



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Northern Region
601 Locust Street
Redding, CA 96001
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
MEGHAN HERTEL, Director



February 19, 2026

Drew Plebani
Director
County of Trinity
530 623-1351
Trinity2050@trinitycounty.org

SUBJECT: Review of Trinity County General Plan Update, Notice of Preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Report, State Clearing House Number 2026010191

Dear Drew Plebani:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has reviewed the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the above-referenced project (Project). CDFW appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Project, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines¹.

CDFW's 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 G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Public Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its Trustee Agency 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). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting comments as a Responsible Agency under CEQA (Public Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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proposed may result in “take” as defined by state law, of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish and G. Code, § 2050 et seq.) or state listed rare plants pursuant to the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA; Fish and G. Code § 1900 et seq.), authorization as provided by the applicable Fish and Game Code will be required.

Project Summary

Proponent: Trinity County

Objective: Trinity County, as Lead Agency, proposes to prepare a comprehensive update to its General Plan to evaluate potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the preferred land use scenario within the Plan Area through the year 2050.

Project Description: Trinity County is updating its General Plan, which covers topics including land use, transportation, housing, conservation, open space, and public safety. The objectives of the General Plan Update include:

- Express the community's vision for Trinity County's future
- Provide a balance between growth and conservation that meets community needs and protects Trinity County's quality of life
- Inform residents, developers, and decision makers of the ground rules that guide development
- Ensure that development occurs in an efficient, orderly manner that minimizes costs to taxpayers
- Engage in a comprehensive and inclusive outreach process

The Project also includes related updates to the County's Zoning Code to more specifically outline allowable uses and permitting processes for development on parcels throughout Trinity County, to reflect changes in State law, and ensure consistency with the 2050 General Plan.

Biological Setting: Trinity County lies within the Klamath Mountains Ecoregion, known to be a biodiversity hotspot characterized by rugged mountains, deep river canyons, and interspersed valleys that create a complex mosaic of habitats^{2,3}. Elevations range from low-lying valleys along the Trinity River to high mountain peaks, supporting diverse vegetation communities including

² USDA Forest Service. 1999. *Klamath Province Ecology and Management*.

³ Ricketts, T.H., et al. 1999. *Terrestrial Ecoregions of North America: A Conservation Assessment*.

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coniferous forests, oak woodlands, riparian corridors, grasslands, and montane meadows⁴. The Trinity River and its tributaries provide critical habitat for anadromous fish species such as Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Coho Salmon (*O. kisutch*), and steelhead trout (*O. mykiss*), which are listed under CESA⁵. Riparian zones and aquatic habitats also support other state sensitive species, including foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylei*), ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*) and western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*)^{5,6}. Upland habitats in mountainous terrain provide for northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), fisher (*Pekania pennanti*), and western bumblebee (*Bombus occidentalis*).

The Klamath Mountains Ecoregion is notable for its high level of endemism, driven by unique geology and serpentine soils that support specialized plant communities^{7,8}. Endemic and near-endemic species in Trinity County include Trinity buckwheat (*Eriogonum alpinum*), Scott Mountain phacelia (*Phacelia dalesiana*), Trinity Mountains fritillary (*Fritillaria glauca*), and Klamath manzanita (*Arctostaphylos klamathensis*)^{4,5}. Invertebrates such as the Trinity bristle snail (*Monadenia infumata setosa*) and other localized mollusks also occur in specialized habitat throughout the Project area⁹. These species often have very limited distributions, making them highly vulnerable to habitat disturbance.

Comments and Recommendations

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations below to assist the Lead Agency in adequately identifying, avoiding, minimizing and/or mitigating potentially significant, direct, and indirect impacts on biological resources with the implementation of Trinity County's General Plan update.

To enable CDFW to provide adequate and meaningful CEQA review, please ensure the DEIR discloses all potentially significant impacts and includes feasible, effective, and enforceable mitigation measures implemented through legally binding instruments (PRC §21081.6(b); CEQA Guidelines §§15126.4, 15041, 15097). Mitigation measures should specify responsible parties, timing,

⁴ Hickman, J.C. (ed.). 1993. *The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California*.

⁵ California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2024. Special Animals List.

⁶ Thomson, R.C., et al. 2016. *California Amphibian and Reptile Species of Special Concern*.

