

Initial Study

Flaherty Conditional Use Permit

Nevada County, California

To:

CEO – Alison Lehman	Department of Public Works – Kevin Nelson
Assessor – Rolf Kleinhans	Fire Protection Planner – Dan Collins
COB – Jeff Thorsby	Environmental Health – Nicole Johnson
Supervisor Hoek – District IV	Agricultural Commissioner
Building Department – Nick McBurney	Nevada County Consolidated Fire Protection District
Economic Development – Kimberly Parker	NSAQMD
Commissioner Foley – District IV	Counsel – Sims & Doug
Bear Yuba Land Trust	Caltrans
California Native Plant Society – Redbud	General Plan Defense Fund
Assistant CEO – Caleb Dardick	CDA Director – Trisha Tillotson
PG&E	Bear River Recreation & Park District
Colfax-Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe	Federation of Neighborhood Associations
United Auburn Indian Community	Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians
Sierra Club – Sierra Nevada Group	T’si Akim Maidu
Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe	Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley
FREED	Forest Springs, LLC
Nevada County Transit Services	Keep Nevada County Rural
CEO – Alison Lehman	Department of Public Works – Kevin Nelson
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Prepared by: Aleena Church, Assistant Planner
 Nevada County Planning Department
 950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 170
 Nevada City, CA 95959
 (530) 265-1345
 aleena.church-cda@nevadacountyca.gov

File Number: PLN25-0106; CUP25-0005; EIS25-0013

Assessor Parcel Number: 025-580-008

Zoning Districts: AG-20 (General Agricultural, 20.00 acre minimum parcel size)

General Plan Designations: RUR-20 (Rural)

Project Location: 13447 American Ranch Court, Grass Valley, CA 95949. Approximately 0.1 mile south of McCourtney Road, 3.0 miles southwest of the City of Grass Valley in unincorporated western Nevada County.

Project Site & Surrounding Land Uses:

The project parcel is approximately 23.42-acres in size and is located in Western Nevada County approximately 3.0 miles from the City of Nevada City. The parcel is accessed from both American Ranch Court and McCourtney Road. The project parcel is zoned AG-20 (General Agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 20.00 acres) and has a RUR-20 (Rural with a minimum parcel size of 20.00 acres) General Plan designation. The project parcel is currently developed with residential and commercial activity, including a primary residence, an ADU, pool, an animal husbandry barn, agriculture building, gravel parking lot, ground mount solar, a well, and a septic system. The parcel topography generally slopes east to west towards McCourtney Road with slopes ranging from 1% to 30%+, however the project area has previously experienced ground disturbance activities, including previously graded areas for the driveway coming from McCourtney Road, the parking area, and agriculture building. The project parcel is bordered by six (6) parcels zoned General Agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 20-acres (AG-20) to the east, south, west, and north. The project parcel is surrounded by parcels that have been developed with a single-family residential home and accessory structures to the north, and undeveloped parcels to the north, south, and east. Figure 1 shows the subject project parcel, surrounding properties, and the zoning of the area.



Figure 1 – Zoning, Noticed Parcels, and Vicinity Map

Project Description:

PLN25-0106; CUP25-0005; EIS25-0013:

A Conditional Use Permit application (CUP25-0004) is proposed to allow the operation of a special events venue accommodating a maximum of 150 guests up to 50 events per year within the General Agricultural (AG-20) zoning district, which requires a minimum parcel size of 20 acres. Events will be held primarily within an existing 4,800-square-foot Agricultural Barn, with limited use of the surrounding outdoor area for ceremonies. The venue will host private events such as weddings, anniversaries, family reunions, non-profit gatherings, memorial services, birthday celebrations, and similar occasions. The maximum number of events allowed is 50 per year. While events may occur up to seven days a week, most are expected to take place on weekends.

Primary access to the special events venue will be provided from McCourtney Road via a dedicated driveway identified on the site plan. This driveway traverses APN 025-580-007, which is also owned by James and Jennifer Flaherty, and will be used exclusively for event access. Secondary access for emergency purposes will be available via the existing driveway from American Ranch Court, which currently serves as the main access to the residence. Event hours will be limited to 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., with no amplified music permitted after 10:00 p.m. All amplified sound will be restricted to within the Agricultural Barn, and noise levels will comply with the Nevada County Noise Ordinance for both daytime and evening operations.

Food and beverages will be permitted at events; however, all food preparation will occur off-site and be transported to the venue. Event setup and cleanup will be the responsibility of the renter, and each vendor will be responsible for the setup and removal of their own equipment. All trash generated during events will be removed from the site and disposed of off-site by the renter. An existing restroom facility for event attendees and will comply with ADA accessibility requirements in accordance with the 2024 California Building Code. ADA-compliant parking spaces and an accessible path of travel will be provided to the ceremony area and the Agricultural Barn. The minimum parking requirement for the venue is 60 spaces. The project proposes a total of 95 parking spaces, consisting of 92 standard spaces located within a graveled parking area delineated by landscape trees in barrels to define parking aisles, along with two ADA-compliant spaces, and one van accessible space located near the restroom facility. All operational requirements associated with the special events venue will be enforced by the property owner. The existing residence on the property will not be used for any special events.

