relevant implementing federal regulations at 25 CFR § 151.

1.4 BACKGROUND

The Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians, California, is a federally recognized Indian Tribe possessing sovereign powers by virtue of such recognition. For thousands of years, the Kumeyaay occupied land 50 miles north and south of the U.S./Mexico border and from the Pacific coast to the Chocolate Mountains. The Tribe's original reservation was reserved on February 10, 1891, following the passage of the Mission Indian Relief Act. On September 28, 1973, the Tribe adopted a Tribal Constitution, which was submitted to the BIA and approved by the Secretary of the Interior on December 19, 1973, and was amended by the Tribe in a duly authorized election on August 5, 2002, and approved pursuant to authority delegated to the Secretary of the Interior on September 6, 2002. The Tribe's stated need for trust land acquisition is driven by the absence of readily developable land with essential infrastructure and utilities.

Currently, the Tribe's reservation consists of two non-contiguous sections referred to by the Tribe as the Big Ewiiaapaayp section and the Little Ewiiaapaayp section. The Big Ewiiaapaayp section totals approximately 5,460 acres in a remote portion of the Laguna mountains at elevations between 5,000 and 5,382 feet and approximately 15 miles north of the U.S./Mexico border. Big Ewiiaapaayp lacks a legal and safe access road, lacks infrastructure, and is off-grid to all utilities, including electricity and telecommunications services as an unfiled territory by any carrier or internet services provider. The sole access road is a single-lane dirt road of twelve miles rising 1,000 feet from its origin at the intersection of Old Highway 80 and La Posta Truck Trail to the south, which is unimproved and poorly maintained for the six miles leading to the Reservation gate, and the last one-mile crosses private fee land without a right-of-way permit for the Tribe. The remaining 11 miles cross U.S. Forest Service public land of the Cleveland National Forest.

The Tribal community is located within the only arable area of land within the Big Ewiiaapaayp Section, which measures approximately 49 acres. The remainder of the Big Ewiiaapaayp section consists of steep ridgelines with 30% to 75% grades covered with heavy brush. The high fuel loads, steep slopes, single access road, and the lack of any communications, subjects the Tribal community to a very high risk of loss resulting from wildfires. The "Little Ewiiaapaayp" section consists of 10.2 acres of land held in trust for the Tribe immediately north of the Project Site across Interstate 8, where the Southern Indian Health Clinic (SIHC) clinic is located. The SIHC clinic provides health services to tribal members and the general public as a state-charted non-profit corporation operating as an inter-tribal consortium of seven federally recognized Indian tribes.[3] The Little Ewiiaapaayp Section is encumbered by two federal business leases with the SIHC. The lease terms and the options to renew belong exclusively to the SIHC as Lessee and have been exercised[4]. The Little Ewiiaapaayp section is leased in its entirety for another 12 years for the 8.6-acre parcel and another 24 years for the 1.42-acre parcel. The Tribe's Tribal Office and programs were operated out of a building on the 1.42-acre parcel subleased by the Tribe from the SIHC until the sublease expired, and the SIHC is permitting the Tribe's temporary use of the premises for receipt of mail, deliveries, and storage of documents.

The Project Site has immediate access to infrastructure along County roads and Interstate 8, including the San Diego Gas & Electric (SDGE) public electric grid, AT&T and Cox Communications advanced broadband services via digital subscriber line (DSL), and 4G LTE and 5G mobile services via AT&T Wireless, Verizon Wireless, and T-Mobile Wireless. The Project Site is a two-minute drive to the SIHC clinic that serves EBKI Tribal citizens as a member Tribe, a five-minute drive to the San Diego County Sheriff Alpine Substation, a five-minute drive to the nearest grocery store, a five to eight-minute drive the child care and elementary and middle schools, a five- to ten-minute drive to small businesses in the Alpine core community, and a ten-minute drive to the Alpine Fire Protection District fire station. The trust acquisition of the Project Site would meet the Tribe's needs because it is located in a more urbanized area with better access and availability to infrastructure to support the development of necessary Tribal facilities and housing.

[4] The SIHC member Tribes are: Campo Band of Digueno Mission Indians of the Campo Indian Reservation, California; Capitan Grande Band of Digueno Mission Indians of California (Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians of the Barona Reservation, California); Viejas (Baron Long) Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians of the Viejas Reservation, California; Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians, California; Jamul Indian Village of California; La Posta Band of Digueno Mission Indians of the La Posta Indian Reservation, California; Manzanita Band of Digueno Mission Indians of the Manzanita Indian Reservation, California.

[5] Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians v Acting Pacific Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Docket No. IBIA 11-062; decided by IBIA in 56 IBIA 163 dated February 6, 2013.

Additionally, acquisition of the Project Site into trust and the establishment of permanent, designated Tribal office space would allow necessary Tribal services to continue on land that is not encumbered by a lease. The acquisition and transfer to trust status of the Project Site will enhance the Tribe's self-determination and self-governance by allowing the Tribe to determine its own priorities and goals for its people, and to provide housing and essential community services to its people. The Tribe believes that acquisition of additional trust land will help ensure the Tribe's stability now and for future generations. If taken into trust, the Tribal Government would be able to exercise Tribal sovereign authority over the land that it currently owns, protecting and enhancing the well-being of Tribal people and natural resources.

1.5 TERMINOLOGY

Terms used throughout this EA include the following:

Project Site: The proposed trust property consisting of approximately 48.7 acres in unincorporated San Deigo County (see **Table 1.2-1** and Figure 3 of **Appendix A**).
Alternative A: Acquisition of the Project Site into federal trust and subsequent development of a Tribal office facility, library community center, and two single-family residences, as well as the maintenance of the emergency Tribal center that is currently operating out of an existing single-family residence and the establishment of a conservation area along Viejas Creek (refer to **Section 2.1** for more details).
Alternative B: No acquisition of the Project Site into federal trust and no proposed development.
Development Area: The proposed development footprint under Alternative A includes the boundaries of the proposed development components, including buildings, parking areas, detention basins, and access driveways, which totals approximately 2.2 acres. To provide a conservative analysis, the "development area" is the proposed development footprint plus a 10-foot buffer around proposed access drives/parking and a 50-foot buffer around proposed buildings to include potential staging areas, utility improvements, landscaping, and fuel maintenance, which totals approximately 4.6 acres.

1.6 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS AND APPROVALS

The project alternatives described in **Section 2** may require the permits and approvals identified in **Table 1.6-1.**

Table 1.6-1: Potential Permits and Approvals

Agency	Permit or Approval
Secretary of the Interior	▪ Transfer of the 48.7-acre Project Site into federal trust status.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	▪ Verification of coverage under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity as required by the Clean Water Act. ▪ For on-site wastewater treatment, registration of the sub-surface drainage system with the Underground Injection Control program with the USEPA.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	▪ Consultation under Section 7 of the federal Endangered Species Act regarding potential effects to endangered species.
San Diego County	▪ Approval of access driveway improvements at Alpine Boulevard and potential issuance of encroachment permits.
State Historic Preservation Office	▪ Consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act if historic properties may be impacted.

Section 2 | Alternatives

This section describes Alternative A (Proposed Project) and Alternative B (No Action). Alternatives are described below and analyzed throughout this EA. **Section 3** summarizes and compares potential environmental consequences, benefits, and/or detriments of the alternatives. This section describes the alternatives analyzed in this EA. A reasonable range of alternatives has been selected based on consideration of the purpose and need for the Proposed Action as well as opportunities for potentially reducing environmental effects.

2.1 ALTERNATIVE A: PROPOSED PROJECT

Alternative A consists of acquisition of the Project Site into federal trust status for the benefit of the Tribe and the subsequent development by the Tribe of a permanent Tribal administrative office facility, a library community center, two houses, and associated infrastructure, as well as the operation of an existing re-purposed single-family residence as an emergency Tribal center, and the establishment of a conservation area along Viejas Creek.

2.1.1 Land Trust Action

The Proposed Action consists of the fee simple conveyance of the Project Site into federal trust status for the benefit of the Tribe. The Proposed Action would shift civil regulatory jurisdiction over the Project Site from the State and County to the Tribe and the federal government. Federal laws, such as the Clean Water Act and the federal Endangered Species Act, would continue to apply to the Project Site.

2.1.2 Proposed Land Uses

A preliminary site plan is shown on Figure 4 of **Appendix A** and proposed land uses are described below.

Tribal Office

An approximately 1,440 square-foot (sf) Tribal office facility would be constructed on the Walker parcel. The office facility would include two executive council workstations with storage rooms and a 432-sf general council meeting room. The meeting room would be furnished with tables, chairs, and an audio/visual setup with a lectern. The office facility would also have two restrooms accessible from the main entrance area and a third restroom exclusive to one of the executive council workstations. A 144-sf deck/patio would be accessible from the meeting room and is included in the 1,440 sf of the structure. The Tribal office is estimated to employ two to three staff.

Library/Community Center

The library/community center would be approximately 1,440 sf and would have a similar floor plan as the Tribal office. The library community center would be constructed on the Salerno parcel and would include a designated library space, a small meeting room, and a large meeting room. The library/community center would also have two restrooms accessible from the main entrance area and a third restroom exclusive to the library room. A 144-sf deck/patio would be accessible from the meeting room and is included in the 1,440 sf. The community center may be utilized occasionally for small special events, anticipated to occur outside of business hours, and with a maximum of 20 persons.

The library/community center would likely be open on an as needed basis by appointment only but is conservatively estimated to employ two to three staff.

Tribal Housing

Two single-family residences approximately 720 sf each in size would be constructed on the Salerno parcel. Each residence would have the same floor plan and would consist of one bedroom and one bathroom on a raised foundation.

Emergency Tribal Center

An existing re-purposed 2,044 sf single family detached home within the central portion of the Project Site is currently designated by the Tribe as an emergency center. During events requiring isolation or quarantine, the center can serve as a non-congregating shelter facility for up to two families. During emergency events that do not require isolation, the facility is intended to function as a communications center for approximately two to four Tribal representatives/staff. No construction activities or other improvements to the emergency center are proposed. Although the emergency center is an existing use, this EA conservatively considers the effects associated with an increase in visitation/occupation of the center during an emergency event.

Conservation Area

Following the acquisition of the Project Site into trust, the Tribe proposes to establish a 4.58-acre conservation area for Arroyo toad, a federally protected species under the Federal Endangered Species Act, along Viejas Creek, which is also USFWS-designated critical habitat for the species (Figure 4 of **Appendix A**). A Biological Opinion (BO) was issued by the USFWS in 2002 to address potential biological resources impacts associated with a previously proposed health clinic project on the Walker parcel (USFWS, 2002). The BO concluded that Viejas Creek within the Project Site may contain suitable breeding habitat for the Arroyo toad, although the condition was degraded and there was no indication of actual occupancy by Arroyo toad. To address this issue, the Tribe agreed to establish a 4.58-acre conservation area along the creek; the size of the conservation area was meant to offset the development acreage of the previously proposed clinic at a one-to-one ratio. The level of development proposed on the Project Site at this time is reduced in comparison to the former health clinic project proposed on the Walker parcel, however the Tribe proposes to maintain the previously agreed-to conservation area size of 4.58 acres consistent with the BO and associated Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Tribe, USFWS, and BIA (USFWS, 2002). On June 12, 2002, the Tribe adopted an Arroyo Toad Ordinance, predicated on the assumption that the Walker Parcel would be brought into federal trust, to ensure permanent preservation of the 4.58-acre conservation area in order to comply with the terms and conditions of the BO. The ordinance requires, among other things, that a funding mechanism be established to maintain the 4.58 acres in a natural state. This will include trash removal, signage, and fencing, if necessary (Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians, 2002).

Circulation and Parking

Currently, access to the Project Site is shared off Bell Bluff Road with at least one other private landowner. Alternative A includes the development of a new access road off Alpine Boulevard, as shown in Figure 4 of **Appendix A**. On-site circulation would consist of a main access drive leading to the Tribal office facility, with a secondary drive off which the emergency Tribal center, library community center, and two single family residences would be located.

The main access drive would be 24 feet wide and paved. The secondary drives would also be paved and would be 20 feet in width. The access drives largely follow the existing unpaved driveway network on site. A designated parking lot would be provided at the Tribal office facility and at the library community center. Each of these parking lots would be sized to accommodate approximately 16 parking stalls. Parking for the residences would be provided via the proposed house driveway, and parking for the emergency center would be along the existing driveway. A Traffic Impact Study (TIS) was prepared for Alternative A and is included as **Appendix B**.

2.1.3 Utilities and Public Services

Potable water supply will be obtained through the construction of on-site groundwater wells or use of the existing domestic groundwater well located on APN 1010901300. Water storage would be provided through the existing water storage tank on the Project Site, and a new water storage tank that would be designed to provide the supplemental capacity needed to meet back-up and fire flow requirements. The actual required capacity of the new tank will depend on the volume and condition of the existing water storage tank, and available well capacity; however, for planning purposes, the maximum capacity is conservatively assumed to be approximately 44,000 gallons (gal) (see **Appendix C**). At this size, the storage tank size would be approximately 22 feet in diameter and 16 feet tall. This would provide Alternative A with up to four peak days of domestic water supply as well as two hours of fire flow consistent with the Alpine Fire District's fire flow guidelines. The storage tank would be located adjacent to or near the existing water storage tank as shown on Figure 4 of **Appendix C**. A pump station would be installed to convey water at pressure to the distribution system to handle both fire flow and domestic demands. The facilities would be designed in accordance with IBC and NFPA codes. Wastewater for the proposed Tribal office, library/community center and two single-family homes will be accommodated by appropriately sized proposed septic and leach field systems for each new facility as shown on Figure 4 of **Appendix C**.

Electricity and natural gas services are already supplied to the Project Site by San Diego Gas and Electric. Solid waste services are provided to the area by multiple providers, including Allied Waste, Universal Waste Systems, EDCO Disposal Corporation, and Waste Management San Diego.

Law enforcement services within unincorporated San Diego County, including the Project Site are provided by the San Diego County Sheriff's department (San Diego Sheriff, 2023). The San Diego County Sheriff would continue to provide law enforcement services to the Project Site in accordance with Public Law 280 as amended in 1968, which gives criminal jurisdiction to State law enforcement for offenses involving Indians in Indian Country if Tribal consent is given.

The Alpine Fire Protection District adopted a service map in 2019 that encompasses the City of Alpine along with an associated sphere of influence and captures the Project Site within its service area (Alpine Fire Protection District, 2019).

2.1.4 Grading and Drainage

The Project Site is relatively level, with elevations ranging from approximately 2,175 to 2,310 feet above mean sea level (asml) with a gentle uphill slope from west to east. Alternative A maximizes the use of the existing relatively flat topography and thus only minor grading is anticipated. The proposed roadways generally align with existing unpaved roadways on-site, further limiting necessary grading activities. As discussed in **Appendix C**, stormwater run-off from the Project Site flows either directly into Viejas Creek, or into a tributary flowing into Viejas Creek. A hydrology map showing the existing drainage patterns and proposed impervious areas is provided as Figure 6 in **Appendix C**.

The proposed site improvements are minimal in nature and would not significantly alter the existing drainage patterns and flow paths. To address the increase in run-off rates from the introduction of impervious surfaces under Alternative A, two stormwater detention basins would be graded within the Project Site (Figure 4 of **Appendix A**). The detention basins would be sized to accommodate the increase in post-project flows under 100-year 24-hour storm conditions, consistent with the San Diego County Hydrology Manual, and would provide approximately 29.2-acre feet in storage. Stormwater collected in the basins would drain at pre-project flow rates.

2.1.5 Construction

Construction of Alternative A is conservatively assumed to commence in the summer of 2025, with construction activities anticipated to occur over the period of up to one year. Due to the small scale and limited duration of construction activities, it is anticipated that construction work would be sourced locally. The proposed facilities would be constructed consistent with the International Building Code.

2.1.6 Best Management Practices and Design Features

Protective measures and best management practices (BMPs), including regulatory requirements and voluntary measures that would be implemented by the Tribe, have been incorporated into the design of Alternative A. Where applicable, these measures will be incorporated into any design or construction contracts to eliminate or substantially reduce environmental consequences from Alternative A. These measures are discussed below in **Table 2.1-1.**

Table 2.1-1: Protective Measures and Best Management Practices

Resource Area	Protective Measures and Best Management Practices
Land Resources	▪ Erosion control measures will be implemented during construction as described further under the Water Resources BMPs. ▪ Standard engineering practices and IBC standards will be used, including adherence to geotechnical standards ensuring soil suitability for structures and septic systems.
Water Resources	The Tribe will apply for coverage under and comply with the NPDES General Construction Permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), for construction site runoff during the construction phase in compliance with the CWA. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared, implemented, and maintained throughout the construction phase of the development, consistent with the General Construction Permit requirements. The SWPPP prepared for the Project Site would include, but would not be limited to, the following BMPs to minimize storm water effects to water quality during construction. ▪ Construction activities will be scheduled to minimize land disturbance during peak runoff periods. ▪ Temporary erosion control measures (such as silt fences, fiber rolls, staked straw bales, temporary re-vegetation, erosion control blankets, and/or sediment traps) will be employed for disturbed areas. ▪ Grading activities will be limited to the area required for construction. ▪ Disturbed areas will be paved or re-vegetated following construction activities. ▪ A spill prevention and countermeasure plan will be developed that identifies proper storage, collection, and disposal measures for potential pollutants (such as fuel, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) used on site. ▪ Petroleum products will be stored, handled, used, and disposed of properly in accordance with provisions of the CWA (33 USC § 1251 to 1387).

Resource Area	Protective Measures and Best Management Practices
	▪ Construction materials, including topsoil and chemicals, will be stored, covered, and isolated to prevent runoff losses and contamination of surface and groundwater. ▪ Fuel and vehicle maintenance areas will be designed to control runoff. ▪ Sanitary facilities will be provided for construction workers. ▪ Landscaping will consist of native, drought tolerant plant and tree species.
Biological Resources	▪ Native vegetation will be retained where possible. ▪ To prevent the introduction of invasive plant species, vehicles and equipment that have been used on sites outside of the project area will be cleaned prior to entering the Project Site. When applicable, weed-free dirt, mulch, gravel, and other materials will be used.
Air Quality	The following dust suppression measures will be implemented during construction: ▪ Exposed construction surfaces will be watered daily as needed. These areas include, but are not limited to soil piles, graded areas, unpaved parking areas, staging areas, and access roads. ▪ At least two feet of free board space will be covered/maintained on haul trucks transporting soil, sand, or other loose material on the site. Any haul trucks that would be traveling along freeways or major roadways will be covered. ▪ Wet power vacuum street sweepers will be used to remove any visible track out mud or dirt onto adjacent public roads at least once a day. Dry powered sweeping will be prohibited. ▪ Vehicle speeds on unpaved roads will be limited to 15 miles per hour. ▪ Paving of roadways, driveways, sidewalks, and parking lots will be completed as soon as possible. Building pads will be laid as soon as possible after grading unless seeding or soil binders are used. ▪ Idling time will be minimized by shutting equipment off when not in use or by reducing the time of idling to five minutes. Clear signage that posts this requirement for workers will be provided at the entrances to the site. ▪ Construction equipment will be maintained in proper working condition according to manufacturer's specifications. The equipment will be checked by a certified mechanic and determined to be running in proper condition before it is operated. The Tribe will reduce emissions of critical air pollutants (CAPs) and greenhouse gases (GHGs) during operation through the following actions: ▪ Electrical vehicle charging infrastructure will be included at the paved surface parking lots associated with the Tribal office and library/community center. ▪ Energy efficient lighting and appliances will be used, which would reduce energy usage, thus reducing indirect CAP and GHG emissions. ▪ Water consumption will be reduced through low-flow appliances, drought resistant landscaping, and the incorporation of "Save Water" signs near water faucets. ▪ Recycling bins will be installed throughout the office and community facilities for glass, cans, and paper products. Trash and recycling receptacles will be placed strategically outside to encourage recycling.
Public Services and Utilities	▪ The construction site will be cleaned daily of trash and debris to the maximum extent practicable.
Noise	The following BMPs will be implemented during construction: ▪ Powered equipment will comply with applicable federal regulations and all such equipment will be fitted with adequate mufflers according to the manufacturer's specifications to minimize construction noise effects.