⁷ Kruckeberg, A.R. 1984. *California Serpentine: Flora, Vegetation, Geology, Soils, and Management Problems*.

⁸ Sawyer, J.O., et al. 2009. *A Manual of California Vegetation*.

⁹ Roth, B. 1981. *Distribution of Land Snails in Northwestern California*.

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actions, and monitoring to ensure compliance with a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP).

1) **Biological Resource Assessment**

The DEIR should include a complete biological resource assessment of the planning area, to contain:

- a. A discussion of major habitat types, sensitive natural communities, and biodiversity hotspots within Trinity County. Emphasize resources that are rare or unique to the region (CEQA Guidelines §15125(c)).
- b. Known occurrences of rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species within the planning area. Consult CNDDDB, Rarefind, and publicly available databases (e.g., iNaturalist, eBird). Include California Species of Special Concern and Fully Protected species (Fish & Game Code §§3511, 4700, 5050, 5515). Identify and evaluate the planning area for rare, threatened, endangered species, Species of Special Concern, and Fully Protected species (FGC §§3511, 4700, 5050, 5515). Seasonal habitat should be considered and addressed. See CDFW's [Survey and Monitoring Protocols and Guidelines](#)¹⁰ for established survey protocol for select species.
- c. Mapped Sensitive Natural Communities (S1-S4 ranks) and/or rare plant communities that occur throughout the planning area. Please visit [Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program](#)¹¹, [Manual of California Vegetation](#)¹² and the [California Native Plant Society Inventory of Rare Plants](#)¹³

2) **Impact Analysis**

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines sections 15126.2 and 15130, the DEIR should analyze the following potential impacts of the Project on biological resources:

¹⁰ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols>

¹¹ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/Natural-Communities>

¹² <https://vegetation.cnps.org/>

¹³ <https://rareplants.cnps.org/Search/Advanced>

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- a. A discussion regarding Project-related impacts on biological resources, including resources in nearby public lands, open space, adjacent natural habitats, riparian ecosystems, and any designated and/or proposed or existing reserve lands [e.g., preserve lands associated with a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP, Fish & G. Code, § 2800 et. seq.)].
- b. A discussion of both the short-term and long-term effects to species population distribution and concentration and alterations of the ecosystem supporting the species impacted [CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.2(a)];
- c. A discussion of potential adverse impacts from lighting, noise, temporary and permanent human activity, human-wildlife conflict, non-native/invasive species;
- d. A discussion on future Project-related changes of drainage patterns; the volume, velocity, and frequency of existing and post-Project surface flows; polluted runoff; soil erosion and/or sedimentation in streams and water bodies; and, post-Project fate of runoff from the Project sites. The discussion should also address the potential water extraction activities and the potential resulting impacts on the habitat (if any) supported by the groundwater. Mitigation measures proposed to alleviate such Project impacts should be included.
- e. An analysis of impacts from proposed future changes to land use designations and zoning, and existing land use designation and zoning located nearby or adjacent to natural areas that may inadvertently contribute to wildlife-human interactions. A discussion of possible conflicts and mitigation measures to reduce these conflicts should be included in the DEIR; and
- f. A cumulative effects analysis, as described under CEQA Guidelines section 15130. General and specific plans, as well as past, present, and anticipated future projects, should be analyzed relative to their impacts on similar plant and wildlife species, habitat, and vegetation communities. If the Lead Agency determines that the Project would not have a cumulative impact, the environmental document should indicate why the cumulative impact is not significant. The Lead

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Agencies conclusion should be supported by facts and analyses [CEQA Guidelines, § 15130(a)(2)].

3) **Specific Considerations for Trinity County's Biological Resources**

The following information is pertinent in the formulation of a comprehensive DEIR, and the functionality and effectiveness of Trinity County's updated General Plan in relation to Trinity County's biological resources.

a. California Special Status Species

Based species occurrence records from the [CNDDDB](#)¹⁴ and CDFW's [Rarefind](#)¹⁵ query tool, the Project area has the potential to support over 162 state special-status species. CDFW recommends the DEIR discuss the Project's potentially significant impacts on these species and their associated habitats, and include applicable avoidance, minimization, and mitigation strategies for reducing impacts to less than significant.

b. Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Connectivity

According to the California Essential Habitat Connectivity dataset available in CDFW's [Biogeographic Information System](#)¹⁶ (BIOS), the Project area bisects several Essential Connectivity Areas (ECA). Similarly, the [California Fish Passage Assessment Database](#)¹⁷, available in BIOS, indicates 277 unassessed, partial and total fish passage barriers. ECA's support native biodiversity and areas essential for ecological connectivity between them. If future Project facilitation has the potential to impact the ecological integrity and function of wildlife corridors supporting resident and transient wildlife movement, such habitat fragmentation could threaten the viability of remaining natural resources. Maintaining, evaluating, and remediating wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity is essential in evaluating longevity of species and remains increasingly important with consideration to California's existing and continued habitat loss and climate change. For more information regarding the importance of habitat connectivity, framework for local analyses and implementation, the [California](#)

¹⁴ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB>

¹⁵ <https://apps.wildlife.ca.gov/rarefind/view/RareFind.aspx>

¹⁶ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/BIOS>

¹⁷ <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/PAD/>

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[Essential Habitat Connectivity Project¹⁸](#) may be a useful resource.

c. Deer Winter Range and Migration Corridors

Fish and Game Code sections 450-460 specify the CDFW's authority for management of deer herds in California. Fish and Game Code section 450 states that it is "*the policy of the Legislature to encourage the conservation, restoration, maintenance, and utilization of California's wild deer populations...*" CDFW has found that land management activities such as grazing, timber practices, agricultural practices and human encroachment due to development may cause a marked decrease in critical deer winter range.

BIOS indicates critical deer winter habitat occurs throughout the County¹⁹. While some resident deer in Trinity County do not migrate, most exhibit seasonal elevational movements influenced by weather. True migrators follow defined summer and winter ranges annually, while others remain in summer and transitional ranges until snow forces them to lower-elevation winter range. Deer may move between ranges throughout winter during snowfall events. Winter diets consist mainly of browse species. Maintaining a mosaic of early- to late-seral habitats in winter range is vital because early seral forests provide nutrition and mid/late seral forests offer thermal cover. Critical winter range is generally below 3,500 feet with southern exposure and is essential during harsh winters. Key areas include:

- Southwest Trinity: Van Duzen, North Fork Eel, Mad River watersheds, Long Ridge
- Central Trinity: Hyampom and Hayfork Valleys (Kingsbury Gulch, Salt Creek, Hayfork Creek, East Fork Hayfork Creek)
- Other Areas: Around Trinity Lake, Lewiston Valley, Trinity River corridor (Lewiston–Burnt Ranch), Weaverville Valley (East/West Weaver Creeks, Sidney, Munger, Gardner Gulches, Oregon Mountain), Browns Creek and Reading Creek watersheds (near Douglas City)

The DEIR should analyze the potential significant impact the Project

¹⁸ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/Connectivity/CEHC>

¹⁹ California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2006. Mule Deer Range – Region 1 [ds277]. BIOS. Available at: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/BIOS>

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policies may have on quality and quantity of critical deer winter range as well as the ability of deer to migrate from spring and summer range to winter range. The analysis should include a discussion of the impact of land changes and development, parcel subdivisions, habitat fragmentation, loss of migration and travel corridors, loss of water sources due to development, loss of mineral springs, loss thermal refugia, loss of foraging areas, and establishment of new roads, developments, etc.

d. Human and Wildlife Conflict

The County's expansive open space within, and adjacent to, urban centers result in humans living within proximity to wild animals and their natural habitats. As our human population continues to expand into wildlife habitat, human-wildlife interactions continue to increase. Conflict between humans and wildlife is a growing concern in developing areas, especially where the conflict results in livestock losses, property damage, spread of wildlife diseases, animal welfare issues and/or mortality. For information about preventing potential conflict for a variety of wildlife species, please visit [Human-Wildlife Conflict²⁰](#). CDFW offers the following recommendations when considering the inclusion of General Plan policies and adoption of subsequent ordinances to avoid human and wildlife conflict:

- i. Wildlife Friendly Fencing- CDFW understands fences are essential for controlling livestock and trespass however, inappropriately designed or installed fencing may create serious hazards and/or barriers for wildlife. Therefore, CDFW strongly encourages the Lead Agency to consider a policy that includes perimeter fencing, and residential fencing to be constructed with wildlife friendly fencing techniques, to reduce the potential of injury or death and provide safe connections and corridors between the habitats that wildlife species use during daily and annual movements. Please consult [A Landowner's Guide to Wildlife Friendly Fences: How to Build Fence with Wildlife in Mind²¹](#) for construction recommendations and use of wildlife friendly fencing. CDFW staff are also available to assist in providing further recommendations for effective wildlife friendly

²⁰ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/HWC>

²¹ fwp.mt.gov/binaries/content/assets/fwp/conservation/land-owner-wildlife-resources/a_landowners_guide_to_wildlife_friendly_fences.pdf

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fencing techniques and the locations where they should be used.