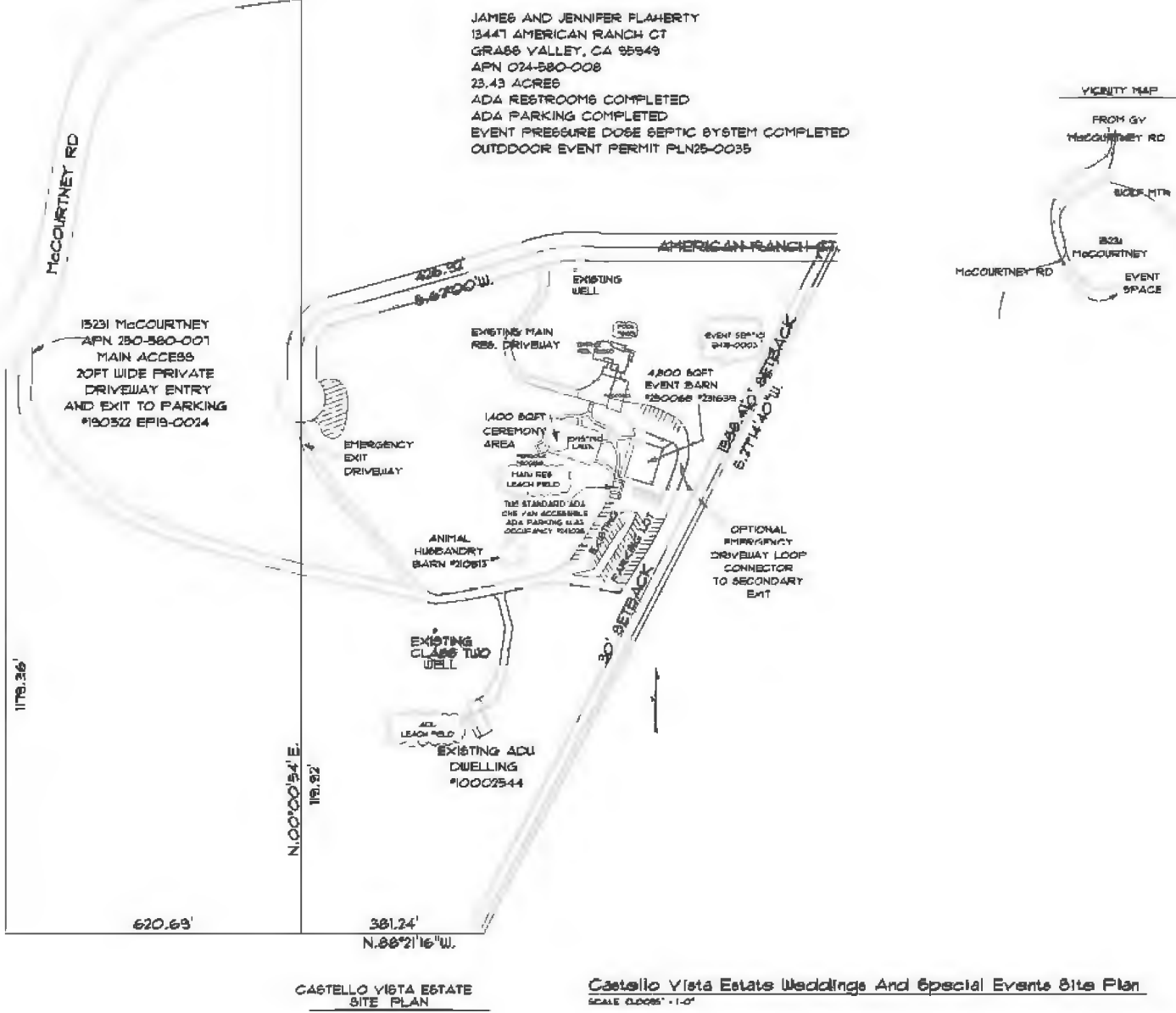


Figure 2 – Proposed Site Plan



Figure 3 – Project Site Aerial Imagery

Other Permits that May be Necessary:

n/a

Relationship to Other Projects:

This parcel currently has an active Outdoor Events Permit which limits the use of 8 events per year and is renewed annually and it set to expire on April 21, 2026.

Consultation with Native American Tribes:

Pursuant to Assembly Bill 52, tribal consultation began August 4, 2025. Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the Project Parcel were notified of the project and invited to consultation. No consultation was requested.

Summary of Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected:

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

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

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

The following measures shall be implemented, and where appropriate, included as a note on construction plans as outlined in each.

3. AIR QUALITY:

Mitigation Measure 3A: Implement Dust Control Measures, Rule 226.

During all phases of the project operation or any future development permits shall comply with the following standards to the satisfaction of the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District, which shall be noted on all grading plans and shall be included in project bidding documents:

1. The applicant shall implement all dust control measures in a timely manner during all phases of project development and construction.
2. All material excavated, stockpiled, or graded shall be sufficiently watered, treated or converted to prevent fugitive dust from leaving the property boundaries and causing a public nuisance or a violation of an ambient air standard. Watering should occur at least twice daily, with complete site coverage.
3. All areas (including unpaved roads) with vehicle traffic shall be watered or have dust palliative applied as necessary for regular stabilization of dust emissions.
4. All land clearing, grading, earth moving, or excavation activities on a project shall be suspended as necessary to prevent excessive windblown dust when winds are expected to exceed 20 mph.
5. All on-site vehicle traffic shall be limited to a speed of 15 mph on unpaved roads.
6. All inactive disturbed portions of the development site shall be covered, seeded, or watered until a suitable cover is established. Alternatively, the applicant shall be responsible for applying non-toxic soil stabilizers to all inactive construction areas.
7. All material transported off-site shall be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent public nuisance.
8. Paved streets adjacent to the project shall be swept or washed at the end of each day, or as required to remove excessive accumulation of silt and/or mud which may have resulted from activities at the project site.

Timing: Duration of project implementation

Reporting: Signing the 226 Dust Control Measure Rule Contract

Responsible Agency: Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District

4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

Mitigation Measure 4A: Limiting activity to disturbed areas.