Resource Area	Protective Measures and Best Management Practices
	▪ Exterior construction activities generating noise will be limited to daytime hours between 7 am and 7 pm Monday through Saturday to the greatest extent feasible, with the exception of federal holidays, when no work will occur.
Hazardous Materials	During construction, personnel shall adhere to the following BMPs to reduce potential incidents with hazardous materials and fire ignition: ▪ BMPs for the safe filling and servicing of construction equipment and vehicle to reduce the potential hazardous material releases: ▪ Catch pans shall be placed under equipment to catch potential spills during servicing. ▪ Refueling shall be conducted only with approved pumps, hoses, and nozzles. ▪ Vehicle engines shall be shut down during refueling. ▪ No smoking, open flames, or welding shall be allowed in refueling or service areas. ▪ Refueling shall be performed away from bodies of water to prevent contamination of water in the event of a leak or spill. ▪ Service trucks shall be provided with fire extinguishers and spill containment equipment, such as absorbents. ▪ Should a spill contaminate soil, the soil shall be put into containers and disposed of in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations. ▪ All containers used to store hazardous materials shall be inspected at least once per week for signs of leaks or potential failure. BMPs designed to reduce the potential for igniting a fire during construction: ▪ Construction equipment will contain spark arrestors, as provided by the manufacturer. ▪ Staging areas, welding areas, or areas slated for development using spark-producing equipment will be cleared of dried vegetation or other material that could serve as fire fuel. ▪ No smoking, open flames, or welding will be allowed in refueling or service areas. ▪ Service trucks will be provided with fire extinguishers.
Visual Resources	The following BMPs shall be implemented to reduce visual impacts during operations, such as from lighting and glare: ▪ Exterior lighting shall be downcast, shielded, and limited to the extent needed for public safety. ▪ Project lighting sources will be consistent with the County's "Lighting Pollution" ordinance, County of San Diego Ordinance 51.201 et. Seq., also known as the "Dark Sky Ordinance ▪ Landscaping will be consistent with existing surroundings to the extent feasible. ▪ Glass used in building façades shall be anti-reflective or treated with an anti-reflective coating to minimize glare

2.2 ALTERNATIVE B: NO ACTION

Under the No Action alternative, the Project Site would not be placed into trust for the benefit of the Tribe and would not be developed with the Tribal office, library/community center, and housing uses identified under Alternative A. Jurisdiction of the Project Site would remain with the County. The Project Site could be developed at some point in the future consistent with federal, State, and local requirements. However, future development would be speculative. It is therefore assumed for the purposes of the EA that existing buildings on the site would remain and existing uses would continue. The majority of the Project Site is therefore assumed to remain undeveloped or minimally utilized under the No Action alternative.

2.3 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Compared with the No Action Alternative, impacts from Alternative A would include those associated with temporary construction activities, a minor increase in impervious surfaces, and an increase in human activities on the site. Alternative A would accomplish the goals discussed in **Section 1.3** and **1.4**, which include establishing a Tribal land base in a more accessible and urbanized area, protecting Tribal homelands, maintaining a conservation area (for Arroyo toad), facilitating Tribal self-determination, and providing Tribal housing. While the No Action Alternative would not result in any of the environmental effects identified for Alternative A, potential environmental impacts of Alternative A would be reduced to a level of less-than-significant with implementation of BMPs and protective measures recommended in **Section 2.1.6** and mitigation measures recommended in **Section 4.0**. The No Action Alternative would not meet the Tribe's objectives and the purpose and need for the Proposed Action.

2.4 ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM CONSIDERATION

The intent of the analysis of alternatives in the EA is to present to decision-makers and the public a reasonable range of alternatives that are both feasible and sufficiently different from each other in critical aspects. NEPA guidance states that lead agencies must evaluate reasonable alternatives and discuss the reasoning as to why additional alternatives were eliminated from detailed study. A lead agency should present environmental impacts of proposed alternatives in a comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker. The alternatives discussed herein were considered and rejected from further consideration because these alternatives were either deemed infeasible, would not offer environmental advantages over Alternative A or would not fulfill the stated purpose and need of the Proposed Action.

2.4.1 Alternative Location

Alternative locations were considered, however, the Tribe already owns the Project Site in fee and the land is in close proximity to the Tribe's trust land (Little Ewiiaapaayp) on which the SIHC clinic operates. The site was selected by the Tribe as it falls within the Tribe's ancestral land base, is adjacent to lands current held in trust for the Tribe, was available to the Tribe for purchase, is within an area that has already been largely disturbed and developed, has adequate site access, is close to public services and connected to utilities, and offers a suitable structure for use as an emergency Tribal center, and lands suitable for development of the Tribal office, community center, and Tribal housing. The Tribe owns several parcels of land (APNs 4040603900, 4040610500, 4040610400, and 4040610600) west and directly east of its trust land on which the SIHC clinic operates; however, the relatively flat developable areas within those parcels are already being utilized for tribal housing. Consideration of an alternative site would require the Tribe to purchase additional lands, thus placing an undue financial burden on the Tribe. Therefore, alternative locations for the trust acquisition are not evaluated within the EA.

2.4.2 Development on Existing Trust Land

The Tribe considered utilizing existing trust land for development. As noted in **Section 1.4**, the Tribe's existing reservation consists of two tracts of land held in federal trust. These include the approximately 5,470-acre Big Ewiiaapaayp reservation, located in a remote portion of the Laguna mountains approximately 15 miles north of the U.S./Mexico border, and the 10.02-acre parcel known as Little Ewiiaapaayp located immediately north of the Project Site where the SIHC clinic is currently located.

Big Ewiiaapaayp

Obstacles to development on Big Ewiiaapaayp include lack of water, geographic remoteness, lack of adequate access roads (only a single unpaved steep road provides access), and the complete lack of utilities (no electricity, gas, telephone, or wastewater systems). Improvements needed to make the Big Ewiiaapaayp parcel suitable for tribal governmental facilities and housing would be extensive, including several miles of grading, paving, and trenching for roads and utilities through natural habitats, including multiple stream and drainage crossings. Developing this area for housing or office space would be extremely costly in comparison to a typical development project and would result in greater environmental effects associated with extensive infrastructure improvements through natural habitat areas, and greater vehicle miles traveled for tribal staff and employees given the distance to urban centers with access to basic services, including but not limited to grocery stores, schools, and health care facilities. This alternative is not likely economically feasible and was eliminated from full consideration because of the potential for increased environmental consequences and because it would not accomplish the purpose of the Proposed Action.

Little Ewiiaapaayp

Development of tribal facilities and housing on the Little Ewiiaapaayp 10.02-acre parcel directly north of the Project Site is infeasible as this area is currently fully developed and encumbered by a long-term lease agreement between the Tribe and the SIHC. This alternative was eliminated from consideration as it is not feasible and therefore would not accomplish the purpose of the Proposed Action.

2.4.3 Reduced Intensity

A reduced intensity alternative was considered for the Project Site, however, Alternative A is already small-scale and further reduction would not meet the stated purpose. Additionally, scaling down the size of the various project components would render them impractical for their purpose. For example, scaling down the size of the community center would make it too small to serve as an effective gathering place, and decreasing the size of the library or office spaces would leave these spaces too small to function in their intended purpose. Finally, as Alternative A only proposes two houses, there is no reasonable way to reduce the intensity without compromising the minimal proposed gain in Tribal housing.

Section 3 | Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the existing environment of the Project Site as well as the environmental consequences for Alternative A and Alternative B. The following environmental issue areas are described: Land Resources, Water Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural and Paleontological Resources, Socioeconomic Conditions, Transportation and Circulation, Land Use, Public Services and Utilities, Noise, Hazardous Materials, and Visual Resources. Additional details on the regulatory setting summarized below are included within **Appendix D**. Reasonably foreseeable environmental effects are identified in **Section 3.14**. Measures to mitigate adverse impacts identified in this section are presented in **Section 4**. Note that the term "effects" is used synonymously with the term "impacts."

3.1.1 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions and Cumulative Effects Analysis

NEPA requires that agencies consider "any reasonably foreseeable environmental effects of the proposed agency action." NEPA Section 102(C)(i), 42 USC 4332(C)(i). Cumulative impacts are effects on the environment that result from the incremental effects of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. For the purposes of this analysis, reasonably foreseeable future actions include known development projects that are proposed, planned, and/or currently being constructed within ten miles of the Project Site as shown in **Table 3.1-1**.

3.2 LAND RESOURCES

3.2.1 Regulatory Setting

The land resources regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.2-3.2-2** and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D.**

Table 3.2-1: Reasonably Foreseeable Projects

Project	Location	Project Details	Distance from Project Site
Alpine Community Park	98 acres in Alpine	Public park to include nature areas, sports fields, community garden, and infrastructure. Final Environmental Impact Report underway, anticipated construction completion winter 2025.	2.23 Miles
Alpine Community Plan Update	Community Plan Update and General Plan Amendment, Alpine	Identifies a growth and development plan with village-focused land use, local services, and increased residential density in areas of existing infrastructure.	N/A
Cottonwood Sand Mining Project	214.4 acres in El Cajon	Sand mining in phases followed by reclamation	6.38 Miles

Project	Location	Project Details	Distance from Project Site
Lake Jennings Marketplace	13 acres in Lakeside	General Plan amendment to allow development of a gas station, car wash, parking lot, and commercial center.	8.00 Miles
El Monte Sand Mining and Nature Preserve Project	230 acres in Lakeside	Sand mining in phases followed by reclamation and trail access easements.	8.60 Miles

Sources: County of San Diego Parks and Recreation, 2023; County of San Diego Planning and Development Services, 2020; County of San Diego Planning and Development Services, 2017; County of San Diego Planning and Development Services, 2018

Table 3.2-3.2-2: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Land Resources

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Clean Water Act	▪ Prohibits sediment and erosion discharge into navigable waters of the United States and establishes water quality goals.
State	
Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act	▪ Requires the delineation of zones along active and potentially active faults in California.
Seismic Hazards Mapping Act	▪ Requires the mapping of seismic hazard zones at the State level and requires local jurisdictions to regulate development within these zones.
Surface Mining and Reclamation Act	▪ Requires local jurisdictions to incorporate mapped mineral resources designations approved by the California Mining and Geology Board within their general plans.
Local	
San Diego County General Plan	▪ Promotes the preservation of unique geological resources ▪ Identifies mineral resources in the County with a policy of protecting mineral resources as well as ensuring adequate supply of mined resources

3.2.2 Environmental Setting

Geological Setting

The geological history of San Diego County is described within the County's general plan (County of San Diego, 2022). Landforms observed throughout the County are the result of volcanic activity, such as emplacement of magma; seismic events such as uplift, especially in the coastal areas; sedimentation from the ocean and rivers; and hydrothermal processes. Many of these features are regional and expand past the bounds of the County. According to the County's general plan, there are small-scale unique geological resources in the County, such as natural bridge rock outcrops, the Scripps Formation, unique stratified exposed cliff faces, and the volcanic plug that is Round Mountain. No unique geological resources occur within the Project Site.

Topography

Regionally, San Diego County is comprised of three geological regions, including the coastal plain, peninsular ranges, and the Salton trough (County of San Diego, 2022). The Project Site falls within a hilly, narrow valley between two larger more mountainous features of the peninsular ranges. The Project Site is characterized by moderately level terrain with rolling hills up to approximately 15 degrees of slope.

Elevations range from 2,175 to 2,310 feet amsl. Grading has historically occurred on and adjacent to the Project Site for the creation of building pads and public roadways.

Soil Types and Characteristics

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) Web Soil Survey was used to map soil units and provide a summary of major physical characteristics for each unit (NRCS, 2023). The following soil units were mapped on the Project Site and are shown on Figure 5 of **Appendix A**:

- Fallbrook sandy loam, 9-15 percent slopes: This soil covers the eastern half of the Project Site as well as a small portion of the grazing pasture just south of Viejas Creek. located in the northeast portion of the site. Fallbrook sandy loam is not considered prime farmland and is well drained with a high runoff value. This soil makes up approximately 64.1 percent of the site.
- Greenfield sandy loam, 2-5 percent slopes: This soil dominates the grazing land located in the western half of the Project Site. This soil can be considered prime farmland if irrigated and is a well-drained soil with a very low runoff class. This soil makes up approximately 29.1 percent of the site.
- Visalia sandy loam, 2-5 and 5-9 percent slopes: This soil type underlies Viejas Creek and its associated riparian corridor. This soil can be considered prime farmland if irrigated and is a well-drained soil with a low runoff class. This soil makes up approximately 6.8 percent of the site.

These soils are not prone to flooding, are not considered hydric soils, and have an estimated depth to water table of more than 80 inches.

Seismic Conditions

There are no significant faults in the vicinity of the Project Site. The nearest fault in relation to the Project Site is an isolated, unnamed fault located approximately four miles east of the Project Site. This fault is a late Quaternary fault with no known activity in over 700,000 years (USGS, 2023a; CDC, 2023a).

The nearest active fault (activity in the past 11,000 years) is approximately 20 miles east of the Project Site. This fault is the Elsinore Fault, which is a Holocene fault with displacement having occurred in the last 11,700 years. According to EQ Zapp, which maps the state's earthquake hazard zones, the Project Site falls within an unevaluated area. EQ Zapp does not have evaluation of earthquake hazards in situations where (1) the area is undevelopable, (2) the hazard potential is so low that a hazard is not anticipated, or (3) the area is anticipated to be evaluated. As the City of Alpine is adjacent to the Project Site and there are no significant faults near the Project Site, it is likely this area has not been formally evaluated because there is no significant threat of hazard (CDC, 2023b).

Liquefaction and Landslides

Liquefaction is generally only a concern in areas with strong seismic shaking where soils are prone to liquefaction. As discussed above, the Project Site is within an area of minimal seismic activity, therefore, threat of liquefaction is also low. Landslides is another potential threat often associated with seismic conditions, or areas of steep topography. The nearest recorded landslide to the Project Site occurred approximately 2.4 miles west of the Project Site in 2015, when a boulder broke loose from a hillside and rolled into the back of a business in Alpine (USGS, 2023b). Given the mild slopes on site and the lack of nearby landslide occurrences, threat of landslide is considered low.

Mineral Resources

According to the San Diego County General Plan, the County is underlain with significant mineral deposits, known as the "Western San Diego Production-Consumption Region." This area has been mapped with mineral resource zones. The Project Site is outside but in close proximity to the Production-Consumption Region. The nearest area to the Project Site is mapped as MRZ 3 – Resource potentially present. MRZ – 3 zones are areas where no resource was identified, but where one may be present but inaccessible or not readily identifiable. There are no known mineral resources identified within the Project Site. The nearest known mineral resources in relation to the Project Site are an unclaimed tin mine, an underground gold mine, and a sand and gravel pit, all within two miles of the Project Site (USGS, 2023c).

3.2.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

Impacts to land resources would be significant if the alternative were to result in changes to topography such that it would cause an adverse effect such as generating landslides, significant erosion, or placing people or property in harm's way. Seismic-related impacts would be significant if the alternative substantially increased risks from seismic events. Impacts to soils would be significant if the alternative significantly increased soil erosion or placed structures or infrastructure on unsuitable soils.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Topography

As discussed in **Section 2.1.5**, Alternative A has been designed to utilize those areas of the Project Site that are relatively flat and would require minimal grading. Additionally, the access drives follow existing unpaved roads where possible to maximize use of areas that have previously been graded. The emergency Tribal center would not require grading as this project component would use the existing on-site residence. Therefore, grading activities would be limited to the building pads for the two Tribal housing units, the Tribal office, and improvements to on-site access and circulation. Additionally, Alternative A would implement BMPs identified in **Section 2.1.7**, which include the use of standard erosion control methods during construction and adherence to standard engineering practices and IBC standards. Thus, impacts to topography under Alternative A would be less than significant.

Soils

A Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Report was prepared and included as **Appendix C**. This report evaluated grading demands of Alternative A as well as stormwater runoff increases related to an increase in impervious surfaces on the Project Site. This report concluded that discharge volume of stormwater would increase by 28.2 acre-feet when considering a 24-hour, 100-year storm event. Increased stormwater runoff has the potential to generate erosion and alter small-scale topography over time. Therefore, as part of Alternative A, detention basins with a total storage capacity minimum of 28.2 acre-feet would be constructed. This would prevent increased stormwater runoff from generating higher stormwater runoff rates and volumes when compared to existing conditions.

Construction of Alternative A could adversely impact soils due to erosion during construction activities, such as grading and clearing. Grading activities on the Project Site would be minimal and would be concentrated in areas of flat topography or existing grading.

Alternative A would comply with the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System General Construction Permit from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, which would include implementation of best management practices (BMPs) for sediment and erosion control, as described in **Section 2.1.7**. These include, but are not limited to, temporary erosion control measures during construction (e.g., silt fences, fiber rolls, straw bales) and stabilization of exposed soils following construction. Further, stormwater collection and treatment discussed above would be conducted such that stormwater flows and volume would not exceed pre-development conditions. Additionally, Alternative A would follow standard engineering practices and comply with IBC standards related to soil suitability for structures. Impacts related to soils would be less than significant.

Seismic Conditions

The closest active fault is located approximately 20 miles east of the Project Site. Although seismic risk on the Project Site is low, as discussed in **Section 2.1.7**, Alternative A would adhere to International Building Code standards, which includes design requirements related to seismic events. With adherence to these building standards, the impacts related to seismic conditions would be less than significant.

Mineral Resources

There are no known mineral resources on the Project Site, therefore Alternative A would not adversely affect known or recorded mineral resources. No impact would occur.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, the land would not be taken into trust and the Project Site would remain in its current state. Alternative B would not result in changes to topography and would not impact minerals. Additionally, there would be no risks associated with seismic conditions, landslides, or liquefaction as the Project Site would continue to operate in its current state and risks to people or structures would be unchanged.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

Reasonably foreseeable effects associated with land resources could occur as a result of future development in combination with the project alternatives, including the projects listed in **Table 3.1-1** and growth and development envisioned in the in the San Diego County General Plan and Alpine Community Plan. Approved future developments would be required to follow applicable permitting procedures and development standards. Local permitting requirements for construction would address regional geotechnical and topographic conflicts, seismic hazards, and resource extraction availability. In addition, Alternative A and other proposed developments that disturb one acre or more must comply with the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Construction Permit. Adherence to this would lessen the probability of significant erosion occurring regionally. Further, Alternative A would not result in significant alterations to the existing topography of the Project Site and would therefore not contribute to reasonably foreseeable impacts associated with alteration of the surrounding natural topography. Therefore, implementation of Alternative A would not result in significant reasonably foreseeable impacts to land resources.

3.3 WATER RESOURCES

3.3.1 Regulatory Setting

The water resources regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.3-1**, and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D.**

Table 3.3-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Water Resources

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Executive Order 11988	▪ Requires federal agencies to evaluate the potential effects of any actions they may take in a floodplain; floodplain is defined as an area that has a 1 percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year. ▪ Requires agencies proposing that an action be allowed in a floodplain to consider alternatives to avoid adverse effects; if the only practicable alternative action requires siting in a floodplain, Executive Order 11988 requires the agency to minimize potential harm to or within the floodplain.
Clean Water Act	▪ Establishes national water quality goals. ▪ Regulates both point and non-point sources of pollution through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. ▪ Requires an NPDES permit be obtained to discharge pollutants into Waters of the U.S. ▪ Requires states to establish water quality standards for waters in their jurisdiction and to periodically prepare a list of surface waters where beneficial uses are impaired by pollutants. ▪ Requires an Anti-Degradation Policy be developed for each state to maintain surface water quality to levels permissible for existing uses.
Safe Drinking Water Act	▪ Authorizes U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to set National Primary Drinking Water Regulations (primary standards) that apply to public water systems and also defines National Secondary Drinking Water Regulations (secondary standards) for contaminants that cause cosmetic and aesthetic effects, but not health effects.
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	▪ Prepares Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for the National Flood Insurance Program.
State	
Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act	▪ Requires the State to designate beneficial uses of surface and groundwater and to specify water quality objectives for those uses per the water quality objectives described in Regional Water Quality Control Plans.
Sustainable Groundwater Management Act	▪ Establishes a definition of “sustainable groundwater management” based on halting overdraft and balancing levels of pumping from and recharge of groundwater basins. ▪ Requires the adoption of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the most important groundwater basins in the State. ▪ Encourages local agencies to form or join Groundwater Sustainability Agencies to draft GSPs for their respective groundwater basins.
San Diego County General Plan	▪ Outlines the County’s goals and policies related to water resources

3.3.2 Environmental Setting

Surface Water

Surface waters on the Project Site include a portion of Viejas Creek, wetlands adjacent to Viejas Creek, an intermittent channel tributary to Viejas Creek, and ephemeral channels, as discussed further in **Section 3.5**. The Project Site falls within the Viejas Creek-Sweetwater River Watershed (180703040803) (USEPA, 2023). The USEPA evaluates the waterbody condition of three surface water resources in the watershed: Loveland Reservoir, Sweetwater River above Loveland Reservoir, and Viejas Creek. Viejas Creek crosses the Project Site. Downstream of the Project Site, Viejas Creek drains into the Sweetwater River, thence into Loveland Reservoir. All three of these waterbodies were last reported on in 2024 to evaluate whether water conditions warranted listing as impaired under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. Loveland Reservoir was listed as impaired for municipal and domestic water supply (USEPA, 2024a). Specifically, this waterway was listed for aluminum. The Sweetwater River above Loveland Reservoir was also listed as impaired for warm freshwater habitat, specifically for toxicity (USEPA, 2024b). Viejas Creek was evaluated and found to be in good condition and did not warrant listing as impaired (USEPA, 2024c).

Groundwater

The Project Site falls within an area of moderate drought risk (score 47 out of 100) with the highest risk factor being physical vulnerability (CDWR, 2023b). The Project Site is not underlain by a defined groundwater basin (CDWR, 2023a). Groundwater use throughout the County is limited and groundwater accounts for only about 5 percent of the County's water supply portfolio (San Diego County Water Authority, 2023). However, groundwater is the primary source of water supply for land uses in the vicinity of the Project Site, including but not limited to rural residential uses and the SIHC clinic north of the freeway. An existing groundwater well and storage tank currently serve the Project Site.

Drainage and Flooding

A Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Report was completed for the Project Site and is included as **Appendix C**. A site hydrology map is included as Figure 6 of **Appendix C**. As discussed in **Appendix C**, sheet flow from the Project Site flows either directly into Viejas Creek, or into a tributary flowing into Viejas Creek. The totality of the Project Site is designated as Flood Zone X. This flood zone represents areas outside of the 0.2 percent chance of flooding per year, which are therefore outside of the 500-year floodplain. A floodplain map is shown on Figure 6 of **Appendix A**. It is noted that the Project Site is far enough inland that it is outside of the California coast tsunami zone (CDC, 2023).