- ii. Watering and Feeding Ungulates- California is home to many native ungulate species, including elk, mule deer, and pronghorn. They may be found in diverse habitats throughout the state that may include remote, rural, and residential areas. These animals may live in resident or migratory herds.
- iii. Watering and feeding ungulates can have negative consequences for both the species population and the surrounding ecosystem. Providing food may lead to habituated animals, dependency on human-provided food sources, overcrowding, and has been known to lead to disease transmission among herds. CDFW recommends the Lead Agency develop local policies and enforceable codes aimed at preventing watering and feeding of ungulates, and allowing for the construction of deer exclusion fencing in appropriate locations as part of an updated general plan. CDFW staff are available to assist the Lead Agency in targeting most appropriate locations for installing exclusionary fencing where it would be most effective. For more information, please visit [Human-Wildlife Conflicts: Ungulates²²](#).
- iv. Human-Wildlife Conflict with Black Bears- Black bears provide many ecosystem benefits by serving as seed dispersers, scavengers, and predators. They are omnivores and will consume nearly anything, including seeds, plants, berries, other animals, pet food, human food, and trash. Improperly stored garbage, bird feeders, fruit trees and accessible pet food can attract bears which is likely to result in bears becoming habituated to and losing their fear of humans. This change in bear behavior can lead to an increase in bear encounters, property damage, loss of small livestock or pets. CDFW recommends the Lead Agency develop policies and enforceable codes aimed at preventing bear and human conflict as part of current or future General Plan updates. For more information about preventing potential conflicts with black bears, please visit [Human-Wildlife Conflicts: Black Bears²³](#).

²² <https://wildlife.ca.gov/HWC/ungulates>

²³ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/HWC/Black-Bears>

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e. Jurisdictional Waters

The Trinity River, and its many tributaries, occur throughout the Project area. These waters have the potential to be significantly impacted by future development, mining activities, and encroachment. As a Responsible Agency under CEQA, CDFW has authority over activities in rivers, lakes, and streams or any such activities, the project proponent (or "entity") must provide written notification to CDFW pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1602 et seq.

To preserve and protect the integrity of these resources, CDFW recommends including AMM's and General Plan policies to ensure effective setbacks from future proposed encroachment and land modification/disturbances. The DEIR should provide a justification for the effectiveness of the chosen distance for the setback. CDFW recommends including and evaluating future Project-related changes in upstream and downstream drainage patterns, runoff, and sedimentation to these resources.

f. Wild and Scenic Rivers

The United States legislature enacted the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) in 1968 to preserve rivers and their immediate environments with "*outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values*" in their "*free-flowing condition*" (16 USC §1271). The California legislature followed suit in 1972 with the California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (California WSRA). Similar to the federal WSRA, the California WSRA's stated purpose is to preserve rivers and their immediate environments with "*extraordinary scenic, recreational, fishery, or wildlife values*" in their "*freeflowing state*" (PRC § 5093.50). The Trinity River, segments of its North and South Forks and the New River, were protected under the California WSRA in 1972 and under the federal WSRA in 1981.

Many factors may influence the Project's impact on the Wild and Scenic River designation of the Trinity River and its tributaries, including changes to the scenic, recreational, fisheries, and/or wildlife resources. Scenery may be impacted by changes to flow, water appearance, fish and wildlife viewing, and visual effects of facilities within the viewshed of the river. Recreation may be impacted by changes to

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water quality related aesthetic odors, tastes, contacts, and public health and safety aspects as well as the odor of cannabis within the river corridor. Fisheries may be impacted by changes to streamflow, water temperature, water quality, and quality of aquatic habitat. Wildlife may be impacted by changes to, or loss of, habitat as a result of Project activities. The DEIR should analyze the impact of the proposed Project on the WSRA-listed rivers and, if necessary, propose measures which seek to avoid, minimize, and ultimately preserve the character of the WSRA-listed rivers.

g. Policies Linking Development and Conservation

CDFW recommends the Lead Agency consider aligning Plan policies with regional and state-wide natural resource conservation strategies, such as those outlined in the following reports, when developing policies for the updated Plan: [Safeguarding California Plan](#)²⁴; [California State Wildlife Action Plan: A Conservation Legacy for Californians](#)²⁵; [California 2030 Natural and Working Lands Climate Change Implementation Plan](#)²⁶ and [30 X 30 California](#)²⁷.