Outdoor event activities shall be limited to the existing Agricultural Barn, the previously disturbed outdoor ceremony area, and parking area identified on the approved site plan. No expansion of outdoor event areas into undisturbed portions of the site shall occur.

Timing: Duration of project implementation

Reporting: Verification through project approval and ongoing compliance with conditions of approval

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

13. NOISE

Mitigation Measure 13A. Noise Monitoring.

The project operator shall continue to utilize real-time noise monitoring during all events involving amplified sound to ensure compliance with the Nevada County Noise Ordinance. Noise levels shall

be maintained below applicable Leq and Lmax thresholds at the property lines. Records of monitoring shall be maintained and made available to the County upon request.

For the Rural zoning district standards, maximum noise levels include:

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

Timing: Duration of project implementation

Reporting: Verification through project approval and ongoing compliance with conditions of approval

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

17. TRANSPORTATION

Mitigation Measure 17A: Onsite parking requirements.

On-site parking shall be provided for all events, with a minimum of 60 parking spaces available at all times. Event guests shall be directed to park on-site only. Primary access to the venue shall be provided via the McCourtney Road driveway. The American Ranch Court driveway shall be reserved for emergency access only.

Timing: Duration of project implementation

Reporting: Verification through project approval and ongoing compliance with conditions of approval

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

18. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Mitigation Measure 18A: Unanticipated Tribal Cultural Resources.

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

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

The contractor shall implement any measures deemed by the CEQA lead agency to be necessary and feasible to preserve in place, avoid, or minimize impacts to the resource, including, but not limited to, facilitating the appropriate tribal treatment of the find, as necessary. Treatment that

preserves or restores the cultural character and integrity of a TCR may include Tribal Monitoring, culturally appropriate recovery of cultural objects, and reburial of cultural objects or cultural soil. Work at the discovery location cannot resume until all necessary investigation and evaluation of the discovery under the requirements of the CEQA, including AB52, have been satisfied.

Timing: *Prior to issuance of Grading/Improvement/Building permits and throughout construction*

Reporting: *Planning Department Approval of Grading and Construction Permits*

Responsible Agency: *Planning Department*

19. UTILITIES/SERVICE SYSTEMS

Mitigation Measure 19A: Appropriately Dispose of Toxic Waste.

Industrial toxic waste (petroleum and other chemical products) is not accepted at the McCourtney Road transfer station and if encountered, shall be properly disposed of in compliance with existing regulations and facilities. This mitigation measure shall be included as a note on all improvement plans, which shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Department prior to permit issuance.

Timing: *Duration of project implementation*

Reporting: *Verification through project approval and ongoing compliance with conditions of approval*

Responsible Agency: *Planning Department*

21. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFIGANCE

See all Mitigation Measures listed above.

Mitigation and Monitoring Matrix:

MEASURE #	MONITORING AUTHORITY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMING
3A	Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District	Duration of project implementation
4A	Planning Department	Duration of project implementation
13A	Planning Department	Duration of project implementation
17A	Planning Department	Duration of project implementation
18A	Planning Department	Prior to permitting & issuance of grading/improvement/building permits
19A	Planning Department	Duration of project implementation

Initial Study and Checklist

Introduction:

This checklist is to be completed for all projects that are not exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA requires a brief explanation for answers to the Appendix G: Environmental Checklist except “No Impact” responses that are adequately supported by noted information sources. Answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts. This Initial Study uses the following terms to describe the level of significance of adverse impacts. These terms are defined as follows.

- **No Impact:** An impact that would result in no adverse changes to the environment.
- **Less than Significant Impact:** An impact that is potentially adverse but does not exceed the thresholds of significance as identified in the impact discussions. Less than significant impacts do not require mitigation.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation:** An environmental effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the environment without mitigation, but which is reduced to a level that is less than significant with mitigation identified in the Initial Study.
- **Potentially Significant Impact:** An environmental effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the environment; either additional information is needed regarding the extent of the impact to make the significance determination, or the impact would or could cause a substantial adverse change in the environment. A finding of a potentially significant impact would result in the determination to prepare an EIR.

1. Aesthetics:

Existing Setting: The project parcel is approximately 23.42-acres in size and is located in unincorporated Western Nevada County. The parcel is approximately 4.0 driving miles south of the City of Grass Valley and only 0.3 driving miles west of the McCourtney Road Transfer Station. The topography of the parcel generally east to west towards McCourtney Road with slopes ranging from 1% - 30%+, but the project area itself is mostly flat due to previously approved and completed grading activities, in addition to the general flat topography at the project site. The project site is located within a rural agricultural area characterized by large parcels, open pastureland, rolling hills, and scattered agricultural and residential structures. With the exception of the Nevada County McCourtney Road Transfer Station to the east of the parcel. Existing development on the site includes an agricultural barn, a single-family residence, ADU, associated driveways, pool, and graveled parking areas.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?				✓	A, K
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				✓	A, K, 1
c. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?			✓		A
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?			✓		A, 2

Impact Discussion:

1a-c: The project site is accessed directly off McCourtney Road, a county-maintained road and American Ranch Court, a private road. The project parcel is not visible from any State Highways, nor is it located within or near a Scenic Corridor Combining District (SC), therefore the Scenic Corridor Combining District standards do not apply. From the project area on the parcel, there are substantial views of the Sacramento Valley and the Sutter Buttes. The parcel itself is at the top of a hill in the neighborhood accessed by a private driveway and road, therefore there is no obstruction of the view to neighbors or the public. The improvements that have been made to the parcel in regard to the event center such as the landscaping, lawn, and agricultural barn, have made the property more attractive in addition to the upkeep of the property. The design of the special events venue is substantially consistent with the design guidelines of the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines because it meets the Nevada County design guidelines by using appropriate building materials for the agricultural building which will be where the events take place, such as corrugated metal siding, a metal roof, roof overhangs, wood doors, and muted soft colors such as white, black, and grey. Vegetation, structures, and topography block the view of the project area, so it is not visible from McCourtney Road. Due to a lack of visibility from a highway with an official scenic designation, there will be no impact on a state scenic highway. Due to the topography, vegetation, and location of the subject parcel being out of public view, the development of the special events venue would not impact the public views of the site. Thus, as proposed, the project would not result in demonstrable negative aesthetic impacts on scenic vistas or public views, nor would it degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; therefore, the project is anticipated to result in a **less than significant** impact to these aesthetic features.