3.3.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

Impacts to water resources would be significant if runoff from the Project Site were to cause local flooding or introduce additional contaminants to runoff that leaves the Project Site. Groundwater impacts would be significant if development were to adversely affect local water supply either by reducing the availability of potable water or increasing the demand for domestic water to the point where the existing water supply system would need to be expanded. Water quality could be significantly affected if an alternative caused the exceedance of water quality standards of receiving water bodies or groundwater.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Surface Water

Surface water resources within the Project Site, including Viejas Creek and associated wetlands, Viejas Creek tributary, and ephemeral drainages (Figure 7 of **Appendix A**), would not be directly impacted during construction or operation of Alternative A. However, construction activities can increase erosion and sediment discharge during storm events. Construction activities would also include the routine use of potentially hazardous construction materials, such as concrete washings, oil, and grease that could spill onto the ground and dissolve into stormwater. Alternative A would involve construction activities in excess of one acre and therefore would be required to apply for coverage under the NPDES General Construction Permit. The provisions of this permit include preparation of a SWPPP that would be developed prior to ground disturbance. The SWPPP would include BMPs to reduce potential surface water contamination during storm events. BMPs would include, but not be limited to, those presented in **Table 2.1-1**. The BMPs within the SWPPP would minimize adverse impacts associated with construction by reducing erosion and the risk of soil contamination from construction materials. In addition to BMPs within the SWPPP, dust suppression BMPs listed in **Table 2.1-1** to minimize air quality impacts would further prevent fugitive dust or loose soil from dispersing off-site. Additionally, as discussed above, stormwater detention basins would be designed to ensure stormwater runoff rates would not exceed pre-development conditions and would therefore not result in higher runoff rates and associated erosion risks. With consideration of the proposed stormwater treatment and adherence to the NPDES permitting program and implementation of the SWPPP, impacts to surface water quality would be less than significant.

Groundwater

The introduction of impervious surfaces can reduce groundwater recharge in areas where surface percolation accounts for a large percentage of natural recharge. Alternative A would result in a minor increase in impervious surfaces within the Project Site. As noted above, construction of Alternative A would include the development of stormwater detention basins designed to accommodate a 24-hour, 100-year storm event, and collected stormwater will be allowed to percolate and re-enter the groundwater table. Therefore, groundwater recharge would not be altered by Alternative A.

Potable water supply will be obtained through the construction of on-site groundwater wells or use of the existing onsite well. The capacity and quality of the existing well is unknown; however, it is anticipated that it will continue to serve Alternative A. The projected average water supply needed to reliably meet water demand for Alternative A is 2,400 gallons per day as described in **Appendix C**. Estimates for the emergency center are conservative as they assume that the facility is constantly occupied as a non-congregating shelter facility for two families, and the facility would only be utilized during emergencies. Historic metered flow data for the existing home was not available but was estimated to be 670 gpd. Thus, Alternative A is conservatively estimated to increase water demand within the Project Site by 260 percent. While it is likely the existing well would be sufficient to serve Alternative A, the pumping capacity of the well will be evaluated prior to operation of Alternative A to ensure adequate supply and fire flows. Alternative A does not include project components that would have a disproportionately high water demand in comparison to surrounding rural residential uses and agriculture that would measurably impact groundwater resources. Further, the project facilities would be designed and managed to minimize potable water usage.

Water conservation measures outlined in **Table 2.1-1** include low flow fixtures, high efficiency/water conserving appliances, and use of drought tolerant native vegetation in landscaping. Finally, wastewater would be collected and treated on-site. As discussed in **Appendix C**, each structure will be equipped with an appropriately-sized leach field. Percolation data was previously collected for the Walker parcel and is included as Attachment C of **Appendix C**. Site-wide percolation was estimated based upon percolation testing on the Walker parcel as well as data from the NRCS Custom Soils Report for the totality of the Project Site (NRCS, 2023). Percolation rates were measured on the Walker Parcel as 28 minutes per inch at 4 feet, 30 minutes per inch at 6 feet, and 12.6 minutes per inch at 10 feet. Based on these conditions, the total area of leach field needed to accommodate the proposed land uses would be 900 square feet, which includes a safety factor of 1.2. Three general soil types were observed within the upper 14 feet of several test pits, which primarily consisted of silty sands and poorly graded sand/clay mixtures. No groundwater was encountered during the geotechnical study conducted on the Walker parcel in 2001, which included conducting test pits (Attachment C of **Appendix C**). Groundwater is therefore not anticipated to be a concern regarding the design, construction, or operation of the proposed leach fields. Wastewater facility design, collection, and treatment would be conducted to USEPA standards such that groundwater resources would be protected from contamination. As Alternative A would not jeopardize groundwater resources, there would be a less-than-significant impact.

Drainage and Flooding

All grading and earthmoving activities would occur outside of the FEMA-designated 100- and 500-year floodplains. As such, floodplain impacts from Alternative A would not occur. A hydrologic map of existing site conditions is provided as Figure 6 of **Appendix C**. This shows drainage patterns flowing into Viejas Creek, or into tributaries to Viejas Creek. The proposed site improvements are minimal in nature, and do not significantly alter the existing drainage patterns and flow paths within the Project Site. Existing and post-project stormwater runoff rates were calculated in **Appendix C** consistent with the San Diego County Hydrology Manual (Hydrology Manual) utilizing a runoff coefficient and rainfall intensity. The peak stormwater run-off flows from the Project Site during a 100-year, 24-hour storm event were calculated under existing conditions to be 119 cubic feet per second (cfs), and under post-construction conditions to be 299 cfs. Based on the increased runoff rates, it was determined that 28.2 acre-feet of stormwater storage would be necessary to offset the increased stormwater runoff during a 100-year 24-hour storm event. As shown in **Appendix C**, with inclusion of stormwater detention basins, the flow rates and volume of stormwater runoff would not exceed pre-development conditions. Additionally, the detention basins would allow for percolation of collected stormwater, and drainage patterns on site would not be altered. Therefore, impacts related to drainage and flooding would not occur.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, the Project Site would remain in its current state. There would be no new impacts to water resources, and current water uses and drainage would continue.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

As discussed above, Alternative A would not result in impacts related to drainage or flooding and therefore would not contribute to future drainage and flooding impacts. Construction activities could result in erosion and sediment discharge to surface waters, potentially affecting water quality in surface water bodies. In addition, construction equipment and materials have the potential to leak, thereby discharging oil, grease, and construction supplies into stormwater, potentially affecting both surface water and groundwater.

Alternative A and any new development affecting over an acre would be required to apply for an NPDES General Construction Permit. These requirements would prevent impaired runoff from exiting the site and would prevent runoff from exceeding water quality standards. These requirements would apply to other reasonably foreseeable projects disturbing greater than one acre of land. Therefore, significant reasonably foreseeable impacts would not occur.

The wastewater generated by Alternative A would have a less than significant impact with regards to water quality due to proper treatment and disposal, thus preventing groundwater contamination. Reasonably foreseeable developments would be required to adhere to local, State, and federal regulations, as applicable, with regards to wastewater treatment and disposal. Wastewater treatment standards are designed to be protective of water quality and prevent water quality impairment through avoidance of the impact.

In addition to wastewater generation, operation of Alternative A would also generate an increased demand on groundwater resources of 2,400 gpd. As discussed in **Section 3.9**, the Project Site is designated as Village Residential (VR-2) in both the County General Plan and the draft Alpine Community Plan. This designation envisions a residential density of two gross single-family units per acre of land. As the Project Site totals 48.7 acres, this equates to 96 single-family housing units. At most (during times where the emergency center is in use), the Project Site would generate a water demand equivalent to four single-family units. This would be significantly less than the water demand of planned future development of the Project Site based on zoning. Therefore, reasonably foreseeable water demand would be less than anticipated compared to full buildout of land uses identified in the County's General Plan.

Private dwellings in the vicinity of the Project Site utilize groundwater wells for water supply. Although growth has occurred in the area, the wells in the vicinity of the Project Site yield greater than 10 gallons per minute (San Diego County, 2011). The Project Site and vicinity are outside the areas identified by the County as having a potential for low well yield and localized groundwater problems (San Diego County, 2011). The groundwater basin that would be utilized by Alternative A for water supply has an estimated groundwater capacity of 72 percent at maximum buildout of the County General Plan. A level of 50 percent or less of maximum storage is considered potentially significant (San Diego County, 2011).

The previous owner of the Project Site tested the existing on-site well on the Project Site and found that it produced over 100 gallons per minute as a sustained flow. Groundwater has been used for the past 100 years to irrigate alfalfa grown on the Walker parcel, which contains approximately 16 acres of usable agricultural land. Alfalfa requires between 6,700 gpd and 8,030 gpd (University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2007). Therefore, approximately 8,920 gpd to 10,700 gpd of groundwater has historically been used to irrigate the alfalfa fields on the Walker parcel. This amount only applies to the Walker parcel and is much greater than what the water demand of Alternative A would be (2,400 gpd). Additionally, groundwater only accounts for approximately 5 percent of water use throughout the County. As Alternative A would not have a high water demand and regional water use largely does not rely on groundwater demand, reasonably foreseeable cumulative impacts to groundwater would be less than significant.

3.4 AIR QUALITY

3.4.1 Regulatory Setting

The air quality regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.4-1,** and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D**.

Table 3.4-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Air Quality

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1970	▪ The CAA created the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six criteria air pollutants: ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and lead. ▪ States are required to have State Implementation Plans (SIP) for areas that are not achieving the NAAQS (nonattainment areas). ▪ The Federal General Conformity Rule requires demonstration that a proposed federal action will conform to the applicable SIP. ▪ Prevention of Significant Deterioration program protects Class I areas. ▪ Tribal minor new source review permits are required if emissions would exceed certain standards. ▪ The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) per the CAA designated over 180 air pollutants as "hazardous air pollutants" due their effects on the environment and human health.
State	
Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32)	▪ Assembly Bill (AB) 32 is the overarching law that requires the State to set Statewide GHG reduction targets. AB 32 required the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop a Climate Change Scoping Plan that describes the approach California will take to reduce GHGs to achieve emission reduction goals and to update the plan every five years.
California Clean Air Act and Regional Air Quality Standards	▪ Requires nonattainment areas to achieve and maintain the CAAQS by the earliest practicable date, as well as requires local air districts to develop plans for attaining the State O3, CO, SO2, and NOx standards. ▪ The San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) regulates air pollutant emissions within San Diego County and maintains air quality conditions.

3.4.2 Environmental Setting

Regional Meteorology

The Project Site is located within the south-central portion of the San Diego Air Basin (SDAB), which is coincident with San Diego County. The climate of San Diego County is characterized by warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters. One of the main determinants of the climatology is a semi-permanent high-pressure area (the Pacific High) in the eastern Pacific Ocean. In the summer, this pressure center is located well to the north, causing storm tracks to be directed north of California. This high-pressure cell maintains clear skies for much of the year. When the Pacific High moves southward during the winter, this pattern changes, and low-pressure storms are brought into the region, causing widespread precipitation. In the Alpine area, the months of heaviest precipitation are November through April, averaging about 16 inches annually. The mean temperature is 62.6°F, and the mean maximum and mean minimum temperatures are 74.6°F and 50.6°F, respectively (NCEI, 2023).

Regional Air Quality

The major air pollutant in the County is ground-level ozone, with concentrations exceeding national and state standards due to weather and geography. A common atmospheric condition known as a temperature inversion affects air quality in San Diego County. During an inversion, air temperatures get warmer rather than cooler with increasing height. Inversion layers are important elements of local air quality because they inhibit the dispersion of pollutants, thus resulting in a temporary degradation of air quality.

Light winds coming off the Pacific Ocean can push urban pollutants inland into the foothills, which can act to further concentrate air pollution.

Attainment Status

The Project Site is currently within the jurisdictional area of the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (APCD). The APCD regulates air pollutant emissions from stationary sources within San Diego County. However, once the Project Site is taken into trust, air quality would be under the jurisdiction of the USEPA. To determine conformance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), states are responsible for providing ambient air monitoring data to the USEPA. The USEPA then determines, using the violation criteria, if the results of the monitoring data indicate compliance with the NAAQS. The USEPA classifies areas in compliance with the NAAQS as being in "attainment". Areas that do not meet the NAAQS are classified as being in "nonattainment" by the USEPA. As shown in **Table 3.4-2**, San Diego County is has a nonattainment status for ozone, and attainment/maintenance for carbon monoxide. The County meets the federal standards or is unclassifiable for all other pollutants.

Table 3.4-2: Project Area NAAQS Attainment Status

Pollutant	NAAQS
Ozone (8-hour)	Nonattainment (Severe 15)
PM_{10} (24-hour, annual)	Attainment – Unclassified
$PM_{2.5}$ (annual)	Attainment – Unclassified
Carbon Monoxide (8-hour, 1-hour)	Attainment – Maintenance
Nitrogen Dioxide (annual, 1-hour)	Attainment
Sulfur Dioxide (24-hour,1-hour)	Attainment
Lead (30-day average)	Attainment

Source: USEPA, 2023a
PM_{10}: Particulate matter with diameters that are generally 10 micrometers and smaller
$PM_{2.5}$: Particulate matter with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller

Hazardous Air Pollutants

Hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) are those pollutants that are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects, such as reproductive effects or birth defects, or adverse environmental effects. HAPs are also known as toxic air pollutants or air toxics (USEPA, 2023b). The State of California uses the terminology “toxic air contaminants,” and under section 39655 of the California Health and Safety Code, toxic air contaminants are defined as "an air pollutant which may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or an increase in serious illness, or which may pose a present or potential hazard to human health." The USEPA has listed 188 HAPs that are considered detrimental to the environment (USEPA, 2023b). For more information on HAPs, see **Appendix D**.

Odor

Odors can be produced by many substances in the environment, such as animals, human activities, industry processes, natural decomposition of materials, and vehicles. While odors are normally only nuisances, some can be toxic and can cause detrimental health effects. In general, the USEPA does not have regulations for odors per se but does control 188 toxic air pollutants in addition to the air pollutants seen in **Table 3.4-2**. Only sulfur dioxide SO_2 is odorous, and the controlled toxic air pollutants are only monitored for toxicity and not odor (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, 2015).

Types of operations that can produce noticeable odors waste include processing and heavy industrial facilities such as wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs), landfills and composting facilities, chemical manufacturing, and confined animal facilities. There are various agricultural operations surrounding the Project Site, including cattle; however, the Project Site is not located near any significant odor sources.

Sensitive Receptors

Sensitive receptors are generally defined as land uses that house or attract people who are susceptible to adverse effects from air pollution emissions and, as such, should be given special consideration when evaluating air quality impacts from projects. Sensitive receptors include facilities that house or attract children, the elderly, people with illnesses, or others who are especially sensitive to the effects of air pollutants. Hospitals, schools, convalescent homes, parks and recreational facilities, and residential areas are examples of sensitive receptors. The nearest sensitive receptors are the rural residences directly adjacent to the Project Site on the north, south, east, and west.

3.4.3 Impacts

Assessment Criteria

Adverse impacts to ambient air quality could result if either construction or operation would result in violations of the CAA provisions, or if emissions would impede the ability of the State to meet NAAQSs. The effects of the Alternatives on San Diego County APCD air quality management are assessed below as required under the CAA.

Methodology

Construction Analysis

Construction activities would consist of grading, building, road work, and parking lot construction. A fleet mix of trucks, excavators, and graders would be used to complete construction. Effects on air quality during construction were evaluated by estimating the quantity of each CAP emitted over the duration of the construction period. Fine particulate matter 10 microns in diameter and smaller (PM_{10}) and 2.5 microns in diameter and smaller ($PM_{2.5}$) are the pollutants of concern resulting during earth-moving and fine grading activities. Volatile organic compounds (VOC), nitrogen oxides (NOx), SO_2, carbon monoxide, GHG, and diesel particulate matter (DPM) emissions would be emitted from heavy equipment from the combustion of diesel fuel. Mobile source emissions would result from the use of on-road construction vehicles. Emissions from construction trucks and heavy equipment were calculated using the USEPA-approved California Emissions Estimator Model, Version 2020.4.0 (CalEEMod). Emissions were estimated assuming that construction would begin in June 2024 and continue for approximately one year. CalEEMod emissions results are summarized below and included in **Appendix E**.

Operation Analysis

Annual operation emissions for Alternative A were calculated using CalEEMod. **Appendix E** includes the assumptions and inputs incorporated into CalEEMod. CalEEMod default values were used in most cases.

Hazardous Air Pollutants

Construction activities would result in short-term emissions of DPM from off-road heavy-duty diesel equipment exhaust and diesel-fueled haul trucks. Construction-related HAP emissions are addressed within the construction emissions discussion below.

Operational HAPs are primarily associated with manufacturing sites, dry cleaners, autobody shops and industrial land uses. Alternative A does not include any facilities that would emit substantial sources of HAPs; accordingly, no further analysis of operational HAP emissions is provided.

Federal General Conformity

Conformity regulations apply to federal actions that would cause emissions of CAPs above certain levels to occur in locations designated as nonattainment or maintenance areas for the emitted pollutants. As discussed in **Section 3.4.2**, the Project Site is located in an area that is nonattainment for ozone, maintenance for CO, and attainment or unclassifiable for all other pollutants. If project emissions are equal to or exceed applicable levels for any CAP provided in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §93.153 (b)(1) and (2), then a federal general conformity determination analysis would be required. Stationary sources are exempt under conformity regulations and therefore not subject to de minimis levels. The requirement for a conformity determination for Alternative A is discussed below.

Federal Class I Areas

The CAA designates international parks, national wilderness areas, and memorial parks larger than 5,000 acres and national parks larger than 6,000 acres as "Class I areas." If a development alternative emits greater than the prevention of significant (PSD) threshold of 250 tons per year (tpy) of any one CAP from stationary sources during construction or operation, a best available control technology analysis would be conducted. The nearest Class I area is Agua Tibia Wilderness, approximately 40 miles from the Project Site.

Tribal New Source Review

New Source Review (NSR) is a preconstruction permitting program for stationary sources under the CAA. Alternative A does not include any stationary sources subject to NSR permitting requirements.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Construction

Construction of the proposed facilities would result in the temporary generation of emissions resulting from excavation, grading, material hauling, and worker trips. Fugitive dust, the dominant source of PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ emissions, is generated when vehicles and equipment disturb soil and other friable materials. Uncontrolled dust from construction can become a nuisance and potential health hazard to those living and working nearby. Off-road construction equipment is often diesel-powered and can be a substantial source of NOx emissions, in addition to PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ emissions. Painting, worker commute trips, asphalt paving are dominant sources of ROG emissions. Such air quality effects generally would be temporary and localized. Construction emissions were estimated using CalEEMod. The detailed output CalEEMod files generated for this analysis are included in **Appendix E**. The estimated construction emissions are summarized in **Table 3.4-3**.

As shown in **Table 3.4-3**, emissions of individual criteria pollutants from the construction of Alternative A would not exceed applicable de minimis levels; therefore, a conformity determination is not required for these pollutants during construction. Construction emissions would be reduced with implementation of construction BMPs described in **Section 2.1.6**. Implementation of construction BMPs is expected to control the production of fugitive dust (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) and to reduce emissions of criteria pollutants and DPM.

Table 3.4-3: Estimated Construction Emissions (Tons per Year)

Construction Year	VOC	NOx	CO	SO_2	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$
2024	0.1	1.0	1.1	0.002	0.09	0.05
2025	0.1	0.7	0.8	0.002	0.05	0.03
Maximum Year Emissions	**0.1**	**1.0**	**1.1**	**0.002**	**0.09**	**0.05**
De minimis Level	25	25	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exceed Level?	No	No	No	No	No	No

Notes: N/A = Not Applicable. *De minimis* levels are only applicable for projects in nonattainment and maintenance areas.
Source: **Appendix E**

This would reduce the overall quantity of these emissions and dust that could disperse off-site and negatively affect neighboring areas. Additionally, emissions of criteria air pollutants would not exceed criteria identified in the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance Air Quality (San Diego County, 2007) as shown in **Appendices D** and **E**. Construction-related HAP emissions would be limited to DPM from diesel-powered equipment. This equipment would be operated intermittently over the construction period. The construction would occur over an area of approximately 4 acres rather than being concentrated in one area. The construction area would be at least 100 feet from the nearest offsite residence and most construction would occur at far greater distances. This distance would allow for the dispersal of the minor amounts of DPM emissions. Due to the minor amount of associated $PM_{2.5}$ emissions shown in **Table 3.4-3**, the short duration of construction and dispersal of DPM emissions, construction-related HAP emissions would not pose a health risk to nearby residents. Construction of Alternative A would not result in significant effects to regional air quality.

Operation

Air quality effects associated with the operation of Alternative A would include emissions from vehicle traffic and area sources (e.g., landscape equipment). The detailed output CalEEMod files generated for this analysis are included in **Appendix E**. The estimated operational emissions are summarized in **Table 3.4-4**.