Aligning local Plan policies with regional and statewide conservation strategies ensures consistency with broader climate resilience and biodiversity goals, improves ecological outcomes, and positions the Plan to meet future regulatory requirements. It also enhances eligibility for funding and technical resources, supports science-based habitat and connectivity priorities, and helps communities adapt to climate change while reducing risks such as wildfire and habitat loss.

4) **Draft Trinity County General Plan 2050**

The following recommendations are specific to the Revised Public Review Draft of the Trinity County General Plan 2050 (Plan).

a. County Operations, Permitting and Regulatory Compliance

The Plan Update includes policies intended to protect riparian corridors, water quality, and aquatic resources, including policies

²⁴ <https://www.slc.ca.gov/sea-level-rise/safeguarding-california-plan-2018-update/>

²⁵ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/SWAP>

²⁶ <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-10/draft-nwl-ip-040419.pdf>

²⁷ <https://opc.ca.gov/30x30/>

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requiring avoidance and minimization of impacts to streams and riparian vegetation (Conservation and Open Space Element, Riparian Resources policies, pp. 5-22 through 5-31). However, the Plan does not clearly address how County-led activities, such as vegetation removal, road maintenance, and clearing of encampments, will consistently comply with these same policies and applicable regulatory permitting requirements.

While the Plan broadly encourages regulatory compliance, it does not include specific implementation measures requiring County departments to obtain regulatory approvals, such as streambed alteration agreements, or coordinate internally on avoidance and minimization measures when County activities intersect streams or riparian areas. The Plan should be strengthened to explicitly require that County-initiated projects adhere to the same environmental review, permitting, and Best Management Practice standards expected of private development. Doing so would improve internal consistency and ensure that the Plan's conservation policies are meaningfully implemented.

b. Environmental Justice

The Environmental Justice Element appropriately recognizes that land use decisions can disproportionately affect vulnerable populations and emphasizes equitable access to a healthy environment (Environmental Justice Element, pp. 3-1 through 3-14). However, the Plan does not adequately reconcile these goals with environmental protection policies where encampments occur in riparian corridors and other sensitive habitats.

The Plan does not address how encampment management actions, such as vegetation removal or displacement, may result in unintended environmental impacts, including degradation of riparian vegetation and water quality. Nor does it identify coordinated strategies, such as provision of sanitation facilities or designated low-impact areas, that could reduce both environmental harm and public health risks. CDFW recommends explicitly integrating environmental justice considerations into land use and resource protection policies affecting unhoused populations.

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c. Open Space Designations and Conflicting Allowed Uses

The Open Space Element identifies wildlife habitat, floodplains, and riparian areas as resources warranting protection (Open Space Element, pp. 5-1 through 5-15). However, the Plan also allows certain uses within open space designations, including unimproved camps and small-scale mining operations, without clearly evaluating how these uses may conflict with conservation objectives when located in environmentally sensitive areas.

The Plan does not appear to distinguish between public and private lands or analyze cumulative impacts associated with these allowed uses in riparian corridors and flood-prone areas. The Plan should clarify where such uses are appropriate, establish policies to minimize environmental impacts, or reconsider their compatibility with open space designations intended to protect fish and wildlife habitat.

d. Roads, Sedimentation and Infrastructure Maintenance

The Circulation Element emphasizes maintaining existing transportation infrastructure while conserving financial and natural resources (Circulation Element, pp. 4-8 through 4-16). The Conservation Element similarly recognizes the importance of protecting water quality from sedimentation (pp. 5-18 through 5-22). However, the Plan does not appear to fully acknowledge that County-maintained roads and drainage infrastructure are a significant source of sedimentation to streams.