1d: The proposed special events venue includes the use of an existing Agricultural Barn that includes 16 exterior lights installed along the perimeter of the building. There are 10 LED downlight rectangular shield and 6 round downlight gooseneck style LED lights. All 16 of the proposed lights are downward facing and fully shielded to prevent the light source or lens from being visible from adjacent properties and roadways and are compatible with section 12.04.108 of the Nevada County Code which states that all outdoor light fixtures shall be fully shielded and downward facing to prevent the light source or lens from being visible from adjacent properties and roadways. Overall, the proposed lights are generally small and appear to be compatible with the surrounding area. Additionally, existing light sources in the vicinity, including the McCourtney Transfer Station located approximately 0.3 miles from the project site, contribute to ambient nighttime lighting in the area. The project would not introduce new permanent or temporary outdoor lighting and would not result in substantial new sources of glare that could adversely affect daytime or nighttime views. A standard condition of approval would require lights that are replaced be in compliance with section 12.04.108 of the Nevada County Code which requires lights to be fully shielded and downward facing so as not to result in glare that could adversely affect day or nighttime views. Due to the size of the project parcel, the proposed location of the special events venue proposed improvements being far away from adjacent properties, and a standard condition of approval for lighting compliance, it is not anticipated that the lights will cause a substantial amount of light or glare that would adversely impact nighttime views. Therefore, light and glare impacts from the proposed development is anticipated to be minimal with the implementation of development standards in the Nevada County Zoning Code, and this impact is considered **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

2. Agricultural and Forestry Resources:

Existing Setting: The California Department of Conservation Important Farmland Finder (2020) classifies the project parcel as partially Grazing Land, which is the same classification as the surrounding properties. The California Department of Conservation defines Grazing Land as land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. The project site does not contain any land within a Williamson Act contract, nor is the parcel within a Timberland Production Zone. To the east and north of the project parcel are single-family residential homes with accessory structures, and undeveloped parcels to the west and south. There is no forest land on or around the project parcel.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?				✓	A, K, 3

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				✓	A, 2, 4
c. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resource Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?				✓	A, K, 2
d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓	K, 2
e. Involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓	A, K, 3

Impact Discussion:

2a-e: The site is designated as both “Grazing Land” by the California Important Farmland Finder and would thus will not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The project site is not currently under a Williamson Act contract and does not contain agricultural uses. The project parcel is not zoned for timberland production and no forest land is being converted to non-forest. Additionally, this project was routed to the Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner and no comments were received. Therefore, the proposed project would not involve other changes in the existing environment which could result in conversion of farmland or forestland and would have **no impact**.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

3. Air Quality:

Existing Setting: Nevada County is located in the Mountain Counties Air Basin (MCAB). The MCAB includes the central and northern Sierra Nevada Mountain range with elevations ranging from several hundred feet in the foothills to over 6,000 feet above mean sea level along the Sierra Crest. The MCAB generally experiences warm, dry summers and wet winters. Ambient air quality in the air basin is generally determined by climatological conditions, the topography of the air basin, and the type and amount of pollutants emitted.

The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District has responsibility for controlling air pollution emissions including “criteria air pollutants” and “toxic air pollutants” from direct sources (such as factories) and indirect sources (such as land-use projects) to improve air quality within Nevada County. To do so, the District adopts rules, regulations, policies, and programs to manage the air

pollutant emissions from various sources, and also must enforce certain statewide and federal rules, regulations and laws.

The Federal Clean Air Act of 1971 established national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). These standards are divided into primary and secondary standards. Primary standards are designed to protect public health and secondary standards are designed to protect plants, forests, crops, and materials. Because of the health-based criteria identified in setting the NAAQS, the air pollutants are termed “criteria” pollutants. California has adopted its own ambient air quality standards (CAAQS). Criteria air pollutants include ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, and particulate matter. CAAQS include the NAAQS pollutants, in addition to visibility reducing particles, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, and vinyl chloride. A nonattainment area is an area where a criteria air pollutant’s concentration is above either the federal and/or state ambient air quality standards. Depending on the level of severity, a classification will be designated to a nonattainment area. Failure of a state to reach attainment of the NAAQS by the target date can trigger penalties, including withholding of federal highway funds. Table 1 shows the current attainment/nonattainment status for the federal and state air quality standards in Nevada County.