Table 3.4-4: Operational Emissions of Criteria Pollutants (Tons per Year)

Source	VOC	NOx	CO	SO_2	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$
Maximum Emissions	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.002	0.1	0.04
De minimis Levels	25	25	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exceed Level?	No	No	No	N/A	No	No

Notes: N/A = Not Applicable. *De minimis* levels are only applicable for projects in nonattainment and maintenance areas.
Source: **Appendix E**

As shown in **Table 3.4-4**, emissions of individual criteria pollutants from the operation of Alternative A would not exceed applicable de minimis levels; therefore, a conformity determination is not required for these pollutants during operation. Additionally, operational emissions of criteria air pollutants would not exceed thresholds of significance identified in the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance Air Quality. Operational emissions would be reduced with implementation of BMPs described in **Section 2.1.6**, including the use of energy and water saving appliances. Alternative A does not include any land uses that would generate odors or HAP emissions. Air quality impacts from operation of Alternative A would be less than significant.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, the Project Site would remain as it is and the construction or operational air quality impacts identified for Alternative A would not occur.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

Criteria Air Pollutants

Reasonably foreseeable development in the region will include land and roadway development necessary to accommodate the County's planned growth for this area. Such development will increase the potential for air quality impacts. Reasonably foreseeable air quality impacts will occur if projects in the region cause exceedances of the State or National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Alternative A would not result in significant contributions to these potential impacts. Operation of Alternative A would result in the generation of mobile emissions from vehicles trips and area source emissions (e.g., landscape equipment). The analysis in **Section 3.4.3** specifically addresses potential future emissions of criteria pollutants. Emissions of all criteria pollutants are below de minimis levels and therefore are considered to be less than significant. Additionally, emissions of criteria air pollutants would not exceed criteria identified in the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance Air Quality. In the coming decades, operational emissions are expected to decrease due to improved fuel efficiency technology and stricter federal and State regulations. Additionally, operational emissions would be reduced with implementation of BMPs described in **Section 2.1.6,** including compliance with applicable building standards, and use of energy and water saving appliances. Reasonably foreseeable air quality effects from operation of Alternative A would be less than significant.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Development of Alternative A would result in an increase in GHG emissions from construction, mobile sources (trips generated), and area sources, and indirect sources related to energy production. GHG emissions were calculated using CalEEMod and estimates for Alternative A are included in **Table 3.4-5**. Operational GHG emissions for the opening year 2025 are estimated to be approximately 138 metric tons (MT) CO_2e.

Table 3.4-5: Project-Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Emission Source	Alternative A MT of CO2e/year
Construction (Total)	
Construction	333
Operation (Annual)	
Area	5
Energy	26
Mobile	93
Stationary	1
Solid Waste	8
Water/Wastewater	5
Operation Total	138

Notes: CO2e = carbon dioxide equivalent; MT = metric tons
Source: **Appendix E**

As shown in **Table 3.4.5**, approximately 67 percent of the operational GHG emissions would come from indirect mobile emissions from vehicle trips. Fuel efficiency regulations have been enacted that will reduce GHG emissions from mobile sources over time. These include increasing fuel efficiency of vehicles and providing incentives for transitioning to electric vehicles. The Proposed Project would likely result in an additional decrease in vehicle miles traveled by locating tribal facilities and housing on the Project Site, an area served by utilities and with access to essential services, including grocery stores, schools and health care facilities. The Tribe will reduce project-related GHG emissions through project design and BMPs listed in **Table 2.1-1**.

Construction BMPs include minimization of equipment idling, and proper maintenance of construction equipment. Operational BMPs would reduce indirect GHG emissions from compliance with applicable building standards, including provision of electrical vehicle charging infrastructure, use of energy and water efficient fixtures, and proper maintenance of equipment. With the implementation of BMPs, Alternative A would not result in a significant adverse cumulative impact associated with GHG emissions.

3.5 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

3.5.1 Biological Resources

The regulatory setting concerning biological resources is summarized in **Table 3.5-1**, and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D**.

Table 3.5-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Biological Resources

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA)	▪ Protects federally listed wildlife and their habitat from take. ▪ Requires consultation under Section 7 of the FESA for federal agencies and tribes if project activities may affect a listed species or its critical habitat, including if take of a listed species is necessary to complete an otherwise lawful activity. ▪ Defines Critical Habitat as specific geographic areas within a listed species range that contain features considered essential for the conservation of the listed species.
Magnuson Stevens Act and Sustainable Fisheries Act	▪ Governs marine fisheries management in U.S. federal waters. ▪ Establishes requirements for fishery management councils to identify and describe Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern to protect, conserve, and enhance habitat for the benefit of fisheries. ▪ Defines EFH as those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity. ▪ Establishes a federal EFH consultation process that advises federal agencies to avoid, minimize, mitigate, or otherwise offset adverse effects on EFH.
Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)	▪ Protects migratory birds and requires project-related disturbances to be reduced or eliminated during the nesting season (generally February 1 through August 30).
Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act	▪ Prohibits take, possession, and commerce of bald and golden eagles and associated parts, feathers, nests, or eggs with limited exceptions.
Clean Water Act (CWA) (Sections 404 and 401)	▪ Defines Wetlands and Waters of the United States subject to jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and/or the State. ▪ Guides the permitting and mitigation of filling or dredging of Waters of the U.S. under the authority of Section 404 of the CWA by USACE or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

Regulation	Description
State and Local	
California Endangered Species Act (CESA)	▪ Provisions protect species of wildlife designated by the California Fish and Game Commission as endangered, threatened, or candidate species and their habitat from take.
California Fish and Game Code	▪ Prohibits take of a species listed under the CESA or otherwise special status, such as fully protected species. ▪ Allows the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to issue an incidental take permit for a State-listed species if specific criteria outlined in Title 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) § 783.4(a), (b) and CDFW Code Section 2081(b) are met.
Native Plant Protection Act of 1977	▪ Administered by CDFW. ▪ Designates special-status plant species and provides protection measures for identified populations.
San Diego County General Plan	▪ Identifies goals and policies related to biological resources ▪ Identifies habitat conservation planning areas
San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Plan	▪ Identifies sensitive species and habitats within the planning area ▪ Demarcates subarea planning areas ▪ Allows for a more streamlined permitting process for impacts to species/habitats with CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

3.5.2 Environmental Setting

Methodology

Consulting biologist Dr. Geo Graening (Acorn Environmental) conducted a biological field assessment of the Project Site on September 6, 2023. Survey methodology is described in detail in Section 2 of **Appendix F-1**. The survey consisted of evaluating biological communities and documenting potential habitat for special-status species with the potential to occur within the Project Site. A portion of the Project Site was historically surveyed by biologist Erin Robbins (Mooney and Associates), who conducted a biological resources survey of APN 4040802600 parcel on March 6, 2001. A Biological Assessment was prepared for the Project Site to facilitate consultation with the USFWS pursuant to Section 7 of the FESA and is included as **Appendix F-1**. The following information was utilized in this analysis and in determining the environmental setting of the Project Site, as cited in **Appendix F-1**:

- The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB)(Figure 6 of **Appendix F-1**; CDFW, 2023)
- A query of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) database *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California* (online edition) (**Appendix F-2**)
- USFWS species list (Attachment A of **Appendix F-1**)
- Aerial photography of the Project Site
- Previously conducted biological resources studies pertaining to the western portion of the Project Site, including a 2001 Biological Assessment and 2002 Biological Opinion (FWS-SDG-1718.4) for a previously proposed project involving a health clinic that was never constructed (included as Attachment B of **Appendix F-1**)
- USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) of the Project Site and vicinity (Figure 7 of **Appendix A**)

The Biological Assessment was submitted to USFWS and the BIA received concurrence on its findings from the USFWS on September 11, 2024 (**Appendix F-4**).

Habitats

The following terrestrial vegetation communities and aquatic features occur in the Project Site:

- Mixed chaparral/ montane scrub
- Coast live oak riparian
- Pasture
- Ruderal/developed
- Willow scrub
- Perennial channel (Viejas Creek), intermittent channel (tributary to Viejas Creek), and ephemeral channels
- Wetlands associated with Viejas Creek

Habitats are shown on Figure 8 of **Appendix A** and a detailed description of each habitat type is provided in Section 3.4 and 3.5 of **Appendix F-1**.

Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.

Aquatic features on the Project Site include Viejas Creek, an intermittent channel tributary to Viejas Creek, wetlands adjacent to Viejas Creek, and ephemeral channels. These features have the potential to be considered waters of the U.S.

Federally-listed Species

A list of animals observed during the survey is provided in Section 3.2 of **Appendix F-1**, and a list of plants observed is included as Attachment C of **Appendix F-1**. The following species were returned on the USFWS species list as species with the potential to occur in the vicinity of the Project Site (Attachment A of **Appendix F-1**):

- San Diego thornmint (*Acanthomintha ilicifolia*) Threatened
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica* Threatened
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) Endangered
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) Endangered
- Arroyo (=arroyo Southwestern) toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) Endangered
- Hermes copper butterfly (*Lycaena hermes*) Threatened
- Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) Candidate
- Southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*) Proposed Threatened
- Western Spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) Proposed Threatened

A detailed account of each species is provided in Section 4 of **Appendix F-1**. No federally-listed species were observed during the survey.

State-Listed Species

Although state-listed (including candidate species) species are not afforded formal protection on trust land, a query of CNDDB (5-mile radius from the Project Site; CDFW, 2023) and the CNPS Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (Viejas quadrangle) was performed (**Appendix F-2**). The following state-listed species were evaluated and found to have potential to occur within the development area (**Appendix F-1**, **Appendix F-2**, and **Appendix F-3**):

- San Diego milk vetch (*Astragalus oocarpus*), California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) 1B.2: the mixed chaparral/montane scrub is suitable for this species.
- Lakeside ceanothus (*Ceanothus cyaneus*), CRPR 1B.2: the mixed chaparral/montane scrub is suitable for this species.
- Delicate clarkia (*Clarkia delicata*), CRPR 1B.2: the mixed chaparral/montane scrub is suitable for this species.
- Sticky geraea (*Geraea viscida*), CRPR 2B.2: the mixed chaparral/montane scrub is suitable for this species.
- Moreno currant (*Ribes canthariforme*), CRPR 1B.3: the mixed chaparral/montane scrub is suitable for this species.
- Red-diamond rattlesnake (*Crotalus ruber*), California Species of Special Concern: Suitable habitat is present where rocky outcrop areas overlap with the mixed chaparral/montane scrub.

None of these species were observed during the site visit.

Critical Habitat, EFH, and HCPs

There are no Essential Fish Habitat or Habitat Conservation Plans that overlap with the Project Site. However, the Project Site is located within the designated critical habitat of Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*). Specifically, the Project Site is within Critical Habitat Map Unit 18, which includes the Sweetwater River, Peterson Canyon, and adjacent uplands. Additionally, the Project Site falls within the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Plan area. However, the sub-plan for the area that encompasses the Project Site has not yet been developed. Although a subarea plan has not been formally adopted for this area, it still falls within the scope of the overall MSCP. The Project Site does not fall within a conservation area and does not include actions that would conflict with the County's implementation of the plan.

3.5.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

Impacts on biological resources would be significant if construction or operation would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on species with special status under the FESA;
- Have a substantial adverse effect on habitat necessary for the future survival of such species, including areas designated as critical habitat by the USFWS and areas designated as EFH by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS);
- Result in a take of migratory bird species as defined by the MBTA;
- Result in take of bald or golden eagles as defined under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act; and/or
- Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the CWA through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Habitats

Alternative A would result in the following habitat impacts, as shown on Figure 8 of **Appendix A**:

- 1.2 acres of ruderal/developed

- 0.8 acres of pasture
- 2.6 acres of mixed chaparral/montane scrub

Viejas Creek and its associated wetland and riparian habitat are the most sensitive biological features within the Project Site. These features have been wholly avoided with a buffer and would be maintained in their natural state within a conservation area. Ruderal/developed habitats include areas that have been modified from their natural state and are subject to ongoing development, disturbance, vegetation management, or other activities that limit the value of habitat to wildlife. These areas include existing structures, paving, access drives, and landscaping. Similarly, pastureland has been modified from its natural condition through livestock grazing, vegetation management, and ongoing human disturbance. Mixed chaparral/montane scrub is present largely within the eastern portion of the Project Site. These habitat types are not considered sensitive or of a limited distribution and are not afforded formal protection. Additionally, although not sensitive, Alternative A would avoid approximately 86.1 percent of mixed chaparral/montane scrub habitat on the Project Site. Operation of Alternative A would not involve activities that would result in ongoing conversion of habitat, nor would operation of Alternative A involve storage of acutely hazardous materials, production of sever vibrations, or other activities that could affect habitat. Therefore, impacts to sensitive habitats would not occur.

Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.

Construction of Alternative A would not involve direct impacts to aquatic habitats and would not result in filling, excavation, re-routing, or other impacts to features with the potential to be considered waters of the U.S. Alternative A proposes to establish a 4.58-acre conservation area along Viejas Creek, which would ensure the long-term protection of this resource. Indirect impacts from potential discharge of pollutants to surface waters during construction are addressed in **Section 3.3.** With adherence to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permitting program and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan/BMPs (**Table 2-1**), indirect impacts to wetlands/waters of the U.S. from construction activities would be less than significant.

As discussed in **Section 3.3**, the Tribe would apply for coverage under the USEPA Construction General Permit, which would minimize potential indirect impacts to aquatic resources that could occur during construction. In conjunction, a SWPPP and a Spill Response Plan would be implemented during construction to avoid or minimize the potential for erosion, sedimentation, or accidental release of hazardous materials. The SWPPP would remain in effect throughout construction. Operation of Alternative A does not include activities that would result in conversion of aquatic habitat, nor would operation of Alternative A indirectly endanger aquatic resources. There would be a less-than-significant impact.

Federally-Listed Species

As discussed in **Section 2.1.2** (under heading of Conservation Area), a Biological Assessment and Biological Opinion were previously prepared for the western portion of the Project Site (the Walker Parcel) for a previously proposed project involving a health clinic that was never constructed. These documents determined that the Walker Parcel within the Project Site lacked suitable habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher, Least Bell's vireo, and southwestern willow flycatcher. The 2023 survey confirmed that habitat for these species is lacking throughout the Project Site. Therefore, Alternative A would have no effect on these species (see Section 5 of **Appendix F-1**).

Since completion of the 2002 Biological Opinion, three new federally-listed species have been identified with potential to occur in the vicinity of the Project Site: San Diego thornmint, Hermes copper butterfly, and Monarch butterfly. However, it is extremely unlikely that these species would occur on the Project Site as the Project Site lacks the requisite habitat for these species. Therefore, as discussed in **Appendix F-1**, it was determined that Alternative A would have no effect on these species. In addition, since the 2002 Biological Opinion, two new Proposed Threatened species were identified in **Appendix F-1** with potential to occur on the Project Site: western spadefoot toad and southwestern pond turtle. Potential impacts to these species were assessed concurrently with USFWS consultation for impacts to Arroyo toad, summarized below. It was determined that potential impacts to these species would be similar to impacts to Arroyo toad and that measures protective of Arroyo toad would be protective to southwestern pond turtle and western spadefoot toad. These measures are included in **Section 4**. These measures were included within the Biological Assessment, which determined that the Proposed Project may affect but is unlikely to adversely affect southwestern pond turtle and western spadefoot toad. On September 11, 2024, the USFWS concurred with this determination (**Appendix F-4**).

Based on the prior Biological Opinion, the USFWS previously determined that Arroyo toad may occur within Viejas Creek and the intermittent channel on the Project Site. The 2023 survey confirmed these habitats unchanged since the Biological Opinion but did note that this habitat was degraded from past and ongoing use, including grazing (**Appendix F-1**). Consistent with the 2002 Biological Opinion, the Tribe entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the USFWS identifying an Arroyo toad conservation area (USFWS, 2002). The Tribe adopted a Tribal Ordinance setting aside a conservation area in perpetuity that captures the totality of Viejas Creek crossing the Project Site as well as the immediately adjacent suitable upland habitat (Figure 4 of **Appendix A**). The proposed development under Alternative A would be set back from the areas previously identified by USFWS as the uppermost bounds of suitable upland habitat for Arroyo toad. Although suitable habitat for Arroyo toad would not be directly impacted, there is potential for construction of Alternative A to degrade Arroyo toad habitat should an accidental hazardous materials spill occur or should degraded runoff escape into suitable habitat. This is a potentially significant impact. Therefore, impact avoidance measures identified in the prior Biological Opinion would be applicable to Alternative A and have been included in **Section 4**. These include measures such as designating construction staging areas away from surface waters, establishing silt fencing around areas of active ground disturbance, and having a biologist monitor initial ground clearing (**Section 4**). These measures were included within the Biological Assessment, which determined that the Proposed Project may affect but is unlikely to adversely affect Arroyo toad. On September 11, 2024 USFWS concurred with this determination (**Appendix F-4**). Therefore, with consideration of mitigation in **Section 4**, construction impacts to special-status species would be less than significant.

Operation of Alternative A would not directly convert habitat for special-status species. However, Alternative A would include external light, which could degrade adjacent habitat if allowed to overspill the developed area. This includes habitat suitable for Arroyo toad. Mitigation in **Section 4** would require that exterior lighting be designed to be downcast and would require use of motion-sensing systems as allowed by site security and safety. With inclusion of mitigation in **Section 4**, operational impacts to special-status species would be less than significant.

State-Listed Species

State species are generally not afforded formal protection on land in federal trust. However, it is noted that there are five state-protected plants that have the potential to occur within the development area. These plants are CRPR ranked List 1 or 2, however, they are not listed under the California Endangered Species Act and are not afforded specific legal protections, even outside of trust land.

Additionally, these species have potential to occur within the mixed chaparral/montane scrub, and Alternative A would avoid 86.1 percent of mixed chaparral/montane scrub habitat on the Project Site. Therefore, even though these species would not be afforded protection after the land is taken into trust, the vast majority of suitable habitat for these species would not be impacted. State-protected animals with the potential to occur on the development area are limited to red-diamond rattlesnake, which may occur in the mixed chaparral/ montane scrub, specifically in the rocky outcropped areas. As shown in Figure 8 of **Appendix A** impacts to chaparral habitat overlapping rocky outcrops are limited to small portions of the access drive that largely follow existing roadways. Therefore, habitat for this species is avoided through project design.

Mitigation in **Section 4** protective of Arroyo toad related to indirect lighting impacts would also be generally protective of wildlife that may occur outside of the development area, such as bird species protected under the MBTA and birds protected under state regulations. Pre-construction nesting bird surveys are discussed below and included as mitigation in **Section 4**. This measure would reduce potential impacts to State-protected bird species.

Nesting Migratory Birds and Raptors

Trees, shrubs, and structures within the Project Site may provide suitable nesting habitat for migratory birds. Suitable nesting habitat for bald and golden eagles does not occur within the Project Site. If construction activities are conducted during the general nesting season (February 15 – September 1), potentially occurring nesting birds could be directly impacted by earthmoving activities and indirectly impacted by noise and other construction-related disturbance. Should construction commence within the general nesting season, these impacts would be potentially significant. Pre-construction nesting bird surveys are included as mitigation in **Section 4**, which would reduce potential impacts to nesting migratory birds. Additionally, BMPs listed in **Section 2.1.6** include the use of downcast lighting and avoidance of lighting that would overspill the impact area, which would reduce light and glare impacts on birds. There would be a less-than-significant impact with mitigation.

Critical Habitat, EFH, and HCPs

As discussed above, there are no EFH or HCPs that overlap with the Project Site. Although the Project Site falls within the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Plan, the sub-plan intended to cover the area encompassing the Project Site has not yet been developed. The goal of the sub-plan will be to streamline the permitting process for developments within the planning area. The Tribe is coordinating consultation directly with the USFWS separate from this Plan, and state permitting would not apply to the Project Site after taken in to trust. Although state permitting would not be required, it is noted that state-listed species that would require permitting for impacts would not be impacted, as discussed above. Therefore, impacts to EFH and HCPs would not occur. However, the Project Site is within designated critical habitat for Arroyo toad. In accordance with the 2002 Biological Opinion described above, the Tribe already entered into a MOA with USFWS to set aside a permanent conservation area for Arroyo toad (USFWS, 2002). Given the passage of time and changes to the project since issuance of the 2002 Biological Opinion, the BIA initiated consultation with USFWS regarding the potential effects of Alternative A on critical habitat and federally listed species. On September 11, 2024, the USFWS concurred that Alternative A is not likely to adversely affect federally listed species or critical habitat with consideration of conservation measures contained within the letter of concurrence, which were based upon measures required by the 2002 Biological Opinion (**Appendix F-4**). These conservation measures are provided as mitigation measures in **Section 4**. With the implementation of mitigation, impacts to critical habitat would be less than significant.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, no development would occur within the Project Site. As such, there would be no significant impacts to biological resources in the vicinity of the Project Site.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

Alternative A would avoid sensitive habitats and aquatic resources and therefore would not contribute to impacts to these resources. Further, as described in **Section 2.1.6**, BMPs would include measures to prevent the spread of noxious weeds and thus would not cumulatively contribute to indirect cumulative impacts related to habitat degradation from introduction of invasive vegetation. Potential impacts to nesting birds would be avoided through implementation of mitigation in **Section 4**, therefore, Alternative A would not contribute to reasonably foreseeable impacts to nesting birds. Stormwater runoff during construction would be regulated by a project-specific SWPPP and would serve to protect the quality of runoff that exits the Project Site. Future projects disturbing more than one acre of land would also be required to obtain and adhere to a SWPPP.

