



DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
VALERIE TERMINI, Acting Director



February 9, 2026

Magda Gonzalez, Senior Planner
City of Hollister
Community Development Department
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Hollister, California 95023
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**Subject: Meridian Village (Subdivision and Multifamily Development) (Project)
Notice of Preparation (NOP)
State Clearinghouse No.: 2025121246**

Dear Magda Gonzalez:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received a NOP from the City of Hollister pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under Fish and Game Code.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's **Trustee Agency** for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish and Game Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (*Id.*, § 1802).

CDFW is also submitting comments as a **Responsible Agency** under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, activities evaluated in the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority (Fish and Game Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California

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Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), related authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code may be required.

Nesting Birds: CDFW has jurisdiction over actions with potential to result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections that protect birds, their eggs and nests include sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession, or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession, or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird).

Unlisted Species: Species of plants and animals need not be officially listed as Endangered, Rare, or Threatened (E, R, or T) on any State or federal list to be considered E, R, or T under CEQA. If a species can be shown to meet the criteria for E, R, or T, as specified in the CEQA Guidelines section 15380, CDFW recommends it be fully considered in the environmental analysis for the Project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: Colette Fahmy

Objective: The Project entails subdividing a 12.75-acre parcel into five lots and constructing a total of 219 residential units (90 apartments and 129 condominiums) with associated public and private streets. Lot 1 will be 89,104-square feet with five apartment buildings, each building consisting of 18 units for a total of 90-apartment units, as well as a 16,170-square foot recreation center and private park area. Lots 2 through 5 would be developed with 3-, 4-, 5-, and 6-unit townhome-style buildings for a total of 129 condominium units. Lot 2 will be 40,058-square feet; Lot 3 will be 85,861-square feet; Lot 4 will be 89,205-square feet; and Lot 5 will be 50,163-square feet.

Location: The Project site is located within the City of Hollister on the south side of Meridian Street and west of State Route 25 at Hillcrest Rd. The Project is located within Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 054-600-005

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist the City of Hollister in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) prepared for the Project.

Based on a review of aerial imagery, the Project site is comprised of previously cultivated wheat, that is regularly disked, and has a high density of non-native ruderal

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species, including several species of mustard (Brassicaceae family). The Project site may contain suitable habitat for several special-status species, including, but not limited to, the State candidate Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) and State species of special concern western red bat (*Lasiurus frantzii*).

Crotch's Bumble bee

The Project site is within the range of Crotch's bumblebee (CBB) (CDFW 2026). CBB are known to inhabit areas of grasslands, scrub habitat, and ruderal vegetation that contain requisite habitat elements for nesting, such as small mammal burrows and bunch/thatched grasses, and these habitat elements may be present within the Project site. As such, CDFW recommends a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment to determine if the Project site and the immediate surrounding vicinity contain habitat suitable to support CBB. Potential nesting sites, which include all small mammal burrows, perennial bunch grasses, thatched annual grasses, brush piles, old bird nests, and hollow logs would need to be documented as part of the assessment.

If it is determined that suitable CBB habitat is present within the Project site, CDFW recommends the DEIR include the following measures:

Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: CBB Surveys

If potentially suitable habitat is identified, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for CBB, and their requisite habitat features following the methodology outlined in the Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act Candidate Bumble Bee Species (CDFW 2023), prior to the initiation of construction within the Project site.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: CBB Avoidance

If CBB is detected, then CDFW recommends that all small mammal burrows and thatched/bunch grasses be avoided by a minimum of 50 feet to avoid take and potentially significant impacts. If ground-disturbing activities will occur during the overwintering period (October through February), consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement Project activities and avoid take. Any detection of CBB prior to or during Project implementation within the Project site warrants consultation with CDFW to discuss how to avoid take.

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Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: CBB Take Authorization

If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an Incidental Take Permit (ITP), pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081 subdivision (b) is necessary to comply with CESA.

Special-status Bats

The rescinded Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) that was originally prepared for the Project identified mitigation measures to address potential impacts to special-status bat species, including the western red bat, that may occur within the Project site. CDFW concurs with these measures and recommends their inclusion in the DEIR to mitigate for potential impacts to special-status bats.

EDITORIAL NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

Cumulative Impacts

CDFW recommends that a cumulative impact analysis be conducted for all biological resources that will either be significantly or potentially significantly impacted by implementation of the Project, including those whose impacts are determined to be less than significant with mitigation incorporated or for those resources that are rare or in poor or declining health and will be impacted by the Project, even if those impacts are relatively small (i.e., less than significant). Cumulative impacts are recommended to be analyzed using an acceptable methodology to evaluate the impacts of this Project's incremental contribution to habitat loss and past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects on resources and be focused specifically on the resource, not the Project. An appropriate resource study area should also be identified and mapped for each resource being analyzed and utilized for this analysis. CDFW staff are available for consultation in support of cumulative impacts analyses as a trustee and responsible agency under CEQA.

Nesting birds

The rescinded MND identified mitigation measures to address potential impacts on nesting birds that may occur within the Project site. CDFW concurs with these measures and recommends their inclusion with the DEIR.

California Natural Diversity Database

Please note that the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) is populated by and records voluntary submissions of species detections. As a result, species may be

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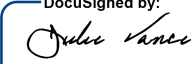
present in locations not depicted in the CNDDDB but where there is suitable habitat and features capable of supporting species. A lack of an occurrence record in the CNDDDB does not mean a species is not present. In order to adequately assess any potential Project-related impacts to biological resources, surveys conducted by a qualified biologist/botanist during the appropriate survey period(s) and using the appropriate protocol survey methodology are warranted in order to determine whether or not any special status species are present at or near the Project site.

CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the NOP to assist the City of Hollister in identifying and mitigating this Project's impacts on biological resources.

More information on survey and monitoring protocols for sensitive species can be found at CDFW's website (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols>). Please see the enclosed, Attachment 1, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) table, which corresponds with recommended mitigation measures in this comment letter. Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Evelyn Barajas-Perez, Environmental Scientist, at (805) 503-5738 or evelyn.barajas-perez@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

FA83F09FE08945A...
Julie A. Vance
Regional Manager

Attachments

Attachment 1 - MMRP

ec: State Clearinghouse
Governor's Office of Planning and Research
State.Clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

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REFERENCES

California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2023. Survey considerations for California Endangered Species Act (CESA) candidate bumble bee species. California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Sacramento, California, USA.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2026. Biogeographic information and observation system. <<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/BIOS>>. Accessed January 23, 2026.

Attachment 1

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM
(MMRP)**

**PROJECT: Meridian Village (Subdivision and Multifamily
Development) (Project)**

SCH No.: 2025121246

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURE	STATUS/DATE/INITIALS
<i>Before Disturbing Soil or Vegetation</i>	
Crotch's Bumble bee	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: CBB Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: CBB Take Authorization	
<i>During Construction</i>	
Crotch's Bumble bee	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: CBB Avoidance	