Nevada County has two federally recognized air monitoring sites: The Litton Building in Grass Valley (fine particulate matter, also called PM_{2.5}, and ozone) and the fire station in downtown Truckee (PM_{2.5} only). For eight-hour average ozone concentrations, Nevada County is serious nonattainment for both the 2008 and 2015 state and federal ozone standards of 75 and 70 parts per billion, respectively (Table 1). Unlike other pollutants, ozone is not typically released directly into the atmosphere from any sources. Ozone is created by the interaction of Nitrogen Oxides and Reactive Organic Gases (also known as Volatile Organic Compounds) in the presence of sunlight, especially when the temperature is high. The major sources of Nitrogen Oxides and Reactive Organic Gases, known as ozone precursors, are combustion sources such as factories, automobiles and evaporation of solvents and fuels. Ozone is mainly a summertime problem, with the highest concentrations generally observed in July and August, when the days are longest, especially in the late afternoon and evening hours. Ozone is considered by the California Air Resources Board to be overwhelmingly transported to Nevada County from the Sacramento Metropolitan area and, to a lesser extent, the San Francisco Bay Area. This recognition of overwhelming transport relieves Nevada County of CAAQS-related requirements, including the development of CAAQS attainment plan with a “no-net-increase” permitting program or an “all feasible measures” demonstration.

For particulate matter, ambient air quality standards have been established for both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}. California has standards for average PM₁₀ concentrations over 24-hour periods and over the course of an entire year, which are 50 and 20 µg/m³, respectively. (The notation “µg/m³” means micrograms of pollutant per cubic meter of ambient air.) For PM_{2.5}, California only has a standard for average PM_{2.5} concentrations over a year, set at 12 µg/m³, with no 24-hour-average standard. Nevada County is in compliance with all of the federal particulate matter standards, but like most California counties it is out of compliance with the state PM₁₀ standards. Particulate-matter is identified by the maximum particle size in microns as either PM_{2.5} or PM₁₀. PM_{2.5}, is mostly smoke and aerosol particles resulting from woodstoves and fireplaces, vehicle engines, wildfires, and open burning. PM-10 is a mixture of dust, combustion particles (smoke) and aerosols from sources such as surface disturbances, road sand, vehicle tires, and leaf blowers.

Table 1: Attainment Status by Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District of State and Federal Air Quality Standards. In addition, the entire district is either Attainment or Unclassified for all State and Federal NO₂, SO₂, Pb, H₂S, visibility reducing particles, sulfates, and vinyl chloride standards.

Pollutant	State Designation	Federal Designation
Ozone (O ₃)	Nevada County: Non-attainment (due to overwhelming transport)	<u>2008 O₃ Standard (75 ppb)</u> Western Nevada County: Serious Non-attainment;
		<u>2015 O₃ Standard (70 ppb)</u> Western Nevada County: Serious Non-attainment;
PM ₁₀	Nevada County: Non-attainment	Unclassified
PM _{2.5}	Nevada County: Unclassified	<u>2012 Annual Standard (12µg/m³)</u> Nevada County: Unclassifiable/Attainment
		<u>2012 24-hour Standard (35µg/m³)</u> Unclassifiable/Attainment
CO	Nevada: Unclassified	Unclassifiable/Attainment

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

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

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?		✓			A, F
b. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?		✓			A, F, 5, 6, 7
c. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?			✓		A, F, L, 5
d. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?			✓		A, F, 6

Impact Discussion:

3a: Nevada County’s General Plan, Chapter 14 Air Quality Element, contains numerous policies to protect air quality in Nevada County. With the exception of General Plan Air Quality Element Policy 14.7A, which requires compliance with Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District Rule 226, the Nevada County General Plan Air Quality Element policies are intended to apply to development that generates new residents or new employees. By assessing air pollution and emissions associated with the proposed project and recommending mitigation measures based on Thresholds of Significance established by the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD), the project as proposed would comply with Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District regulations. The project has been mitigated by Mitigation Measure 3A, as discussed below to be complaint with the NSAQMD construction guidelines and be compliant with Rule 226, which is related to the control of dust emissions from operation of the project such as vehicles driving along the driveway and gravel parking lot. In addition, based on the County’s review of the NSAQMD Rules and Guidelines for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts of Land Use Projects, it appears several of the objectives of the NSAQMD regulations are achieved through the application of mitigation measures provided. Furthermore, the applicant has already signed the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District Rule 226 contract during the review for the Outdoor Event Permit.

Therefore, given the above discussion, the project itself will not violate any established policies or standards for the protection of air quality nor would it conflict with or obstruct implementation of any quality plan, therefore air quality impacts would be **less than significant with mitigation**.

3b: The California Emissions Estimation Model (CalEEMod) provides a means to estimate potential emissions associated with both construction and operation of land use projects. The project involves the operation of a special events venue within an existing agricultural barn and does not include any new construction, grading, or ground disturbance. As such, the project would not generate construction-related air pollutant emissions, including fugitive dust or equipment exhaust. Using the parameters specific to this proposed recreational project, the CalEEMod model identified potential increases in the pollutants of concern during the operation of the project. Operational emissions would be limited to intermittent vehicle trips associated with event attendance and vendor access, with a maximum of 50 events per year.

Pollutant	NSAQMD Threshold*	Project Impact
NOx	< 24 lbs/day	0.30 lbs/day (0.10 tons/yr)
ROG	< 24 lbs/day	0.70 lbs/day (0.10 tons/yr)
PM10	< 79 lbs/day	0.70 lbs/day (0.10 tons/yr)
CO	N/A	2.0 lbs/day (0.3 tons/yr)
*These thresholds are “Level A” in NSAQMD’s Guidelines. CalEEMod Version 2022.1		

As shown above on Table 1, although all pollutant levels would increase marginally with the project, none would exceed thresholds established by NSAQMD. Although PM10 is not

anticipated to exceed the per diem threshold adopted by NSAQMD, this constituent has been identified in Nevada County as exceeding ambient air quality standards and should be mitigated to the extent possible through dust control measures such as slow vehicle speeds on-site as required in Mitigation Measure 3A.