Although state-protected species would not be afforded formal protection on the Project Site once taken into trust, state-protected birds would not be impacted with implementation of the nesting bird survey identified in **Section 4**. Similarly, bat roost habitats would not be impacted, and indirect impacts would not occur with mitigation identified in **Section 4**. Therefore, Alternative A would not generate reasonably foreseeable impacts to state-protected species. With the exception of Arroyo toad, no federally-listed species would be impacted by Alternative A. Consultation with the USFWS pursuant to Section 7 of the FESA has been completed and agreed upon conservation measures to reduce potential impacts to federally listed species have been incorporated as mitigation measures within **Section 4** (see also **Appendix F-4**). With implementation of mitigation, Alternative A would not contribute to reasonably foreseeable effects to federally listed species and habitat.

3.6 CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

A Cultural Resources Investigation Report and Addendum were prepared for the Project Site in 2023 and 2025, respectively, by Natural Investigations Company and are on file with the BIA Pacific Region (confidential **Appendix G**). The Project Site represents the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The investigation included a records search conducted by the South Coastal Information Center at San Diego State University, a Sacred Lands File (SLF) search conducted by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), geoarchaeological sensitivity analyses, and pedestrian surveys of the APE. Key information from the Cultural Resources Reports is summarized below.

3.6.1 Regulatory Setting

The cultural resources regulatory setting information is summarized in **Table 3.6-**, and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D.**

Table 3.6-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Cultural and Paleontological Resources

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Section 106 of the National Historic	▪ Requires that federal agencies must identify cultural resources that may be affected by actions involving federal lands, funds, or permitting actions.

Regulation	Description
Preservation Act (NHPA)	▪ The significance of the resources must be evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. ▪ If an NRHP-eligible resource would be adversely affected, measures to resolve adverse effects must be taken.
Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act	▪ Includes provisions governing the repatriation of Native American remains and cultural items under the control of federal agencies and institutions that receive federal funding ("museums"), as well as establishes a process to address Native American human remains on federal or tribal lands.
Archaeological Resources Protection Act	▪ Establishes that archaeological resources and sites on public and Indian lands are protected resources. ▪ Establishes a permit process for archaeological excavation on federal and Indian lands, a process for prosecuting cases of damage and removal of archaeological resources as well as trafficking artifacts.
Paleontological Resources Preservation Act	▪ Establishes that paleontological resources on federal land are protected resources.
State and Local	
San Diego County General Plan	▪ Establishes the County's goals and policies related to cultural resources. ▪ Establishes the County's goals and policies related to paleontological resources.

3.6.2 Environmental Setting

There are three broad prehistorical periods defined within San Diego County: Paleoindian [12,000 to 8,000 Before Present (B.P.)], Archaic (8,000 to 2,000 B.P.), and Late Prehistoric (2,000 B.P. to Historic). Prior to European contact in the late 1700s, the Kumeyaay occupied an area reaching from the Pacific Coast in southern San Diego County, south into Baja California, and east into the Imperial Valley. Euroamerican settlement of the Kumeyaay territory had a dramatic effect on Kumeyaay culture. The Kumeyaay population was approximately 30,000 individuals at the establishment of the San Diego Mission in 1769 and declined to approximately 3,000 by the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848.

The Cuyapaipe (Ewiiaapaayp) Indian Reservation was established in 1891 following an Executive Order and Act of Congress, the Mission Indian Relief Act. The Ewiiaapaayp Band's tribal members govern themselves under a tribal constitution enacted and approved in 1973 and amended in 2002. Today, the Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians is a federally recognized Indian tribe, possessing sovereign powers by virtue of such recognition. The Project Site is located within the Tribe's ancestral territory and contiguous to land held in federal trust for the Tribe, separated only by roadways and rights-of-way. The Tribe purchased the property from a private landowner that previously utilized the site for grazing of livestock and occupied a rural residence on site. Associated infrastructure, including a garage, a barn, and utilities are present on site. Additional information regarding the cultural setting and history associated with the Project Site is available in **Appendix G**.

Records Search and Field Surveys

Searches of the California Historical Resources Information Center (CHRIS) at the South Coastal Information Center (SCIC) were conducted on August 30, 2016 and September 14, 2023 for the Project Site. The records searches identified six previous cultural resource studies that have occurred on the Project Site and 10 additional studies within a half mile of the Project Site.

These studies identified six cultural resources within the Project Site and 30 previously recorded cultural resources within a half mile of the Project Site. The cultural resources report (**Appendix G**) summarizes the results of the following surveys:

- A survey completed on September 8 and 9, 2016 by archaeologist Charlane Gross, MA, RPA on the Salerno parcel.
- A survey completed on April 9, 2018 by archaeologist Charlane Gross, M.A., RPA on the Walker 2 parcel.
- A survey completed on September 28, 2023 by archeologist Natalie Marshall, BA on the Walker parcel.
- A survey completed on May 30, 2025 by archeologist Dylan Stapleton, MA, RPA to document existing structures on the Walker 2 parcel (**Appendix G-1**).

The archaeological surveys consisted of pedestrian surveys of the entire Project Site via walking meandering transects of the Project Site. Identified resources are discussed in detail in **Appendices G** and **G-1**. Several potentially historic features were identified. Cultural resources investigations identified six sites within the Project Site, further discussed below. The most recent surveys (2023 and 2025) did not identify any indication of buried deposits of cultural resources.

Salerno Parcel A

Sites P-37-024186, P-37-024187, P-37-024188, and P-37-024189 have been recorded within the Salerno parcel (**Appendix G**). The Salerno parcel is disturbed by roads, utilities, mowing, and mulching. Surveys in 2017 did not relocate site P-37-024186, a milling slick, or P-37-024187, three flakes, or P-37-024188, two flakes and a mano fragment, or P-37-024189, three flakes. Because these sites were not relocated and because of the nature of their constituents, it is assumed that they are not eligible for the NRHP. No new cultural resources were identified in the Salerno parcel during the more recent surveys.

Walker 2 Parcel

Site P-37-024245 (milling features and artifacts) was recorded within the Walker 2 parcel in 2002 (**Appendix G**). The Walker 2 parcel is disturbed by roads, utilities, and buildings. The most recent surveys relocated the site and determined that it is unchanged since identified in 2002. Site P-37-024245 was previously determined not eligible for the NRHP. A follow-up survey of the Walker 2 parcel was conducted in 2025 to document three existing structures and update site records for P-37-24245 and P-37-030232 (**Appendix G-1**). Two structures, the residence and garage, were determined to have been constructed between 1979 and 1985 based on aerial imagery and determined ineligible as a historic resource due to age (maximum potential age of 46 years). A third structure, a barn, was also documented. This structure first appears on a 1954 aerial but did not meet the criteria for inclusion on the NRHP (**Appendix G-1**). Subsurface testing took place at P-37-024245, which resulted in the determination that the site is not eligible for the NRHP (**Appendix G-1**). The survey did not alter the previous recommendations of *No Historic Properties Affected*.

Walker Parcel

The Walker parcel is disturbed by roads, utilities, and buildings. Site P-37-024245 (milling features and artifacts) and P-37-040581 (Jackass Mail Trail) were recorded within the Walker parcel in 2002 and 2023, respectively (**Appendix G**). The San Antonio to San Diego Mail Line, a portion of which crosses the Project Site (P-37-040581 - Jackass Mail Trail), seems to have made use of existing trails.

The most recent survey relocated site P-37-024245 within the Walker Parcel and confirmed that it is unchanged (discussed above under the Walker 2 parcel). Available historical documentation does not provide a physical description of the trail itself, and it likely has shifted during its use. The location of site P-37-040581 was only ever recorded based on historic maps, not surveys, and could not be verified as actually historically crossing the Project Site. However, an approximately 6-foot-wide road maintained and used regularly as a vehicle access drive was observed in the approximate location of Jackass Mail Trail. It is unclear if the access drive opportunistically followed Jackass Mail Trail or if its location is coincidental and the historical alignment occurred elsewhere on the Project Site or entirely off the Project Site. Even if it is assumed that Jackass Mail Trail did cross the Project Site and does follow the present-day access drive, this segment was found to lack integrity of design, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association. Thus, it was determined this portion of Jackass Mail Trail is not a contributing element to the potential NRHP eligibility of the overall site and does not meet any of the eligibility criteria at 36 CFR 60.4 for inclusion on the NRHP (**Appendix G**). The most recent survey did not identify a new site but did locate an isolated mano (recorded on appropriate site record forms), which is not eligible for the NRHP.

Native American Consultation

Two Sacred Lands File searches were conducted by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) and no sacred lands were identified at the time of the requests in 2016 and 2023. The NAHC supplied a list of Native American individuals and groups who may have additional information about cultural resources in the vicinity of the Project Site. These individuals and groups were contacted and a reply was received from Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians, who stated that cultural resources have been located within or adjacent to the Project Site and a cultural monitor should be present during ground disturbing activities.

Paleontological Resources

The University of California Museum of Paleontology (UCMP) specimen database was reviewed for paleontological discoveries within the bounds of the Project Site and none were reported (UCMP, 2023). Shells and/or hard coverings of marine invertebrates (e.g., corals, mollusks, crustaceans, and echinoderms) are the majority of fossils located in San Diego County, although some skeletal remains of terrestrial vertebrates (e.g., reptiles, birds, mammals) have been identified (San Diego County, 2011). Paleontological resources are most often found in sedimentary strata of the County, which primarily underlies the coastal plain, the desert and some mountain valleys. The vicinity of the Project Site is underlain primarily by plutonic igneous rocks, not sedimentary rocks, and “fossil occurrences in the Peninsular Ranges Region are extremely rare” (San Diego County, 2011).

3.6.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

A significant effect would occur if the implementation of an alternative resulted in physical destruction, alteration, removal, or change in characteristics or reduction of integrity of historic features of a cultural resource. A significant effect to paleontological resources would occur if an alternative resulted in damage or destruction of fossils that provide significant nonrenewable taxonomic, phylogenic, ecologic, or stratigraphic information.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Cultural Resources

Several sites have been identified within the Project Site, however, as described in **Section 3.6.2**, none possess the values that would make them eligible for listing on the NRHP; therefore, no historic properties would be impacted as a result of Alternative A.

The Project Site primarily contains tertiary volcanic rocks and Fallbrook series soils (**Appendix G**). These soils are alfisols that typically lack organic materials and date to the late Pleistocene (22,000-11,500 years ago). These geologic formations and soils predate human occupation of the project area. Consequently, the potential for the presence of intact buried archaeological deposits within the Project Site is low. However, there is the unlikely possibility that previously unknown cultural resources could be encountered during ground disturbing activities on the Project Site.

The NAHC supplied a list of Native American individuals and groups who may have additional information about cultural resources in the vicinity of the Project Site. These individuals and groups were contacted and a reply was received from Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians, who stated that cultural resources have been located within or adjacent to the Project Site and a cultural monitor should be present during ground disturbing activities. Accordingly, mitigation measures are presented in **Section 4** for the treatment of unanticipated archaeological discoveries. With implementation of this mitigation measure, Alternative A would not result in significant adverse impacts to unknown archaeological resources.

Paleontological Resources

No paleontological resources have been reported or observed on or in the vicinity of the Project Site. Therefore, Alternative A would not result in significant adverse impacts to known paleontological resources. Although the possibility is low, previously unknown paleontological resources could be discovered during earth-moving activities. Mitigation measures are presented in **Section 4** for the treatment of unanticipated paleontological discoveries which would ensure that Alternative A would not result in significant adverse impacts to previously unknown paleontological resources.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, no development would occur within the Project Site. As such, there would be no significant impacts to cultural and paleontological resources.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

Reasonably foreseeable impacts to resources typically occur when sites that contain cultural features or artifacts or paleontological resources are disturbed by development. As these resources are destroyed or displaced, important information is lost and connections to past events, people and culture is diminished. Although Alternative A has the potential to impact previously undiscovered cultural and paleontological resources, mitigation measures in **Section 4** would ensure impacts would be less than significant. Any future development projects in the area would be required to follow federal, state, and local regulations, as applicable, regarding cultural and paleontological resources and inadvertent discoveries of these resources, requiring mitigation or avoidance. Therefore, implementation of Alternative A would not contribute to reasonably foreseeable environmental effects on cultural resources.

3.7 SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

3.7.1 Regulatory Setting

There are no relevant laws and regulations associated with the socioeconomic regulatory setting.

3.7.2 Environmental Setting

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Alpine and San Diego County

The Project Site is located immediately east of Alpine, a census-designated place in unincorporated San Diego County. In 2020, the population of Alpine was 15,559 and the population of San Diego County was 3,298,634 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Alpine contains approximately 5,847 housing units and the County contains approximately 1,228,505 housing units of which approximately 6% are vacant (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023; San Diego Union Tribune, 2023). The median household income in Alpine is $109,406, compared to the median household income of the County which is $98,928.

The average household size is 3.28 in Alpine and 3.25 persons in San Diego County, meaning the median households in these jurisdictions are well above the poverty threshold of $30,000 for a 4-person household (US Census Bureau, 2023; CDPH, 2023).

Property Taxes

A total of $24,295.24 in property taxes and special assessments was due for the Project Site during 2023 (San Diego County Treasurer-Tax Collector, 2023a). In the 2022 fiscal year, the County collected $6,569,133,623 (San Diego County Treasurer-Tax Collector, 2023b).

3.7.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

An impact associated with socioeconomic conditions would be considered significant if development were to negatively affect the economy or unemployment, overburden the local housing supply, or cause an increase in crime or pathological gambling.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Socioeconomics

Alternative A includes administration, community, emergency, and residential uses, which would have limited adverse socioeconomic impacts. The proposed uses are not anticipated to have local or regional impacts on the economy, employment levels, or housing. Alternative A would result in the removal of the Project Site from the County's property tax rolls; reducing the annual property tax collected by approximately $24,295.24. This represents 0.0004% of the over $6.5 billion the County collects in taxes, and thus this impact is considered less than significant. Development of tribal administration, community and housing facilities would serve existing Tribal members in the region and would not directly or indirectly increase population or housing. Alternatives do not involve the expansion of public utilities or roadways or otherwise remove obstacles to growth.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, the Project Site would not be acquired into trust and would remain on the County's property tax rolls. No development would occur on the Project Site and the Tribe's housing and community needs would not be met.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

As described in **Section 3.7**, Alternative A would have minimal socioeconomic impacts, particularly at the regional level, and thus would not contribute significantly to any reasonably foreseeable potential effects. Effects to the Tribe would be beneficial through removal of property taxes and achieving the goals discussed in **Section 1.3**.

3.8 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

3.8.1 Regulatory Setting

The regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.8-1** and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D**.

Table 3.8-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Transportation and Circulation

Regulation	Description
Local	
San Diego County General Plan	▪ Aims to provide a balanced, multi-modal transportation system for the movement of people and goods within the unincorporated areas of the County. ▪ Includes a description of the County's transportation network, goals and policies that address the safe and efficient operation, maintenance, and management of the transportation network.

3.8.2 Environmental Setting

Transportation Networks and Intersections

The roadways surrounding the Project Site are shown on Figure 3 of **Appendix A** and include Willow Road and Alpine Boulevard. Regional access to the Project Site is provided via Interstate 8. The Project Site is locally accessible via an access driveway located on Bell Bluff Road. This roadway is not a through road and can be accessed from Alpine Boulevard that runs parallel to Interstate 8. Additional details for Willow Road and Alpine Boulevard are discussed below.

- **Willows Road**: An east to west roadway to the north of Interstate 8 and is classified in the County of San Diego Mobility Element as a 2.2E Light Collector north of the Interstate 8 westbound ramps and as a 4.1A Major Road with a raised median between the I-8 westbound ramps and Alpine Boulevard. Currently, it is constructed as a 2-lane undivided roadway with one lane in each direction. A pavement width of 24 feet is provided along with 8-foot-wide paved shoulders/bike lane/buffer. Curbside parking is prohibited. The posted speed limit is 45 mph.
- **Alpine Boulevard**: An east to west roadway to the south of Interstate 8 that is a part of Historic U.S. Route 80 and is classified in the County of San Diego Mobility Element as a 2.1D Community Collector west of West Willows Road and as a 2.1C Community Collector east of Willows Road. Currently, it is constructed as a 2-lane undivided roadway with one lane in each direction.

- A pavement width of 24-feet is provided along with 6 to 8-foot-wide paved shoulders. Curbside parking is prohibited. The posted speed limit is 55 mph.

Existing Intersection Traffic Volumes and Levels of Service

Intersections surrounding the Project Site were analyzed within the 2023 Traffic Impact Study (TIS) included as **Appendix B**. The TIS evaluated the following intersections in the vicinity of the Project Site:

- Willows Road / Interstate 8 (I-8) WB Ramps
- Willows Road / I-8 EB Ramps
- Willows Road / Alpine Boulevard

Traffic counts were collected on September 19, 2023, during the following peak times for traffic volumes:

- Weekday AM: 7am to 9am
- Weekday PM: 4pm to 6pm

Detailed traffic counts can be found in Attachment A of **Appendix B.** Traffic volumes during the peak hours for the study intersections are shown in Figure 5-2 in **Appendix B**. As noted above, detailed traffic count numbers are included in Appendix A of **Appendix B**.

Level of Service

Level of Service (LOS) is a qualitative measure reflecting the traffic operation of an intersection, with LOS A representing best performance and LOS F the worst. LOS describes the traffic conditions in terms of such factors as speed, travel time, delays, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, and safety. For unsignalized intersections, level of service is determined by the computed or measured control delay and is defined for each minor movement, and therefore it is not defined for the intersection as a whole. **Table 3.8-2** shows the corresponding average total delay per vehicle and a description of vehicular conditions at unsignalized intersections for each LOS category from A to F.

Table 3.8-2: Intersection Level of Service Descriptions

Level of Service	Description	Delay (seconds/vehicle)
A	Occurs when progression is extremely favorable and most vehicles arrive during the green phase. Most vehicles do not stop at all. Short cycle lengths may also contribute to low delay.	≤ 10.0
B	Generally occurs with good progression and/or short cycle lengths. More vehicles stop than for LOS A, causing higher levels of average delay.	10.1 to 15.0
C	Generally results when there is fair progression and/or longer cycle lengths. Individual cycle failures may begin to appear in this level. The number of vehicles stopping is significant at this level, although many still pass through the intersection without stopping.	15.1 to 25.0
D	Generally results in noticeable congestion. Longer delays may result from some combination of unfavorable progression, long cycle lengths, or high volume-to-capacity ratios. Many vehicles stop, and the proportion of vehicles not stopping declines. Individual cycle failures are noticeable.	25.1 to 35.0

Level of Service	Description	Delay (seconds/vehicle)
E	Considered to be the limit of acceptable delay. These high delay values generally indicate poor progression, long cycle lengths, and high volume-to-capacity ratios. Individual cycle failures are frequent occurrences.	35.1 to 50.0
F	Considered to be unacceptable to most drivers. This condition often occurs with over saturation i.e. when arrival flow rates exceed the capacity of the intersection. It may also occur at high volume-to-capacity ratios below 1.00 with many individual cycle failures. Poor progression and long cycle lengths may also be major contributing causes to such delay levels	≥ 50.1

Source: **Appendix B**

A summary of the existing traffic operations at the study intersections is shown in **Table 3.8-3.** As can be seen in the table, study intersections are functioning at LOS C or better in the year 2023.

Existing Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit System

Currently, there are no sidewalks in the vicinity of the Project Site and no bike lanes are provided on Alpine Boulevard, but there are Class II bicycle lanes along Willows Road. According to the County of San Diego Bicycle Master Plan updated on October 29, 2008, no bike lanes are proposed in the Project Site vicinity.

Table 3.8-3: Existing (2023) Operation Levels for Intersections

Intersection	Control Type	Peak Hour	Delay (seconds/vehicle)	LOS
W. Willows Rd / I-8 WB Ramps	MSSC[1]	AM	15.2	C
		PM	16.2	C
W. Willows Rd / I-8 EB Ramps	MSSC[1]	AM	13.3	B
		PM	14.1	B
W. Willows Rd / Alpine Blvd	MSSC[2]	AM	9.4	A
		PM	10.7	B

Source: **Appendix B**

[1] MSSC = Minor Street Stop controlled intersection. Minor street delays are reported.

[2] Analyzed as a Two-Way Stop controlled intersection (westbound and eastbound as stop control). Only westbound delay is reported.

In addition, no sidewalk facilities are planned either. The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) provides local and regional connections between neighborhoods and cities in the County. There are two MTS bus routes serving the area surrounding the Project Site:

- **Route 838**: runs between East County Square and the Reservation. There are 44 stops along this route, with weekday services between 5:05 AM and 8:45 PM, approximately, with 60-minute headways. Weekend services are from 6:50 AM to 7:45 PM approximately, with 60-minute headways. The nearest bus stop to the Project Site is located at Willows Road, less than 0.2 miles north.
- **Route 888**: runs between Jacumba Hot Springs and El Cajon. There are 72 stops along this route. Weekday service from Jacumba Hot Springs to El Cajon is from 9:40 AM to 12:10 PM approximately. From El Cajon to Jacumba Hot Springs, weekday service is from 4:10 PM to 6:40 PM, approximately. There are no services offered on Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday,

Thursday, or holidays. The nearest bus stop to the Project Site is located along Willows Road less than 0.2 miles north.

Appendix E of **Appendix B** includes the timetable of these bus routes.