While maintenance is encouraged, the Plan does not identify how the County will address known issues such as undersized culverts, failing drainage features, upgrading ford-style crossings, or lack of routine maintenance where roads intersect waterways. CDFW recommends Plan explicitly recognizing road-related sedimentation as an ongoing impact and by committing to funding, staffing, and permitting strategies—including routine maintenance agreements to reduce sediment delivery from existing infrastructure.

e. Roads, Wildlife Connectivity and Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions

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The Plan recognizes the importance of preserving fish and wildlife habitat and maintaining wildlife movement corridors (Conservation and Open Space Element, pp. 5-10 through 5-18). The Circulation Element similarly emphasizes safe and efficient operation of the County's road system (pp. 4-1 through 4-8). However, the Plan does not appear to include road infrastructure and wildlife connectivity, including the continued issue of wildlife–vehicle collisions.

Roads and associated infrastructure can fragment habitat and disrupt aquatic and terrestrial movement corridors, increasing mortality risks for wildlife and safety hazards for motorists. While the Plan supports habitat conservation in principle, it does not identify strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate road-related barriers to wildlife movement, nor does it address collision hotspots or opportunities for improvement during road maintenance or upgrades.

CDFW recommends policies that acknowledge wildlife–vehicle collisions as both a public safety and wildlife conservation issue, identification of key wildlife movement corridors and collision hotspots in coordination with state and federal resource agencies, incorporating wildlife connectivity considerations into road maintenance, realignment, and improvement projects, including culvert sizing (oversized box culverts), underpass and overpasses for terrestrial wildlife, drainage structures that may also function as wildlife passage; and supporting feasible mitigation measures, such as signage, speed management, or design features, where warranted.

Explicitly addressing wildlife connectivity in transportation planning would improve consistency between the Plan's circulation, public safety, and conservation goals while reducing long-term risks to both wildlife and the traveling public.

f. Utility Infrastructure Maintenance, Stream Crossings and Fire Risk Reduction

The Plan appropriately supports modernization, hardening, and improved siting of utility transmission facilities to reduce wildfire risk and avoid land use incompatibilities (Goal PFSI-4; Policies PFSI-4.3 and 4.4). These policies are directionally appropriate and responsive to wildfire

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hazards. However, the Plan does not adequately address the biological and hydrologic impacts associated with utility access, construction, and ongoing maintenance activities, particularly where such activities occur at stream crossings or along utility access roads.

While the Plan emphasizes wildfire risk reduction, it does not include specific policies requiring utility providers to maintain, repair, and restore stream crossings, access roads, and other disturbed areas following construction, maintenance, or emergency response activities. In the absence of enforceable standards for erosion control, sediment prevention, and timely site stabilization, especially where work occurs during or immediately following the wet season, utility infrastructure activities may result in chronic sediment delivery, altered drainage patterns, and degradation of aquatic and riparian habitats. These impacts can contribute to indirect and cumulative effects on fish and wildlife resources that are not fully addressed by existing Plan policies.

CDFW recommends including policies that require post-work restoration, inspection, and maintenance of utility-related disturbances, and by identifying clear implementation and enforcement mechanisms administered by qualified County staff or through binding agreements with utility providers. In addition, the DEIR should evaluate whether implementation of Policies PFSI-4.3 and 4.4 may facilitate increased utility access and maintenance activities in sensitive areas, including waterways and riparian corridors, and whether additional Plan policies or mitigation measures are necessary to ensure that wildfire risk reduction efforts do not result in unintended adverse impacts to biological resources.

g. Illegal Dumping and Protection of Rural and Natural Lands

The Plan includes policies addressing solid waste management, focusing on the provision of waste services, compliance with state regulations, and long-term disposal needs (Public Services and Facilities Element, pp. 7-8 through 7-12). However, these policies do not explicitly acknowledge illegal dumping in rural, forested, and remote areas as an ongoing environmental issue in Trinity County.

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Illegal dumping directly undermines many of the Plan's stated goals, including protection of water quality, preservation of wildlife habitat, scenic resources, and public health (Conservation and Open Space Element, pp. 5-18 through 5-31). Despite these clear connections, the Plan does not identify dumping as a source of pollution, habitat degradation, or wildfire risk, nor does it address the enforcement and access challenges associated with managing waste in remote areas.

Additionally, illegal dumping may disproportionately affect vulnerable communities and areas lacking adequate services, yet it is not discussed within the Environmental Justice Element (pp. ~3-1–3-14). The absence of policies addressing this issue leaves a gap between identified environmental protection goals and on-the-ground conditions. CDFW recommends including policies to address illegal dumping in the rural and natural lands of Trinity County.