Given the limited frequency of events and the absence of continuous daily operations, the project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase in criteria pollutants for which the region is designated non-attainment. Therefore, with the implementation of the 226 Dust Control Rule air quality impacts would be **less than significant with mitigation**.

3c,d: The project is proposed within a rural area and is surrounded by parcels that have been developed with a single-family residential home and accessory structures to the north and east, and undeveloped parcels to the south and west. The special events venue is intended to serve the community with private celebrations such as weddings, anniversaries, family reunions, etc. Because of the intended use of the operation as a recreational facility, it will not expose the surrounding residents to substantial amount of pollution, as demonstrated in Table 2. The special events venue does not propose any uses that could reasonably be expected to create odors for a substantial number of people. Therefore, the project will have **less than significant impacts** in regard to exposing populations to odors or pollution.

Mitigation: To offset potentially adverse air quality impacts associated with the project activities, the following mitigation measures shall be required:

Mitigation Measure 3A: Implement Dust Control Measures, Rule 226.

During all phases of the project operation or any future development permits shall comply with the following standards to the satisfaction of the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District, which shall be noted on all grading plans and shall be included in project bidding documents:

1. The applicant shall implement all dust control measures in a timely manner during all phases of project development and construction.
2. All material excavated, stockpiled, or graded shall be sufficiently watered, treated or converted to prevent fugitive dust from leaving the property boundaries and causing a public nuisance or a violation of an ambient air standard. Watering should occur at least twice daily, with complete site coverage.
3. All areas (including unpaved roads) with vehicle traffic shall be watered or have dust palliative applied as necessary for regular stabilization of dust emissions.
4. All land clearing, grading, earth moving, or excavation activities on a project shall be suspended as necessary to prevent excessive windblown dust when winds are expected to exceed 20 mph.
5. All on-site vehicle traffic shall be limited to a speed of 15 mph on unpaved roads.

6. All inactive disturbed portions of the development site shall be covered, seeded, or watered until a suitable cover is established. Alternatively, the applicant shall be responsible for applying non-toxic soil stabilizers to all inactive construction areas.
7. All material transported off-site shall be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent public nuisance.
8. Paved streets adjacent to the project shall be swept or washed at the end of each day, or as required to remove excessive accumulation of silt and/or mud which may have resulted from activities at the project site.

Timing: Duration of project implementation

Reporting: Signing the 226 Dust Control Measure Rule Contract

Responsible Agency: Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District

4. Biological Resources:

Existing Setting: The project site is a 23.42-acre parcel in Western Nevada County that is developed residential and commercial activity, including a primary residence, an ADU, pool, an animal husbandry barn, agriculture building, gravel parking lot, ground mount solar, a well, and a septic system. The project area is proposed completely within areas that have already been previously disturbed and constructed. No new construction is proposed with this project. The project occurs within a manzanita chaparral plant community. The overstory is composed of mostly foothill pine (*Pinus sabiniana*), with a scattering of Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). Dominant plants within the understory are sticky whiteleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos viscida* ssp. *viscida*), buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), gum plant (*Grindelia camporum*), a few scrub oaks (*Quercus berberidifolia*) and some patches of Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). There is one seasonal creek on the very south end of the parcel called Dry Creek. The project is not mapped as having major deer migration corridors, deer holding areas, or critical fawning areas.

Review of recent aerial imagery, publicly available mapping sources, including the USGS topographic map, and observations made during a site visit indicate that the project site consists primarily of previously disturbed agricultural land with limited native vegetation. Tree cover on the site is sparse and consists of a limited number of oak trees scattered throughout the parcel. A seasonal drainage is shown on the USGS topographic map traversing a portion of the property. No other creeks, ponds, wetlands, or aquatic features were observed on the site during the site visit or identified through map review.

The proposed project involves the continued use of existing, previously developed facilities and does not include new construction, grading, vegetation removal, or ground disturbance. Because the site is already developed and the project would not modify existing site conditions, preparation of a formal biological study was not warranted for the current application. Evaluation of biological resources was therefore based on review of recent aerial imagery, publicly available mapping sources, including the USGS topographic map, and observations made during a site visit.

Special Status Species:

A current review of the California Natural Diversity Data Base and database information provided by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service were used for special status species consideration, as part of the Biological Resources Inventory. A total of two (2) special status species have been identified within three-miles of the Project Parcel:

The special status plants that occur within the Grass Valley quad are Stebbin’s morning-glory (*Calystegia stebbinsii*) and Pine Hill flannel bush (*Fremontodendron californicum* ssp. *decumbens*). These two species require specialized soils of either gabbroic or serpentinite, neither of which occur at this site. Dubious pea (*Lathyrussulphureus* var. *argillaceus*) was last seen in 1926 in Nevada County and probably was extirpated long ago. This site appears to be much more arid than areas where Brandegee’s clarkia (*Blarkia biloba* ssp. *biloba*) occurs within Nevada County. The other listed plants require mesic conditions that are not present within this site. Similar observations are true for the special status wildlife found elsewhere within this quad; they require perennial waters and/or connectivity to the Sacramento Delta region, not present at this site.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?		✓			J, 9, 10

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
b. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?			✓		A, J, K, 8
c. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?			✓		A, J, K, 8
d. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?			✓		9, 10
e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?				✓	A
f. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?				✓	A

Impact Discussion:

4a: The project parcel is fully developed, including all components of the proposed special events center such as parking areas, event spaces, and supporting infrastructure. Because the site is built-out, most natural habitats that could support special-status species have already been removed or disturbed. According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s IPaC system, Stebbin’s morning-glory (*Calystegia stebbinsii*) and Pine Hill flannel bush (*Fremontodendron californicum* ssp. *decumbens*) are documented in the broader Grass Valley area; however, CDFW’s California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) and other biological databases show no occurrences on the project site. Field observations confirm that no individuals or remnants of special-status species are present, and existing “as-built” improvements appear to have avoided impacts to protected resources.