3.8.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

Impacts to the transportation system would be significant if the alternative increases traffic volumes to the point where traffic exceeds the design capacity of the roadway. A significant impact would also result if an alternative created a new hazard for vehicles, pedestrians, or bicyclists. Per Section 4.5.2 Unsignalized Intersections Methodology of the County of San Diego Guidelines, an improvement is required at an unsignalized intersection if any of the following are triggered:

- The project causes the average intersection delay to be LOS E or F during the peak hour.
- The project adds five or more seconds of delay to an intersection that is currently operating at LOS E or F during the peak hour.
- The intersection meets the peak hour traffic signal warrants after the addition of project traffic per the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD–latest edition).

Methodology

This traffic analysis assesses the study area intersections in the following scenarios to determine the potential impacts to the roadway network:

- Existing (2023)
- Opening Year (2026) Without Project
- Opening Year (2026) + Project

The year 2026 is assumed to be the opening year for Alternative A. To calculate the traffic volumes for 2026 based on 2023 traffic count data, a 2% annual ambient growth was applied to the existing volumes to obtain the Opening Year (2026) Without Project traffic volumes. Alternative A traffic was added to the calculated 2026 traffic volumes to obtain the Opening Year + Project traffic volumes. Trip generation rates for Alternative A were generated using the 11th Edition of the Trip Generation Manual, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). Estimated Alternative A traffic was distributed and assigned to the street system based on the existing traffic pattern and the location of employment/residential areas in addition to site proximity to Interstate 8. The following intersections were assessed:

- Willows Road/Interstate 8 (I-8) WB Ramps
- Willows Road/I-8 EB Ramps
- Willows Road/Alpine Boulevard
- Alpine Boulevard/Project Driveway (does not currently exist)

The County of San Diego Transportation Study Guidelines (dated September 2022) were utilized as assessment criteria.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Construction Traffic

During construction of Alternative A, additional temporary trips would be generated on the weekdays with construction work occurring during daytime hours between 7 am and 7 pm. The worker arrival peak would be between 6 am and 7 am and the departure peak between 3:30 pm and 4:30 pm. These peak commute times partially coincide with local commute times. The increase in construction worker commute trips would be small and the additional trips would only occur during construction. Additionally, there would be truckloads of material hauling, and construction vendor trips during construction. These trips would primarily occur outside of the peak commute hours for the surrounding roadway network and equipment would be moved on and off the Project Site on different days. The periodic delivery and removal of such equipment during mostly off-peak hours would constitute a minimal disruption of existing traffic on the Valley Center Road roadway network. The relatively small number of trips required to make such deliveries and removals would not impact the existing traffic load or capacity of the surrounding roadway network. Therefore, construction of Alternative A would have a less-than-significant impact on existing traffic in the surrounding area.

Opening Year (2026) Operational Levels

Trip Generation

The trip rates for Alternative A can be seen in **Table 3.8-4** and the ITE land uses used for each project component are described below:

- Library/Community Center - Land Use 495 Recreational Community Center from the 11th Edition of the Trip Generation Manual, ITE.
- Residential Homes - Land Use 210, Single Family Detached Housing from the 11th Edition of the Trip Generation Manual, ITE.
- Office Building - Land Use 712, Small Office Building from the 11th Edition of the Trip Generation Manual, ITE.
- Emergency Center - Land Use 650, Free Standing Emergency Center from the 11th Edition of the Trip Generation Manual, ITE.

Table 3.8-4: Alternative A Trip Generation

Description	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Emergency Center	1	1	2	1	2	3
Library/Community Center	2	1	3	6	7	13
Single Family Residential	0	1	1	1	1	2
Office	2	0	2	1	2	3
Total Trips	**5**	**3**	**8**	**9**	**12**	**21**

Source: **Appendix B**

In total, Alternative A is estimated to generate approximately 8 and 21 trips during the AM and PM Peak Hours, respectively.

Intersection Level of Service

Table 3.8-5 summarizes the Opening Year with and without Project delay and levels of service at the study area intersections. As shown in **Table 3.8-5**, under the Opening Year with Project scenario, the study intersections are estimated to operate at LOS C or better with traffic from Alternative A. Additionally, Alternative A is estimated to generate approximately 8 and 21 trips during the AM and PM Peak Hours, respectively. These numbers are minimal. With the addition of Alternative A generated traffic under the Opening Year + Project scenario (**Table 3.8-5**), the study intersections will continue to operate at LOS C or better. Based on the peak hour intersection analysis and the adopted guidelines, no vehicular mobility deficiencies were identified and hence no improvements are required at the study area intersections. Therefore, the impact of Alternative A on operation levels would be less than significant.

Project Access

Under Alternative A, a new access from Alpine Boulevard, just east of the Willows Road interchange, would be built on an existing driveway. The access will be controlled with a stop sign that will control northbound traffic exiting onto Alpine Boulevard (see Figure 4 of **Appendix A**) and is calculated to operate at LOS A during the AM and LOS B during the PM peak hours (see **Table 3.8-5**). Given that the proposed driveway would not cause service levels to decrease to an acceptable level, this impact is less than significant.

Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Systems

There are no sidewalks or bike lanes existing or planned within the immediate vicinity of the Project Site therefore, Alternative A would not result in impacts to pedestrian facilities. Two bus routes serve the area surrounding the Project Site (Route 838 and Route 888).

Table 3.8-5: Opening Year Intersection Operations

Intersection	Control Type	Peak Hour	Opening Year Without Project		Opening Year + Project		Delay Change	Improvement Triggered?
			Delaya	LOS	Delay	LOS		
W. Willow Rd/ I-8 WB Ramps	MSSC[1]	AM	16.2	C	16.3	C	0.1	No
		PM	17.3	C	17.6	C	0.3	No
W. Willow Rd/ I-8 EB Ramps	MSSC[1]	AM	14.0	B	14.1	B	0.1	No
		PM	14.9	B	15.3	C	0.4	No
W. Willow Rd/ Alpine Blvd	MSSC[1]	AM	9.5	A	9.5	A	0.0	No
		PM	10.9	B	10.9	B	0.0	No
Alpine Blvd/ Project Access	MSSC	AM	DNE[2]	NA	9.1	A	NA	No
		PM	DNE[2]	NA	10.5	B	NA	No

Source: **Appendix B.** For intersection analysis worksheets, see Appendix C for Opening Year without Project and Appendix D for Opening Year + Project in **Appendix B.**

[1] Analyzed as a two-way stop-controlled intersection (westbound and eastbound stop control). Only westbound delay is reported.

[2]Does not exist.

Alternative A is expected to employ two to six people and would introduce two one-bedroom single family homes, with an anticipated population of 2 persons per household (or 4 persons total).

The proposed land uses are not anticipated to result in a significant increase in transit ridership. Therefore, impacts associated to pedestrian facilities and transit systems would be less than significant.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, the Project Site would remain in its current state, and consequently there would be no increase in vehicular traffic. There would be no change in pedestrian, bicycle, or transit circumstances.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

Any future development in the area would be subject to County review. This review would include assessing the potential impacts of increased traffic on local roadways and the usage of pedestrian facilities and public transit. Any significant impacts identified would be addressed through the collection of traffic impact fees or installation of improvements. Alternative A would result in an insignificant daily increase in traffic and minute impacts on pedestrian facilities and public transit. Therefore, implementation of Alternative A would not contribute to reasonably foreseeable effects on the transportation system.

3.9 LAND USE

3.9.1 Regulatory Setting

The land use regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.9-3.9-1,** and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D**.

Table 3.9-3.9-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Land Use

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Farmland Protection Policy Act	▪ Intended to minimize the impact that federal programs have on unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. ▪ Assures that federal programs are administered in a manner that is compatible with state and local units of government, private programs, and policies to protect farmland.
State and Local	
Williamson Act	▪ Designed to preserve farmlands and open space lands. ▪ Landowners contract with the County to maintain agricultural or open space use of their lands in return for a reduced property tax assessment.
San Diego County General Plan	▪ The San Diego County General Plan contains goals, objectives, implementation measures and maps that form a blueprint for physical development in the unincorporated County. ▪ 2022 General Plan provides an environmentally sustainable approach to planning that strives to balance infrastructure needs, housing, and economic vitality, while maintaining and preserving each unique community within the County, agricultural areas, and extensive open space.
Alpine Community Plan	▪ The County is currently updating the Alpine Community Plan, which will reflect the latest General Plan (2011) and other State requirements and County plans and programs, accommodate for population and demographic changes, address future infrastructure needs, protect sensitive natural resources and habitats, and reflect the current community's vision for the future.

Regulation	Description
	▪ Land use designations within the Alpine Community Plan match the parcel-specific land use designations provided in the San Diego County General Plan.
San Diego County Zoning Code	▪ County's Zoning Ordinance' purpose is to serve the public health, safety, and general welfare; and to provide the advantages resulting from the implementation of the San Diego County General Plan. This Ordinance is applicable to all unincorporated areas of San Diego County, and all development are required to follow the standards set forth in their respective zoning designations. However, State and federally owned lands and Indian Reservation lands are not required to adhere to the Zoning Ordinance.

3.9.2 Environmental Setting

Land Use and Zoning

The Project Site is located in unincorporated San Diego County within the draft Alpine Community Plan area. The County is undergoing an update process to the Alpine Community Plan, which was circulated in 2020-2021 but has not yet been adopted (County of San Diego, 2020). The Project Site is zoned A70 (Limited Agricultural Use Regulations) as shown in Figure 9 of **Appendix A** . Surrounding zoning includes S94 (Special Purpose, which encompasses the I-8 corridor) immediately to the north, A70 on all sides surrounding the Project Site, and one parcel zoned RC (Residential/Commercial) north of the I-8 right-of-way.

The Project Site is designated as Village Residential (VR-2) in both the County General Plan and the draft Alpine Community Plan (Figure 10 of **Appendix A**). The County General Plan utilizes 'Village' designations to concentrate higher land use densities near village or town centers in the unincorporated County, with transitional land uses of semi-rural and rural lands providing an interface to more agricultural or open space uses (County of San Diego, 2022). Semi-rural land uses are designated immediately south of the Project Site and rural lands are designated east, With VR-2 designations located along the I-8 corridor (Figure 10 of **Appendix A**).

The Project Site contains an existing single-family residence and several outbuildings and driveways, while the remainder is largely undeveloped, and portions of the onsite grassland have been historically mowed or grazed by livestock. The nearest airstrips are located at Agua Caliente Airport, approximately 14 miles west of the Project Site.

Agriculture

As described above, a portion of the Project Site is used for pasture. The California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) designated the Project Site as "Other Land" (CDC, 2023a). This category is not designated as farmland and may include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and small water bodies. The Project Site is not enrolled in the Williamson Act (CDC, 2023b). As discussed in **Section 3.2.2**, there are two soils on the Project Site that are considered 'Prime Farmland If Irrigated': Greenfield sandy loam, 2-5 percent slopes (29.4 percent of the site) which dominates the pasture in the western portion of the Project Site, and Visalia sandy loam, 2-5 and 5-9 percent slopes (6.8 percent of the site) that is located primarily along and underneath the Viejas Creek riparian corridor.

3.9.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

Land use impacts would be significant if Alternative A is incompatible with surrounding land uses or would inhibit the implementation of land use plans, policies and controls related to the avoidance of environmental impacts for the project area. Significant land use impacts may also occur if the alternative converts Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide/Local/Unique Importance to other uses, as determined by the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA).

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Land Use

Alternative A would result in 48.7 acres of land being transferred from fee to federal trust, which would remove it from County land use jurisdiction. While land use regulations and zoning would not apply to the Project Site once taken into trust, the proposed uses would not conflict with the existing land use designation and zoning of the Project Site or adjacent properties. Alternative A would not conflict with the intent of the A70 (Limited Agricultural Use Regulations) zoning or the Village Residential (VR-2) land use designations. Allowable uses within A70 zoning include family residential, civic uses including fire protection services, and agricultural uses. VR-2 allows a housing density of two units per gross acre, which could allow up to 97 homes on the Project Site under County policies.

Alternative A would be generally consistent with allowable uses under the A70 zoning and VR-2 land use designations of the Project Site as it would result in the development of two low density rural residential homes as well as tribal civic uses, including a tribal administrative office and library/community center. Alternative A would result in a small-scale development of two homes and small Tribal civic buildings that would be consistent with the intention of the County's land use planning of utilizing the village residential designation to provide a transition to semi-rural and rural lands that exist south and east of the Project Site. Although County land use regulations would not apply on the Project Site, the proposed uses would be compatible with surrounding properties, which include agricultural and rural residential uses. Land use impacts under Alternative A would be less than significant.

Agriculture

The California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) designates the Project Site as "Other Land" (CDC, 2023a). This category is not defined as farmland. There are two soils on the Project Site that are considered Prime Farmland If Irrigated, predominantly associated with the Viejas Creek riparian corridor and the area that is currently utilized for pasture. There is no agriculture within the stream or its setback and the grassland on the Project Site is currently mowed and/or grazed, which would continue after development of Alternative A. Therefore, there would be no conversion of agricultural lands and impacts would be less than significant.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, the Project Site would remain under County jurisdiction and no development would occur. Therefore, land use consistency or compatibility impacts would not occur under this alternative.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

As discussed in **Section 3.9**, proposed uses would be compatible with existing and surrounding agricultural and rural residential uses. Thus Alternative A would not contribute to reasonably foreseeable effects on land use or agriculture.

3.10 PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES

3.10.1 Regulatory Setting

The public services regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.10-3.10-1**, and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D**.

Table 3.10-3.10-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Public Services and Utilities

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Safe Drinking Water Act	▪ Establishes protective drinking water standards for protection of public health.
Clean Water Act	▪ Establishes national water quality goals. ▪ Regulates both point and non-point sources of pollution through the NPDES permit program. ▪ Requires states to establish water quality standards for waters in their jurisdiction and to periodically prepare a list of surface waters where beneficial uses are impaired by pollutants.
Public Law 280	▪ Changed criminal jurisdiction from the federal government to certain states, including California, for offenses involving tribal members in Indian Country.
State	
California Integrated Waste Management Act Assembly Bill 939	▪ Requires jurisdictions to conduct a solid waste disposal needs assessment that estimates the disposal capacity needed to accommodate projected solid waste generated within the jurisdiction. ▪ All local jurisdictions are required to divert 50 percent of their total waste stream from landfill disposal.

3.10.2 Environmental Setting

The services that are addressed include water supply, wastewater collection and treatment, solid waste service, energy, law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services, schools, and parks.

Water Supply

Water to the Project Site is supplied by an existing private groundwater well and storage tank (**Appendix C**). The nearest municipal supplies to the Project Site are the Padre Dam Municipal Water District, whose Eastern Service Area boundary ends immediately west of the Project Site (Padre Dam Municipal Water District, 2023).

Wastewater Services

The existing residences on the Project Site rely on private septic systems.

The Project Site falls within the sphere of influence of the Alpine Sewer Service Area (SSA) of the San Diego County Sanitation District, and facilities could be extended to the Project Site if necessary (County of San Diego Wastewater and Water Engineering, 2011).

Solid Waste Services

Solid waste services are provided to the area by multiple providers, including Allied Waste, Universal Waste Systems, EDCO Disposal Corporation, and Waste Management San Diego (County of San Diego Department of Public Works, 2021). Pacific Waste Services provides solid waste removal for the SHIC, located across the street from the Project Site. There are four landfills in the San Diego region, three of which are privately operated and one of which is operated by the City of San Diego. The landfills receive a total daily throughput of approximately 19,750 tons per day. Together, they have a total remaining capacity of 146,359,020 cubic yards, which is roughly 48 percent of their total permitted capacity (SANDAG, 2021).

Energy

Electricity and natural gas services are already supplied to the Project Site by San Diego Gas and Electric (SDGE).

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement services within unincorporated San Diego County are provided by the San Diego County Sheriff's Department (San Diego Sheriff, 2023). It provides public safety services to 4,200 square miles of unincorporated San Diego County, nine contract cities, and eighteen Indian Reservations. The Sheriff's Department employs more than 4,000 people, which includes sworn officers and professional staff. The Alpine Station is the nearest Sheriff's Department Substation to the Project Site, located approximately 1.75 miles west.

Fire Protection and Emergency Medical

The Project Site is within the service area of the Alpine Fire Protection District (FPD), which encompasses the Town of Alpine and the surrounding area (Alpine FPD, 2019). Alpine FPD is headquartered at Fire Station 17, approximately 3 miles west of the Project Site. The nearest fire station to the Project Site operated by the Alpine Fire Protection District is Alpine Fire Station 48, which is located approximately 0.8 miles west of the Project Site. The Alpine FPD has three Captains that each manage specific aspects of the emergency delivery system and oversees one of three platoons of firefighters. During 2022, the Alpine FPD responded to 1,587 incidents (Alpine FPD, 2023b).

The Alpine Fire Protection District has a contract with Mercy Medical Transportation, which operates both ground (Mercy Ambulance) and air transportation (Mercy Air and Reach Air) for emergency medical calls (Alpine Fire Protection District, 2023a). In addition, the San Diego County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Office is a division of the San Diego County Fire Protection District which oversees and coordinates the region's EMS system, including providing medical oversight, permitting ambulance providers, designating hospital services, and organizing shared data and communication platforms (San Diego County EMS, 2023). There are several medical facilities in the nearby Town of Alpine, but the nearest hospital with an emergency room is the Sharp Grossmont Hospital located approximately 17 miles southwest of the Project Site in the City of La Mesa (San Diego County EMS, 2023).

Schools and Parks

The Project Site is within the Alpine Union School District that serves approximately 1,750 students. The nearest school is the Heights Charter School approximately 2 miles west of the Project Site. The closest park is the Alpine County Park approximately 2 miles southwest of the Project Site.

3.10.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

A significant impact would occur if project-related demands on public services would cause an exceedance of system capacities that results in significant effects to the physical environment.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Water Supply

There are no municipal water service connections to the Project Site. Water for Alternative A would be provided by an existing onsite domestic groundwater well, and water demand estimates are provided in **Appendix C**. While it is likely the existing well would be sufficient to serve Alternative A, the pumping capacity of the well will be evaluated prior to operation of Alternative A in order to ensure adequate supply and fire flows. Therefore, no impacts to municipal water systems would occur as a result of Alternative A.

Wastewater Services

The Project Site currently does not have any connections to public wastewater services. The existing residence on the Project Site is serviced by a private onsite septic system. Additional septic and leach field systems would be installed as necessary to accommodate the wastewater generation of Alternative A (**Appendix C**)**.** Therefore, no impacts to municipal wastewater systems would occur as a result of Alternative A.

Solid Waste Services

Solid Waste Services are provided by private hauling companies through a franchise agreement with the County of San Diego Department of Public Works. Solid waste service is currently provided to the existing residences on the Project Site and will continue to be used during Project construction and operation. Solid waste from construction may include vegetation removal, wood, glass, plastics, wiring, steel, metal, and other typical construction materials. The solid waste generated from construction will be temporary and therefore would not impact the long-term capacity of the private hauling companies or landfills. Once in operation, the accumulation of solid waste would increase. The various developments proposed under Alternative A would generate approximately 46 pounds of solid waste per day (CalRecycle, 2019), which represents 0.0001% of the total daily volume processed at the local landfills. This negligible increase would not significantly affect the operations of local landfills to process solid waste. Therefore, construction and operation of Alternative A would not result in a significant effect to solid waste services.

Energy

Alternative A would continue to use existing electrical and propane infrastructure on the Project Site, and some extensions of these facilities would be required to accommodate the proposed buildings. The Tribe would coordinate with SDGE regarding any necessary improvements to the electrical infrastructure to serve the needs of Alternative A.

The Tribe would pay the cost associated with increasing the electrical capacities to the Project Site per provider specifications. Any construction requirements, such as trenching and laying service lines, would result in minor temporary impacts and bare earth would be re-seeded. There would be a less-than-significant impact.

Law Enforcement

Alternative A would result in a negligible increase in demands on the San Diego County Sheriff's Department due to the limited size and scope of Alternative A. Calls for service would not be disproportionate to other small-scale developments in the project vicinity. This small increase in service is not anticipated to require new or expanded law enforcement facilities. Construction and operation of Alternative A would result in a less-than-significant effect to law enforcement.

Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

The increased risks of fire during construction would be similar to that found at other construction sites and would not be considered abnormal. Alternative A would result in a negligible increase in demands on the Alpine Fire Protection District due to the limited size and scope of Alternative A. Calls for service would not be disproportionate to other small-scale developments in the project vicinity. This small increase in service is not anticipated to require new or expanded fire protection or emergency medical facilities by the Alpine Fire Protection District. Furthermore, Alternative A includes operation of an Emergency Tribal Center, which will allow the Tribe to better respond to emergencies in the vicinity, ensuring no significant impacts during project operation. With implementation of standard construction measures to reduce the risk of fire, which are listed as BMPs in **Table 2.1-1**, impacts would be less than significant.

Schools and Parks

There would be minimal impact to the Alpine Union School District from Alternative A because only two residences would be constructed, and one existing residence on the Project Site has been converted to the Emergency Tribal Center, meaning that only one net new residence will be developed. The small number of employees of the newly constructed Tribal office, Library/Community Center, and Emergency Tribal Center are expected to already live in the vicinity of the Project Site. As such, no impacts to schools would occur. The closest park is 2 miles southwest of the Project Site. Alternative A is not expected to significantly increase visitation to this park because it would not significantly increase the population in the County. As such, no impacts to parks would occur.