Regulatory Requirements

California Endangered Species Act (CESA)

Reasonably foreseeable future projects may be subject to CDFW's regulatory authority pursuant to CESA. CDFW is responsible for ensuring appropriate conservation of fish and wildlife resources including threatened, endangered, and candidate plant and animal species, pursuant to [CESA](#)²⁸. Listed species that a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) be obtained if future proposed Projects have the potential to result in "take" (California Fish and Game Code Section 86 defines "take" as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill") of state-listed species, either through construction or over the life of the project.

CDFW encourages early consultation, as significant modification to the proposed Project and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures (AMM's) may be necessary to obtain a CESA ITP. CDFW must comply with CEQA for issuance of CESA ITP. CDFW therefore recommends that the DEIR address all Project impacts to CESA-listed species and specify a mitigation monitoring and reporting program that will meet the requirements of CESA. Based on review of CNDDDB, the NOP and local knowledge of the Project area, CESA-listed species have the potential to occur onsite.

²⁸ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CESA>

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Lake and Streambed Alteration Program (LSA)

Future project implementation associated with the General Plan update may require notification under Fish and Game Code section 1602. Fish and Game Code section 1602 requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may do one or more of the following: Substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream or lake; substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel or bank of any river, stream, or lake; or deposit debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream or lake. Please note that "any river, stream or lake" includes those that are episodic (i.e., those that are dry for periods of time) as well as those that are perennial (i.e., those that flow year-round). This includes ephemeral streams, desert washes, and water courses with a subsurface flow.

Upon receipt of a complete notification, CDFW determines if the proposed Project activities may substantially adversely affect existing fish and wildlife resources and whether a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement is required. An LSA Agreement includes measures necessary to protect existing fish and wildlife resources. CDFW may suggest ways to modify a Project that would eliminate or reduce harmful impacts to fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW's issuance of an LSA Agreement is a discretionary action subject to CEQA (see Pub. Resources Code 21065). To facilitate issuance of an LSA Agreement, if necessary, the DEIR should fully identify the potential impacts to the lake, stream, or riparian resources, and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, and monitoring and reporting commitments. Early consultation with CDFW is recommended since modification of the proposed Project may be required to avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources. Please visit [CDFW's Lake and Streambed Alteration Program](#)²⁹ for additional information.

Fully Protected Species

Fully protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time and authorization may not be issued for their take except as follows: The take is for necessary scientific research, efforts are to recover a fully protected, endangered, or threatened species, live capture and relocation of a bird species for the protection of livestock, if they are a covered species whose

²⁹ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/LSA>

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conservation and management is provided for in a Natural Community Conservation Plan (Fish & G. Code, §§ 3511, 4700, 5050, & 5515) and/or qualify for CDFW authorization pursuant to Senate Bill 147. Specified types of infrastructure Projects may be eligible for an ITP for unavoidable impacts to fully protected species if certain conditions are met pursuant to Senate Bill 147 (see Fish & G. Code §2081.15). To obtain information about Fully Protected Animals, please access CDFW's [Fully Protected Animals](#)³⁰

CEQA Filing Fees

If the Project has an impact on fish, wildlife, or habitat, filing fees are required. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Additionally, payment of a filing fee may be required for each underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

Promoting Collaboration

CDFW is charged with preserving and protecting the state's diverse ecosystems and wildlife therefore, CDFW maintains a strong commitment to collaborate with local governments in the development and implementation of local policies and ordinances that encompass biological resources. CDFW is enthusiastic for the possibility to assist the Lead Agency in fostering a harmonious coexistence between human development and preservation of Trinity County's unique and invaluable biological resources through local policy and ordinance. The Lead Agency is encouraged to engage with CDFW if/when collaboration is warranted.

³⁰ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Fully-Protected>

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Conclusion

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the NOP to assist the Lead Agency in considering Trinity County's biological resources. If you have any questions, please contact Erika Iacona, Senior Environmental Scientist, Specialist by email at R1CEQARedding@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Robert Hawkins on behalf of Tina Bartlett, Regional Manager
Northern Region

ec: State Clearinghouse
state.clearinghouse@lci.ca.gov

Aileen Mahoney
amahoney@rinconconsultants.com

Erika Iacona
R1CEQARedding@wildlife.ca.gov