Vegetation consists primarily of disturbed areas with limited native cover. Only scrub oaks are present, and larger native oak species commonly found elsewhere in the county are absent. While the site’s condition reduces the likelihood of special-status species, increased human activity associated with the proposed project could temporarily disturb raptors, migratory birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, or other sensitive species in the surrounding area. Mitigation Measure 4A, which limits activity to designated commercial areas, is included to minimize potential impacts. Overall, the project is not

expected to result in a substantial adverse effect on candidate, sensitive, or special-status species, and any impacts are anticipated to be **less than significant with mitigation**.

4b,c: The project parcel contains one aquatic feature located at the southernmost portion of the site: a seasonal creek identified as Dry Creek, a tributary of the Russian River in northern Sonoma County. The drainage present on the site is best characterized as an ephemeral drainage, conveying surface water only during and for a short duration following precipitation events in a typical year. Ephemeral drainages are situated above the groundwater table year-round, and groundwater does not contribute to flow at this location. Because surface water flow is intermittent and limited in duration, no wetland or riparian vegetation is present along the drainage. In addition, the developed portions of the site, including the existing driveway, parking area, and agricultural building, are located on the northern portion of the parcel, approximately 500 feet from the seasonal creek. Site soils are not classified as hydric soils, which along with hydrophytic vegetation and wetland hydrology, are necessary indicators for the presence of wetlands. Accordingly, the proposed project would result in **less than significant** impacts to riparian habitat, other sensitive natural communities, and state or federally protected wetlands.

4d: The project site is not located within any wildlife corridor identified by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. BIOS classifies the parcel as a conservation planning linkage (Rank 4/5), indicating moderate landscape connectivity, but no mapped linkage occurs on-site. Therefore, the site does not function as a critical connector for wildlife movement in the region.

Although increased human activity from events could theoretically disturb nearby wildlife, the lack of high-quality habitat and absence of corridors or nursery areas means these impacts are expected to be minimal and temporary. The project's design, adherence to the approved site plan, and implementation of mitigation measures will minimize interactions between humans and wildlife. As a result, the project is not anticipated to substantially interfere with the movement of native resident or migratory species, nor impede established wildlife corridors or nursery sites, and impacts are considered **less than significant**.

4e: Nevada County Code Section 12.04.215 defines protected trees as any oak species with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 36 inches or greater, or trees of any size that possess exceptional size, visual importance, or an association with a historically significant structure or event. Based on review of aerial imagery and site observations, oak trees are present on the project parcel, with potential oak groupings occurring in the southern portion of the property near the seasonal creek and in the northeast corner of the parcel. These areas are outside of the proposed commercial activity areas, and no ground-disturbing activities, tree removal, or site modifications are proposed within these locations. The oak species present on the site consist primarily of scrub oaks. The large, mature, statuesque oak trees commonly found in other areas of Nevada County do not occur within this plant community. No protected oak trees, as defined by Nevada County Code Section 12.04.215, would be removed or impacted by implementation of the proposed project. Accordingly, the project would result in **no impacts** to protected trees and oak resources.

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

Mitigation: To offset potentially adverse special status species and migratory bird impacts associated with the project activities, the following mitigation measures shall be required:

Mitigation Measure 4A: Limiting activity to disturbed areas.

Outdoor event activities shall be limited to the existing Agricultural Barn, the previously disturbed outdoor ceremony area, and parking area identified on the approved site plan. No expansion of outdoor event areas into undisturbed portions of the site shall occur.

Timing: Duration of project implementation

Reporting: Verification through project approval and ongoing compliance with conditions of approval

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

5. Cultural Resources:

Existing Setting: A complete records search was conducted by the North Central Information Center (NCIC) of the California Historical Resources Information System in 1999 for cultural resource site records and survey reports in Nevada County, within a 1/4-mile radius of the proposed project area. It was determined that the overall project area has a low potential for locating historic-period cultural resources in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project area.

In this part of Nevada County, prehistoric-period habitation sites are primarily found adjacent to streams or on ridges or knolls, especially those with a southern exposure (Moratto 1984:290). This region is known as the ethnographic-period territory of the Nisenan, also called the Southern Maidu. The Nisenan had permanent settlements along major rivers in the Sacramento Valley and foothills, and would travel yearly into higher elevations to hunt or gather seasonal plant resources (Wilson and Towne 1978:387-389). The proposed project area encompasses moderate to broad terrain at about 2300 feet elevation, along the northwest American Ranch Hill. There are **no** known recorded prehistoric resources associated with your parcel. Given the lack of recorded resources and the environmental setting, there is low potential for prehistoric or ethnohistoricperiod Native American sites in the project area.

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

Impact Discussion:

5a-c: The project involves the operation of a special events venue within an existing agricultural barn and surrounding developed areas. No new ground disturbance, grading, or construction activities are proposed as part of this application. All project components, including the barn, parking areas, driveway improvements, and associated facilities, have been previously constructed.

Because the project does not involve soil disturbance or modification of existing structures, it would not result in a substantial adverse change to a historical resource or an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15064.5. Additionally, no activities are proposed that would have the potential to disturb subsurface resources. While the possibility of encountering previously unknown archaeological resources or human remains exists with any project, the absence of ground-disturbing activities substantially reduces this potential. If cultural resources or human remains are inadvertently discovered during any future ground disturbance, all work shall cease in the immediate area of the find until appropriate evaluation and treatment can be conducted in accordance with CEQA and applicable State laws, including California Health and Safety Code §7050.5 and Public Resources Code §5097.98. Additionally, Mitigation Measure 18A will be implemented for any Tribal Cultural Resources that are found on site.