Alternative B: No Action

No development would occur under Alternative B, and the Project Site would remain in its current state. Demand on public services and utilities would not change.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

Alternative A would not utilize public water, wastewater, or natural gas utilities. The level of demand on electrical, law enforcement, and fire protection services is anticipated to be similar to existing conditions. While not anticipated, any future development would partially fund public services through development fees and property taxes. Further, Alternative A would not significantly increase population in the County and therefore would not impact schools and parks. For these reasons, Alternative A would not contribute to reasonably foreseeable effects on public services.

3.11 NOISE

3.11.1 Regulatory Setting

The noise regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.11-1**, and additional information on the regulatory setting and acoustical background and terminology used in this section can be found in **Appendix D.**

Table 3.11-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Noise

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Construction Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC)	▪ Provides construction noise level thresholds in its Construction Noise Handbook, 2006, which depends on noise receptor locations, land uses, and time of day. ▪ Noise from construction near noise-sensitive locations should not exceed 78 dBA L_{eq} during the day.
FHWA NAC	▪ Sets noise standards for the assessment of noise consequences related to surface traffic and other project-related noise sources.
Vibration Standards	▪ Peak particle velocity (PPV) is the maximum instantaneous peak (inches per second) of the vibration signal. ▪ The Federal Transportation Administration's (FTA) guideline vibration damage criteria for structures is 0.5 PPV and 0.1 PPV for annoyance of people.
Local	
San Diego County General Plan	▪ The Noise Element of the General Plan aims to control and abate environmental noise to protect citizens from excessive exposure. ▪ The Noise Element establishes noise compatibility guidelines that are based on the Regional Categories established in the Land Use Element.
County of San Diego Municipal Code	▪ Establishes general sound limits for stationary noise sources, construction, and impulsive sounds.

3.11.2 Environmental Setting

For the fundamentals of sounds, effects of noise on people, and characteristics of vibrations, please refer to **Appendix D**. The existing noise environment in the vicinity of the Project Site is defined primarily by vehicle traffic on Interstate 8 with some contribution from neighboring roadways, such as Alpine Boulevard. The estimated ambient noise level (assumed to be primarily due to traffic noise) in the vicinity of the Project Site is approximately 60 dBA equivalent continuous sound pressure level (L_{eq}) over a 24-hour period (Department of Transportation, 2023).

Some land uses are considered more sensitive to noise than others due to the amount of noise exposure and the types of activities typically involved. Residences, motels and hotels, schools, libraries, churches, hospitals, nursing homes, auditoriums, and parks and other outdoor recreation areas generally are more sensitive to noise than commercial or industrial land uses. A sensitive receptor is defined as any living entity or aggregate of entities whose comfort, health, or well-being could be impaired or endangered by the existence of the criteria pollutant, whether it is emissions or noise, in the atmosphere. The nearest sensitive receptors to the Project Site consist of rural residences directly adjacent to the north, south, east, and west.

3.11.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

The assessment of project effects is based on federal NAC standards used by the FHWA, on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) thresholds for perceptible vibration, and the noise standards of San Diego County. Specifically, adverse noise and vibration effects are identified at existing sensitive receptor locations if the following were to occur as a result of the project:

- Project construction noise levels exceed the FHWA construction noise thresholds (see Table 6 of **Appendix D**).
- On-site construction sources that violates standards set forth in the County of San Diego Municipal Code Section 36.408 through 36.409:
    - No operation of construction equipment between 7 pm and 7 am.
    - No construction on Sundays or holidays.
    - Exceeds an average sound level of 75 dB for an eight-hour period, between 7 am and 7 pm, when measured at the boundary line of the property where the noise source is located or on any occupied property where the noise is being received.
- Project construction vibration levels exceed 65 VdB (FTA threshold of perception).
- Project-generated traffic would cause traffic noise levels to exceed the FHWA noise abatement criteria (e.g., 67 dBA for exterior residential uses) where the criteria is not currently being exceeded (see Table 7 of **Appendix D**).
- On-site noise sources associated with ongoing project operations exceed the standards set forth in County of San Diego Municipal Code Section 36.404, specifically in Table 36.404, at residences within (see Table 3.10 of **Appendix D**).
- On-site noise sources associated with ongoing project operations exceed the standards set forth in County of San Diego Municipal Code Section 36.410: no person shall produce or cause to be produced an impulsive noise that exceeds the maximum sound level shown in Table 36.410A and Table 36.410B (Table 11 and Table 12 of **Appendix D**, respectively) except for the listed exceptions, such as emergency work.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Construction Noise

During the construction of Alternative A, noise from construction activities would add to the noise environment in the immediate vicinity of the Project Site. Activities involved in typical construction would generate maximum noise levels, as indicated in **Table 3.11-2**, up to 85 dBA L_{max} at a distance of 50 feet.

Table 3.11-2: Construction Equipment Noise

Equipment Description	Maximum Noise Level at 50 feet [dBA]
Air compressor	80
Backhoe	80
Compactor	82
Concrete mixer	85
Concrete pump	82
Concrete vibrator	76

Equipment Description	Maximum Noise Level at 50 feet [dBA]
Crane, mobile	83
Dozer	85
Generator	82
Grader	85
Impact wrench	85
Loader	80
Paver	85
Pneumatic tool	85
Pump	77
Saw	76
Scarifier	83
Scraper	85
Shovel	82
Truck	84

Source: FTA, 2018

Given a noise attenuation factor of 6.0 dBA per doubling distance, the maximum noise levels from construction at the nearest existing noise-sensitive uses, located approximately 100 feet or more away from proposed construction areas, are expected to be up to 79 dBA L_{max} approximately.

Combined with the estimated existing ambient noise environment of 60 dBA, the temporary noise at the sensitive receptor would be 79 dBA at the loudest. According to FHWA construction noise thresholds (see **Appendix D**), construction noise impacts would be significant where daytime construction activities would generate noise levels exceeding 78 dBA or median baseline noise levels +5 dBA, whichever is louder. Furthermore, construction impacts would also be significant if they exceed County standards specified in Sec. 36.409 and 36.410 of the Municipal Code. These specify that exceedance of 75 dBA for an eight-hour period or 82 dBA for 25% of the time within an hour or more would be unlawful.

Because construction of Alternative A has the potential to exceed both federal and local thresholds, unmitigated construction noise could constitute a significant impact to nearby sensitive receptors. Mitigation measures have been included in **Section 4** to reduce construction-related noise impacts. These mitigation measures include appointing a disturbance coordinator during construction to address noise complaints of nearby sensitive receptors and locating stationary construction equipment to the furthest extent possible from sensitive receptors. Implementation of these mitigation measures would ensure that noise levels during construction would be reduced to the extent feasible.

Furthermore, BMPs included in **Table 2.1-1** would further reduce noise impacts by equipping mufflers on construction equipment and following manufacturer's guidelines to ensure equipment is properly used. Furthermore, the BMPs include restricting construction work from 7 pm to 7 pm Monday through Saturday with no work permitted on federal holidays. Proposed construction hours would be consistent with County of San Diego Municipal Code Sec. 36.408 while also reducing potential sleep disturbance impacts. Therefore, with incorporation of mitigation measures and BMPs, construction noise impacts to sensitive receptors would be less than significant.

Construction Vibration

The vibration levels of typical construction equipment at a distance of 25 feet from the equipment are shown in **Table 3.11-3**. The nearest sensitive receptor is approximately 100 feet north from where active construction would occur. Excessive vibration is usually only an issue when construction requiring the use of equipment with high vibration levels (compactors or large dozers) occurs within 25 to 100 feet of a structure. At this distance, the vibrations associated with construction equipment would be below the thresholds for structural damage (90 vibration velocity [VdB]). Therefore, vibration effects associated with temporary construction activities would be less than significant.

Table 3.11-3: Vibration Source Levels for Construction Equipment

Equipment	Maximum Vibration Level at 25 feet [VdB (rms)]
Vibratory Roller	94
Large Bulldozers	87
Loaded Trucks	86
Jackhammer	79

Source: FTA, 2018

Operational Noise and Vibration

The proposed development under Alternative A is not anticipated to generate significant sources of noise, including the emergency center when in use. Typical sounds that would be heard from the proposed development include but are not limited to maintenance and landscaping activities, conversations between persons, and vehicular noise, such as car doors opening and closing and engines starting.

None of the activities at the proposed development are expected to generate consistent, loud sources of noise that could cause a noticeable increase in the ambient noise environment. Increases in traffic can often be a significant source of noise, but as described in **Section 3.8.3**, Alternative A would result in an insignificant daily increase in traffic. For a barely noticeable difference to be perceivable in the ambient noise environment (an approximate 3 dBA increase), traffic volumes on the surrounding roadways would need to double (**Appendix D**). Therefore, because the traffic increase would not cause a doubling in traffic volumes, there would be no perceivable difference compared to current noise levels. In addition, none of the activities at the proposed development would generate perceptible vibration, and therefore the limited vibration generated would not cause adverse effects. Operation of Alternative A would have less-than-significant noise and vibration effects.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, the Project Site would have no further development and would no noise or vibration beyond existing sources would be generated. No new noise or vibration impacts would occur under Alternative B.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

Future developments would generate noise and could be noticeable with Alternative A, but as described in **Section 3.11.3**, both construction and operation of Alternative A are not expected to cause a significant impact. During construction, incorporation of BMPs described in **Table 2.1-1** and mitigation measures in **Section 4** would reduce construction noise and limit working hours to be consistent with both federal and local thresholds.

During operation, the project components of Alternative A are not anticipated to generate substantial onsite noise due to residential units and government and library/community facilities do not typically generate significant sound levels, especially at levels that would be perceivable to nearby sensitive receptors. The emergency center would also not cause significant noise levels when in use. Furthermore, the traffic anticipated to be generated under Alternative A would be minimal and not raise the ambient noise environment. Therefore, Alternative A would not contribute towards reasonably foreseeable adverse impacts. Future development in the vicinity of the Project Site would be required to comply with applicable noise regulations during construction and operation which would reduce their potential adverse effects. Therefore, no significant reasonably foreseeable effect would occur.

3.12 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

3.12.1 Regulatory Setting

The hazardous materials regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.12-1**, and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D**.

Table 3.12-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Resource Conservation and Recovery Act	▪ Grants the USEPA the authority to manage hazardous waste throughout its life cycle, including storage, treatment, transportation, production, and disposal. ▪ Establishes a management framework for non-hazardous solid wastes. ▪ Authorizes the USEPA to respond to environmental problems related to underground hazardous substance storage tanks, including petroleum.
Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act	▪ Enables the USEPA to determine the maximum pesticide residue amount on food. Maximum limits are based on findings that the maximum limit will be reasonably safe in terms of accumulated exposure to the pesticide residue. For pesticides without a set maximum residue limit, the USEPA has the authority to seize these commodities.
Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act	▪ Mandates that all pesticides sold or distributed be licensed with the USEPA; a pesticide cannot be licensed until it is proven that the pesticide will not generally cause unreasonable adverse effects on the environment if utilized in accordance with its specifications.
Hazard Communication Standard	▪ Ensures that information about chemical and toxic substance hazards in the workplace and associated protective measures are disseminated to workers exposed to hazardous chemicals, including labels, safety data sheets, and proper handling training for hazardous chemicals ▪ Chemical manufacturers and importers that produce and import chemicals are required to assess their products for hazards; safety data sheets and labels must be created with information that outlines the dangers of the products.
Hazardous Substances Act	▪ Necessitates that hazardous household products have precautionary labeling to alert consumers of hazards, proper storage, and immediate first aid steps in case of an accident. ▪ Enables the Consumer Product Safety Commission to prohibit severely dangerous products and products with hazards that cannot be labeled accordingly to Hazardous Substances Act standards.

Regulation	Description
Toxic Substance Control Act	▪ Authorizes the USEPA with the authority to require record keeping, reporting, test requirements, and restrictions associated with certain chemical substances and/or mixtures. ▪ Addresses the production, importation, use, and disposal of certain chemicals (e.g., lead paint).
Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act	▪ Requires industry to report on the use, storage, and release of hazardous substances to federal, state, and local governments. ▪ Requires Indian tribes and state and local governments to utilize this information to prepare their communities for potential risks.
National Fire Protection Association Codes and Standards	▪ Codes and Standards to minimize the possibility and effects of fire and other risks including, but not limited to: sprinkler systems, fire alarms, parking structures, emergency response, and wildland fire protection
State	
California Building Code (CBC)	▪ The CBC includes Fire Code Elements to reduce wildfire impacts including Chapter 7A regarding building materials, systems, and/or assemblies used in the exterior design and construction of new buildings located within a Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area; as well as CBC Section 703A.7 that incorporates State Fire Marshal standards for exterior wildfire exposure protection.
Local	
San Diego County General Plan	▪ The Public Safety Element contains goals, objectives, and policies to provide protection from wildland fire hazards.

3.12.2 Environmental Setting

Hazardous Materials

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was completed in December 2023 for the Project Site to determine if any Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) exist. The Phase I ESA has been prepared in conformance with the BIA guidelines (602 DM 2) and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) Standard Practice E 1527-21. Under the ASTM Standard Practice E 1527-21, RECs are defined as the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products on a property under conditions that indicate an existing release, a past release, or a material threat of release of any hazardous substances or petroleum products within a property into structures or the ground, groundwater, or surface water. In addition to RECs, the Phase I ESA assessed for Historical RECs (HRECs) and Controlled RECs (CRECS). Under ASTM Standard Practice E 1527-21, HREC refers to an environmental condition, including a past release of any hazardous substance or petroleum product that has since been remediated, which in the past would have been considered a REC; and CREC refers to hazardous substance releases that have been partially addressed through remediation but where some contamination remains in place under certain risk-based restrictions or conditions (**Appendix H**). The Phase I ESA conducted historical research that included reviewing aerial photographs and topographical map, interviews, a site reconnaissance of accessible areas on the Project Site on September 6, 2023, and database review that included regulatory, State, and local databases entries up to a one-mile radius of the Project Site.

The Phase I ESA concluded that no RECs, HRECs, or CRECs were connected with the Project Site. During the on-site reconnaissance visit of the Project Site, no RECs, HRECs, or CRECs were observed related to hazardous materials, hazardous waste, or chemical use, storage, or disposal.

Onsite features during the visit included residential dwelling units and auxiliary ranching infrastructure. The infrastructure observed during the site visit indicated historic small scale ranching activities within the Project Site, including small animal husbandry and fodder production. The Project Site did not appear on any regulatory agency lists, and none of the listed sites near the Project Site were considered to affect the Project Site.

Regulatory records did not reveal any RECs, HRECs, or CRECs. An interview with the property owner representative was conducted with regards to the past and current use of the Project Site. The interview stated no development activities on the property since being purchased in 2000, and the current residence is used as office space. The interviewee had no knowledge of any hazardous materials involvement/storage/use or use of underground storage tanks (USTs) at the Project Site. Finally, historical photographs and topographical maps were reviewed. The earliest physical record of a structure (a barn) was seen in a 1953 aerial photograph while the dwelling unit and mobile home were found on a 1985 aerial. Agricultural uses are noted from 1928 through 2012 aerials. No visual clues, outside of historic ranching activities, indicated possible recognized environmental conditions that would signify hazardous material handling, such as industrial facilities.

Wildfire Risk

Wildfire Risk Conditions

According to the FEMA national risk index, the County has a very high risk for wildfires (FEMA, 2023). The Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan of the County also identified the risk of wildfires as high. Wildfires between 1950 and 2014 have resulted in the destruction of over 8,400 structures, burned more than 1,158,468 acres, and caused 30 fatalities. From 2014 to 2019, around 250 homes were destroyed due to wildland fires. The Project Site is located within the region of Alpine, which has a history of wildfires and attributes that make them more probable, such as flammable native vegetation, a dry environment, and steep slopes covered in dense vegetation. In addition, the Santa Ana winds are dry, fast winds that originate inland and enhance the risk of wildfire ignition and spread. They typically occur from September to March. Since 1970, the region has experienced several large fires. These include the Laguna Fire (1970), the Viejas Fire (2001), the Cedar Fire (2003), the Witch Creek Fire (2007), the West Fire (2018), and the Valley Fire (2020) (San Diego County, 2020). The Project Site is located within an area designed by CAL FIRE as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in a local responsibility area. The area surrounding the Project Site is either Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in a local responsibility area or moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone in a state responsibility area or federal responsible area (CAL FIRE, 2023).

The Project Site is partially developed with a residence and auxiliary structures with the remainder the site undeveloped. The riparian vegetation and trees along Viejas Creek and surrounding the Project Site can serve as fuel for wildfires and the topography varies between gentle slopes and rolling hillsides. Additional fuels on the Project Site include chaparral vegetation, although with lower combustibility. Various cleared dirt roads within the Project Site could serve as fire breaks depending on the intensity of an event.

3.12.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

Impacts associated with hazardous materials include a release of hazardous materials and improper hazardous material management.

A project would be considered to have significant hazardous material impacts if the site had existing hazardous materials onsite that would require remediation or mitigation prior to development of a project. Additionally, if a project results in the use, handling, or generation of a controlled hazardous material that would increase the potential risk of exposure, result in health risks or loss of life, then the project would have a significant impact.

A project would be considered to have a significant impact if it were to increase wildfire risk on-site or in the surrounding area. This includes, but is not limited to, increasing fuel loads, exacerbating the steepness of the local topography, introducing uses that would increase the chance of igniting fires, reducing fire barriers, inhibiting local emergency response to or evacuation routes from wildfires, building in a high-risk fire zone without project design measure to reduce inherent wildfire risk, and conflicting with a local wildfire management plan.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

As described in **Section 3.12.2**, no existing hazardous materials have been identified on or within the vicinity of the Project Site that would affect Alternative A (**Appendix H**). Described below are construction and operation-related impacts related to hazardous materials.

Construction

Hazardous Materials

During construction of Alterative A, limited quantities of hazardous substances common to construction would be used and stored on the Project Site, such as fuels, solvents, oils, and paint. These would also include temporary bulk storage containers for fuel storage and storage sheds or trailers for fueling and maintenance purposes. Common construction activities that could cause accidental releases include the handling and transfer of chemicals and fuels from one container to another, such as during refueling. In general, the chemicals and fuels used onsite could pose a hazard to the environment if not transported, used, stored, and disposed of properly.

Such instances of mismanagement could pose a hazard to the public and environment, and therefore could create a significant impact. However, several factors would be in place to reduce the probability of an accidental release. During transportation of hazardous materials off- and onsite, the transporters of hazardous materials would be required to adhere to applicable State, federal, and local regulations. This would ensure that the transportation of hazardous materials to and from the Project Site would not result in spills. For onsite, BMPs in **Table 2.1-1** would reduce the probability of accidental onsite release through spill prevention methods and utilizing proper equipment. Furthermore, onsite hazardous chemicals would be used and stored per federal regulations and manufacturer guidelines would be followed. Therefore, the impacts from Alternative A from the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials during construction would be less than significant.

Other Hazards

As described in **Section 3.7.2**, the County has experienced destructive wildfires, and the Project Site is located within an area that is designated a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. During construction, the operation of equipment could create sparks that could ignite the vegetation on the Project Site. The ignited vegetation could then create a wildfire. Examples of construction equipment that could ignite a fire and thus increase risk include power tools and acetylene torches. However, implementation of BMPs in **Table 2.1-1** would reduce the probability of igniting a fire.

These BMPs include the installation of spark arresters on equipment with the potential to create sparks, clearing of dried vegetation in staging areas, welding areas, or other areas slated for development prior to construction activities, ensuring all service trucks are equipped with fire extinguishers, and preventative measures to minimize the potential for fuel spills. Therefore, the potential for fire ignition during construction is less than significant.

Operation

Hazardous Materials

During operation, common hazardous materials may be used on the site, including motor oil, hydraulic fluids, solvents, cleaners, lubricants, and paints etc. All hazardous materials would be stored, handled, and disposed of according to federal manufacturer's guidelines and federal law. Any solid waste produced on site would be stored, handled, and disposed of by adhering to applicable federal and state regulations. Alternative A will not result in significant adverse effects related to waste production and hazardous materials.

Other Hazards

As described in **Section 2.1.6**, Alternative A would be designed to meet IBC, including measures related to fire and structural safety. The IBC includes comprehensive provisions related to fire safety, including the use of fire-resistant materials, requirements for safe and accessible means of ingress (for the fire department) and egress, and the installation and maintenance of fire protection systems, including fire sprinklers and fire alarms, and smoke control systems. Furthermore, the Tribe would take all necessary steps to reasonably ensure the ongoing availability of sufficient and qualified fire suppression services to the Project Site after implementation of Alternative A. These measures would reduce the risk of structural fires onsite that could spread offsite and subsequently cause a wildfire. Therefore, impacts associated with exposing people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving ignition of wildland fires during operation of Alternative A are less than significant.

Alternative B: No Action

Under Alternative B, the Project Site would remain in its current state and no hazardous materials or other hazard-related impacts would occur.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

There is the potential for impacts related to hazardous materials and fire ignition during construction of Alternative A in combination with other projects. New developments would be required to adhere to appropriate and applicable regulations regarding the delivery, handling, and storage of hazardous materials and other hazards, thereby reducing the risk to the public's health and welfare due to accidental exposure. Furthermore, additional BMPs would be utilized during construction to reduce the risk of igniting a fire onsite during construction activities. Therefore, there would be no reasonably foreseeable significant hazard or hazardous material impacts during construction.

As described in **Section 3.12.3**, during operation, Alternative A would not have a high fire ignition probability due to the incorporated building features that would reduce fire risks. As for hazardous materials used during operation, they would be used, stored, handled, and disposed of according to federal regulations and manufacture guidelines. New development in the vicinity of the Project Site would also be required to follow appropriate and applicable regulations with regards to hazardous materials in addition to adhering to appropriate buildings codes and regulations with regards to fire safety.

Therefore, the alternatives would not contribute to significant future impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials. Reasonably foreseeable environmental effects would be less than significant.

3.13 VISUAL RESOURCES

3.13.1 Regulatory Setting

The visual resources regulatory setting is summarized in **Table 3.13-1**, and additional information on the regulatory setting can be found in **Appendix D.**

Table 3.13-1: Regulatory Policies and Plans Related to Visual Resources

Regulation	Description
Federal	
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act	▪ Established a policy of preserving designated free-flowing rivers for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. ▪ Encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection.
State and Local	
Caltrans State Scenic Highway Program	▪ To preserve and enhance the natural beauty of California with scenic highways being designated based upon the amount of natural landscape visible to a passing motorist.
Title 24 Outdoor Lighting Zones	▪ Has mandatory requirements for outdoor lighting, such as maximum brightness and shielding. These requirements vary based on the Lighting Zone the building is located in. ▪ Lighting Zones range from Zone 0 (undeveloped open spaces) to Zone 3 (urban areas). Lighting Zone 4 can only be designated when a local government applies for exceptionally high lighting allowances.
County of San Diego General Plan Update	▪ This plan contains goals, objectives, and policies to guide development within the County. ▪ The Conservation and Open Space Element of the County's General Plan Update contains goals and policies related to landscape/setting, scenic corridors, and astronomical dark skies.
San Diego County Zoning Code	▪ Regulates land use and development within the unincorporated areas of San Diego County. ▪ Has regulations that are intended to minimize light pollution, protect the environment, and promote energy conservation. ▪ Has regulations intended to promote water conservation, protect the environment, and enhance the aesthetic quality of the county.
Alpine Community Plan	▪ Addresses various aspects of future development and planning for the Alpine community, and it reflects the current community's vision for the future and aims to provide new and diverse housing choices. ▪ Includes provisions for aesthetics, emphasizing the importance of integrating natural materials and promoting sustainability in future development.
San Diego County Dark Sky Ordinance	▪ Intends to minimize light pollution to allow citizens of the County to view and enjoy the night environment.

3.13.2 Environmental Setting

Views and Viewsheds

A viewshed is comprised of one or more viewing corridors or vistas from a specific location or viewpoint.

Each vista provides a line-of-sight that can be characterized uniquely from among other vistas within the viewshed. The following constituent elements compose the visual experience within each vista:

- Clarity in line of sight: overall visibility of the object within the viewshed. This can be influenced by trees, buildings, topography, or other potential visual obstructions within the viewshed.
- Duration of visibility: amount of time the object is exposed to viewers within the viewshed.
- Proximity of the viewer: effects of foreshortening due to the distance of the viewer from the object will influence the dominance of the object in the perspective of the viewer within the viewshed.
- Number of viewers: number of viewers anticipated to experience the visual character of the object in a forward-oriented view. Densely populated residential districts or busy highways within the viewshed will present more viewers than in unpopulated areas.

Viewsheds and viewpoints are described by expressing the strength of the viewing experience, framed within the analytical criteria listed above. Viewing experiences are personal and subjective in nature, but if the above elements are used it allows for a more objective, baseline assessment of the visual environment and visual impacts. The following represent some visual qualities that may indicate the presence of a scenic resource:

- Massive rock formation
- Tree with age or interesting features
- Historical value plantings
- Historic buildings
- Feature with local, regional, or statewide importance
- Feature specifically identified in planning documents as having a special scenic value.

The Project Site is undeveloped except for a residence and auxiliary facilities on APN 404-090-13. The remainder of the Project Site is primarily pasture or chapparal habitat. The Project Site also contains a segment of Viejas Creek and associated riparian vegetation in the northwestern corner. The majority of the Project Site and associated features are not visible to motorists from Alpine Boulevard or Highway 8. In general, views of the Project Site to motorists from Alpine Boulevard or Highway 8 are primarily obstructed due to the established vegetation, such as trees, and/or the hilly topography. The eastern portion of the Project Site is visible to motorists on Alpine Boulevard or Highway 8, but these views are still limited. Motorists traveling on Viejas Creek Trail also experience limited viewing opportunities in certain areas due to similar problems. Motorists traveling on Star Valley Drive experience less unobstructed views of the Project Site, but this road is not a through road and has very limited traffic.

Sensitive receptors that experience views of the Project Site include rural residential housing along the perimeter of the site, including those along Bell Bluff Road, and the residence along the southeastern border.

Scenic Highways

The approximately 90-mile segment of Highway 8 north of the Project Site from Sunset Cliffs Blvd to Route 98 (near Coyote Wells) is eligible to be a state designated scenic highway (Caltrans, 2023).

Shadows, Light, and Glare

Current lighting sources on the Project Site are typical for rural residential and agricultural buildings. During the day, sunlight reflecting from structures and motor vehicles are the primary sources of glare. During the night, vehicle headlamps illumination and building lighting are the primary sources of light. The Project Site does not contain unusually bright or uniquely noticeable lighting that affects area residents, and the existing light environment is typical of rural areas.

Local Plans and Ordinances

Development of the Project Site is currently guided by the San Diego County General Plan, the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, and the Alpine Community Plan. However, only the County General Plan specifically has policies addressing the protection of visual resources (discussed below). The Alpine Community Plan is designed to support the County General Plan, but has no specific policies related to visual resources. The San Diego County Zoning ordinance supports the policies of the County General Plan to preserve resources and to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of the residents of San Diego County. The County General Plan specifically states that visual resources are to be protected, such as scenic corridors, geographically extensive scenic viewsheds, and dark skies within the natural environment.

Goal COS-11 specifically addresses the policies of the County to protect visual resources, such as prohibiting billboards within scenic corridors and requiring new utilities to be underground. Goal COS-12 and COS-13 are also related to the preservation of visual resources, specifically the preservation of ridgelines and hillsides and dark skies. Furthermore, Highway 8 adjacent to the Project Site is designated a scenic highway by the County General Plan from the City of El Cajon to the Imperial County border.

3.13.3 Impacts

Significance Criteria

Impacts related to visual resources would be considered significant if the project were to adversely affect a scenic vista or scenic resource, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings or create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Alternative A: Proposed Project

Construction

Equipment usage and material staging during construction would occur onsite, and the views of construction would be partially to wholly blocked by the existing vegetation and topography. Furthermore, visual resources-related impacts from construction would be temporary in nature and would not result in obstructed views of designated scenic resources. Construction would primarily occur during daylight hours and therefore not create significant sources of new light during nighttime hours. Glare could be created from construction equipment, materials, and equipment, but views of the Project Site are primarily obstructed for motorists traveling on the surrounding roadways. Any glare that could be perceived by motorists or the limited surrounding residences would be temporary in nature and not a permanent feature. Therefore, the impact from lighting and glare during construction would be less than significant.

Operation

Alternative A would increase the level of development on the existing landscape, but the overall size and massing of the proposed facilities, less than 6,400 SF (0.14 acres), would be minor compared to the size of the Project Site. Such limited development on a sizeable landmass (48.5 acres) would not alter the visual character of the Project Site. Proposed land uses under Alternative A are generally consistent with the types and density of existing rural residential land uses surrounding the site, and those allowed under the current county land use designations and zoning as discussed in **Section 3.9.3**. Furthermore, as described in **Section 3.13.2**, there are limited views of the Project Site from the surrounding roadways. The roadway with the most unobstructed views, Star Valley Road, is not a through road with high traffic. Very few motorists would view the development on the Project Site as they drive on this roadway. Furthermore, the proposed development would not alter topography in such a way as to increase off-site views. As such, Alternative A would not significantly alter views of the Project Site and would not adversely affect the visual character of the area.

Shadows, Lights, and Glare

Alternative A will introduce limited new sources of light and glare within the Project Site. According to the BMPs in **Table 2.1-1,** the lighting proposed under Alternative A aligns with the requirements of the San Diego County Dark Sky Ordinance. This could include the use of fully shielded luminaires and prohibiting the use of non-shielded luminaries, limits on the intensity of brightness, and the use of warm-colored (lower Kelvin temperature) light sources, as these are less likely to contribute to skyglow. The County General Plan considers the issue of dark skies as it relates to the two recognized observatories: Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories. The Palomar Observatory is approximately 37.4 miles north of the Project Site, and the Mount Laguna Observatory is approximately 17.2 miles east of the Project Site. Given these considerable distances to the observatories and the commitment to incorporate the BMPs in **Table 2.1-1** for compliance with the San Diego County Dark Sky Ordinance, the impact on the observatories and the preservation of dark skies would be less than significant. Alternative A would not result in significant adverse effects associated with light emissions and glare.

Alternative B: No Action

No development would occur under Alternative B and the Project Site would remain in its current state. Therefore, no impacts to visual resources would occur.

Reasonably Foreseeable Cumulative Effects

As discussed in **Section 3.9** and **Section 3.13**, development of Alternative A would be compatible with the agricultural and rural nature of the surrounding area. Furthermore, Alternative A includes a BMP that would ensure that all development is consistent with the San Diego County Dark Sky Ordinance, and thus reduce adverse effects due to potential new lighting. Any future development in the vicinity of the Project Site would be subject to County design review and approval. Therefore, Alternative A would not contribute towards reasonably foreseeable adverse impacts on visual resources.

3.14 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, no physical changes to the Project Site would occur and the land would remain in its current state for the foreseeable future. Use of the Project Site would be limited to ongoing vegetation management through mowing or grazing, and limited use associated with the existing structures. Therefore, there would be no new environmental impacts.

Section 4 | Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures to address potentially significant impacts that could result from implementation of a federal action consist of the following:

- Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.
- Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.
- Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.
- Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

Mitigation measures to be implemented during construction and operation of Alternative A are summarized in the table below. Mitigation is enforceable because it is (1) inherent to the project design; and/or (2) required by federal or Tribal regulations.

Mitigation Measures

Resource Area	Proposed Mitigation
Biological Resources	**General Conservation Measure** ▪ To ensure avoidance and minimization measures from the USFWS consultation process are implemented, all activities conducted for construction and clearing will be monitored by a USFWS-approved biologist (Biologist). The Biologist will be familiar with the habitats, plants, and wildlife of the project area, and will maintain communications with project personnel to ensure that issues related to biological resources are appropriately and lawfully managed. The BIA will submit the Biologist's name, address, telephone number, and work schedule on the project to the USFWS for review and approval prior to initiating project impacts. The contract of the Biologist will allow direct communication with the USFWS at any time regarding the proposed project. The Biologist will be provided with a copy of this consultation. **Arroyo Toad, Western Spadefoot, and Southwestern Pond Turtle** ▪ A 4.58-acre conservation area, which includes no less than a 100-foot buffer from the edge of Viejas Creek and its associated riparian habitat, shall be maintained on the Walker parcel. No construction or ground-disturbing activities shall occur within the conservation area. ▪ Construction activities shall take place to the extent feasible from approximately December 1 through June 30 (depending on seasonal rains) during the spadefoot breeding season when the species is typically more active and closer to breeding habitat. ▪ The Biologist shall conduct a worker awareness training session for construction workers. The training shall identify the characteristics and habitat of the arroyo toad, spadefoot, and pond turtle, and the importance of halting work and contacting the Biologist if the species are observed within the Project Area during ground disturbance. ▪ A preconstruction survey for federally listed species shall be conducted immediately prior to installation of silt fencing to ensure the absence of federally listed species from the project area before exclusionary silt fencing is installed. ▪ Silt fencing shall be placed around areas of disturbance after the preconstruction survey and prior to earthmoving activities. Silt fencing shall not be installed until it is confirmed by the Biologist that federally listed species are absent from the project area. This will require that the preconstruction survey and silt fence installation are conducted during the western spadefoot breeding season (December 1 through June 30).

Resource Area	Proposed Mitigation
	▪ The Biologist shall be present for initial ground clearing activities and shall halt work if a federally listed species is observed. The animal shall be allowed to leave on its own and the Biologist shall maintain a halt to work until determining that recommencing work would not endanger the animal. ▪ If federally listed species are identified during monitoring, the Biologist shall submit a final report to the USFWS within 30 days following construction that documents the location and number of individuals observed as well as disposition (outside of project area, no action necessary; inside of project area, halt work enacted). Should a federally listed species be observed in the project area, and should the Biologist determine that relocation is necessary or that take is possible, construction activities shall halt and formal consultation with USFWS shall occur. Construction shall not continue until formal consultation with USFWS is concluded and any additional measures are put in place. ▪ Construction staging areas shall be designated and sited as far from surface waters as possible. ▪ Potential indirect effects to downstream water quality will be mitigated through a redundant storm water management system that aggressively filters runoff from the site. ▪ Selected landscaping will be chosen with the intent to minimize the need for herbicides and pesticides and when commercially reasonable, will include locally derived native species. ▪ Security lighting will utilize low illumination lighting directed towards both the building(s) and the ground to be reasonably consistent with the dark sky requirements of the County of San Diego and the protection of the Arroyo toad. ▪ Parking lot lighting will utilize a low illumination motion activated sensor system that, consistent with the security needs will be directed away from the creekside boundary, consistent with the dark sky requirements of San Diego and the protection of the arroyo toad. ▪ Employees shall strictly limit their activities and vehicles to the Proposed project area(s), staging areas, and routes of travel. ▪ Equipment maintenance, staging, and dispensing of fuel, oil, coolant, or any other such activities shall occur in designated areas. These designated areas shall be located in such a manner as to prevent any runoff from entering waters of the United States, including wetlands, and shall be located within exclusionary fencing (silt fencing described above) to prevent access to the area by Arroyo toads. ▪ Sediment/grease traps shall be maintained pursuant to manufacturers' recommendations, or at a minimum cleaned and maintained at least once a year prior to the onset of winter rains. ▪ The USFWS would be given the right to access and inspect the Project Site for compliance with mitigation during the creation/revegetation and construction phases. ▪ Preservation and management of the 4.58-acre conservation area shall be included in the Tribe's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan for the Reservation. The Plan shall include a funding mechanism to maintain the 4.58 acres in a natural state. This may include funding for trash removal, signage, and fencing if necessary. ▪ The Arroyo Toad Ordinance (02-14) authorized the Tribe to enter into an MOA with the USFWS specifically related to the health clinic project that was never constructed. As the existing MOA may require modifications, the Tribe shall consult with USFWS and, if necessary, shall enter into a new or amended MOA to provide for the management of the conservation area and the legal means to ensure adequate preservation of the conservation area. **Nesting Migratory Birds/Raptors** ▪ If construction activities occur during the general nesting season (February 15 to September 1), a preconstruction nest survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist within 500 feet of proposed construction areas within 5 days of initiating ground disturbance. ▪ If active nests are identified, the qualified biologist shall determine a suitable avoidance buffer based on the needs of the species observed. Avoidance measures may include establishment of a buffer zone using construction fencing or the postponement of vegetation removal until

Resource Area	Proposed Mitigation
	after the nesting season, or until after a qualified biologist has determined the young have fledged. Avoidance buffers may vary in size depending on habitat characteristics, project-related activities, and disturbance levels. ▪ Should work activity cease for 14 days or more during the nesting season, surveys shall be repeated to ensure birds and raptors have not established nests during inactivity.
Cultural Resources	▪ A Tribal Monitor or qualified archaeologist shall be present during initial ground disturbance to monitor for potential inadvertent discoveries during construction. ▪ In the event of any inadvertent discovery of prehistoric or historic archaeological resources during construction-related earth-moving activities, BIA Regional Archeologist will be immediately notified and finds shall be subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as amended (36 CFR Part 800). Specifically, procedures for post-review discoveries without prior planning pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.13 shall be followed. o All work within 50 feet of the find shall be halted until a professional archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications (36 CFR Part 61), or paleontologist if the find is of a paleontological nature, can assess the significance of the find in consultation with the BIA and other appropriate agencies. o If any find is determined to be significant by the Tribal Monitor or archaeologist or paleontologist, a BIA representative shall meet with the Tribe and Tribal Monitor or archaeologist or paleontologist to determine the appropriate course of action, including the development of a Treatment Plan and implementation of appropriate avoidance measures or other mitigation. o As requested, the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians will be notified of the find. ▪ If human remains are discovered during ground-disturbing activities both the Tribe and BIA Regional Archeologist shall be contacted immediately. Notifications shall occur consistent with the requirements of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and its implementing regulations, as applicable and revised. No further disturbance shall occur until the BIA and Tribal representatives have made the necessary findings as to the origin and disposition. If the remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the BIA and Tribe shall resolve which party will assume primary management authority for the discovery. Work may resume once appropriate measures have been taken and the party with primary management authority has provided written certification to the person responsible for the activity with the date on which activity may resume around the discovery and any appropriate conditions.
Noise	▪ During construction, loud stationary construction equipment shall be located as far away from residential receptor areas as feasible. To the extent feasible, existing barrier features (structures) shall be used to block sound transmission between noise sources and noise sensitive land uses. ▪ Construction equipment and machinery that produce reduced noise levels shall be utilized to the extent feasible. ▪ The Tribe shall monitor construction noise and will designate a disturbance coordinator (such as an employee of the general contractor or the project manager for the Tribe), post the coordinator's contact telephone number conspicuously around the Project Site, and provide the number to nearby sensitive receptors. The disturbance coordinator shall receive all public complaints, be responsible for determining the cause of the complaints, and implement any feasible measures to alleviate the problem.

Section 5 | Consultation & Coordination

This section lists agencies and organizations consulted during preparation of this EA, shown in the table below.

Agencies and Organizations Consulted

Agencies and Organizations Consulted	Summary of Consultation and Coordination
Federal	
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)	The USFWS was consulted to obtain a list of federally listed special-status species with the potential to occur in the vicinity of the Project Site. Additionally, the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory was consulted to identify potential wetlands and waters in the vicinity of the Project Site. A Biological Assessment was prepared for the Proposed Project and submitted by the BIA to USFWS (**Appendix F-1**), along with a request for consultation. On September 11, 2024, the USFWS issued a letter that concurred with the findings of the Biological Assessment that the Proposed Project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect federally listed species (**Appendix F-4**).
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)	The USEPA website was reviewed for information regarding NAAQS attainment status
U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)	The USGS website was reviewed for information concerning geological and hydrological information in addition to geological hazards.
U.S. Census Bureau (USCB)	The USCB website was reviewed for information concerning demographical data.
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website was reviewed for information concerning federal poverty guidelines to determining poverty.
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	The NRCS was consulted for data concerning farmland and soil characteristics information.
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics	The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website was reviewed to obtain labor statistics.
FEMA	FEMA floodplain maps were reviewed.
U.S. Census Bureau	The U.S. Census Bureau website was reviewed for information concerning demographical data.
State	
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	The California Natural Diversity Database was consulted to obtain a list of state-listed species and critical habitats with the potential to occur on or near the Project Site.
California Department of Transportation	The California Department of Transportation website was reviewed for information regarding scenic byways.
Local	
San Diego County	San Diego County planning documents, such as the General Plan, were consulted for information regarding numerous environmental topics, such as land use and public services.
San Diego County Sanitation District	The website was consulted for information regarding sewer service areas.

Agencies and Organizations Consulted	Summary of Consultation and Coordination
San Diego County Sheriff's Office	The website was consulted for information regarding law enforcement.
County of San Diego Department of Public Works	The website was consulted for information regarding solid waste service.
San Diego Gas and Electric	The website was consulted for information regarding electricity and natural gas services.
Town of Alpine	Planning documents related to the Town of Alpine, such as the Alpine Community Plan, were consulted.
Alpine Fire Protection District	The Alpine Fire Protection District website was consulted for information regarding fire services.

Section 6 | Preparers

This section lists the preparers of this EA as shown in the table below**.**

List of Preparers

Name	Qualifications	Title
Acorn Environmental		
Ryan Sawyer, AICP	BA; 20+ years of experience; certified environmental planner by the American Institute of Certified Planners	Project Director
Kt Alonzo	BS; 10+ years of experience	Project Manager and Senior Biologist
Jennifer Wade	BA; 17+ years of experience	Senior Environmental Analyst
Josh Ferris	BA; 21+ years of experience	Senior Environmental Analyst
Annalee Sanborn	BS; 11+ years or experience	Senior Environmental Analyst
Kelli Raymond	BS; 10+ years of experience	Senior Environmental Analyst/Biologist
Kimberly Fuchs	BS, +20 years of experience	Senior Environmental Analyst
Kristen Miner	BS, MS; 8+ years of experience	Environmental Analyst
Geo Graening	BS, MS, PHD; 25+ years of experience	Senior Biologist
Jeremy Huey	BA, MS; 10+ years of experience	Graphics
Natural Investigations		
John Nadolski	M.A.; 30 years of experience	Principal Investigator (Cultural Resources)
Natalie Marshall	BA; 1 year of experience	Field Investigator (Cultural Resources)
Phil Hanes	M.A. RPA; 15+ years of experience	Principal and Archaeologist (Cultural Resources)
Joel Rudewicz	M.A., R.P.A.; 15+ years of experience	Principal Investigator (Cultural Resources)

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