Therefore, the project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical or archaeological resource, nor would it disturb human remains. Impacts would be **less than significant**.

6. Energy

Existing Setting: On February 12, 2019, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors approved the Energy Action Plan (EAP) as the County’s unincorporated area’s roadmap for expanding energy-efficiency, water-efficiency, and renewable-energy, and the cost-savings that accompany these efforts. The EAP is focused on operations of structures, infrastructure that generates energy, and efficient use of water. The subject project has an existing electrical hook up to PG&E in addition to a ground mount solar array.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during construction or operation?			✓		A,19
b. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?				✓	A, D, 19, 20

Impact Discussion:

6a: The proposed special events venue do not indicate there will be potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. The applicant has already developed the agricultural building that will be used

for the events. Since the agriculture building was built in 2023 the building would have been subject to the 2022 Building Energy Efficiency Standards. The Standards contain energy and water efficiency requirements (and indoor air quality requirements) for newly constructed buildings. The 2022 update to the Building Energy Efficiency Standards focuses on improving the energy efficiency of newly constructed buildings and additions. Additionally, the use of solar panels on the property would lessen the overall use of energy of the operation. Because the project would be required to comply with the California Building Code including the Building Efficiency Standards, the moderate size of the structure, and lack of energy intensive uses, long-term operational impacts related to energy resources are anticipated to be **less than significant**.

- 6b: The special events venue would not conflict with any state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Building Permits would be required in order to construct and future development of the project. As part of the Building Permit review, all equipment and structures would be required to meet energy standards identified in the California Building Code. Likewise, the project would not obstruct or prevent plans for renewable energy or efficiency. Therefore, the project would have **no impact** to state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Mitigation: None required.

7. Geology and Soils:

Existing Setting: The average elevation in the Project Parcel is approximately 2,392 feet above mean sea level (MSL), with slopes ranging from 1% - 30+%. The general topography of the subject parcel is characterized as partially sloped with a flat portion of the north of the parcel, with a small drainage on the south portion of the parcel. The soils of the project site are mapped as Boomer, hard bedrock – Rock outcrop complex, 5% to 30% slopes and Secca-Rock outcrop complex, 2% to 50% slopes.

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act was adopted in 1972 to prevent the construction of buildings in areas where active faults have surface expression. Ground or fault rupture is generally defined as the displacement that occurs along the surface of a fault during an earthquake. The project site is not within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone and there are no known faults that cross through the project site; however, the project site is located approximately .8-miles southwest, approximately 1.9-miles east, and 1.7-miles northeast of Pre-Quaternary faults (Department of Conservation). Generally, western Nevada County is located in the low intensity zone for earthquake severity. The project site is located within Seismic Zone I—the Low Intensity Zone of the Modified Mercalli scale—meaning the site has a low risk for strong ground motion (Nevada County, 1991).

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including risk of loss, injury or death involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. ii. Strong seismic ground shaking? iii. Seismic-related ground failure including liquefaction? iv. Landslides? 			✓		12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 29
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?			✓		15,16,17
c. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?			✓		12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 29
d. Be located on expansive soil creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?			✓		11, 15
e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?				✓	A, C
f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?		✓			A

Impact Discussion:

7a,c,d: The proposed special events venue is not anticipated to result in adverse effects due to unstable soils, or cause significant erosion. The project site is not within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone and there are no known faults that cross through the project site; however, the project site is located approximately .8-miles southwest, approximately 1.9-miles east, and 1.7-miles northeast of Pre-Quaternary faults, which are older than 1.6 million years. The project site is located within Seismic Zone I, the Low Intensity Zone of the Modified Mercalli scale, meaning the site has a low risk for strong ground motion and thus the project is not anticipated to result in earthquake related impacts. Additionally, neither Boomer, hard bedrock – Rock outcrop complex 5% to 30% slopes and Secca-Rock outcrop complex, 2% to 50% slopes, which underlies the majority of the project site, are described by the USDA Soil Conservation Service as being unstable or expansive and are all classified as well drained. Building permits have been issued and finalized for all

earthwork, which required compliance with the Nevada County grading standards outlined in Nevada County Code Title 14. Building permits would also have to require compliance with the California Building Code (CBC) and the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code requirements to ensure protection during seismic events. Therefore, due to the project soils, standard permit requirements, and that no new construction is proposed, impacts associated with unstable earth conditions are expected to be **less than significant**.

- 7b: The proposed project involves the continued operation of an existing special events center located on an already developed parcel. All components of the event center, including the agricultural barn, driveway access, parking areas, and associated improvements, have been previously constructed. The project does not propose any new construction, grading, or expansion of existing facilities. Because the site is fully developed and no ground-disturbing activities are proposed, the project would not result in soils erosion, grading on steep slopes, or disturbance of unstable soils. Existing driveways, parking areas, and structures were constructed in accordance with applicable County standards in effect at the time of development. No new work subject to Nevada County grading standards or the California Building Code is proposed as part of this application. In addition, all existing commercial activity areas are located outside of steep slopes, and no new habitable or non-habitable structures are proposed. Therefore, the continued use of the site as a special events center would not result in substantial soil erosion or instability, and impacts related to geology and soils are anticipated to be **less than significant**.
- 7e: The project site does not have soils incapable of adequately supporting septic systems. The project site is served by an existing, permitted septic system that supports the primary residence. In addition, a permitted pressure-dosed wastewater disposal system designed to accommodate up to 150 people was approved and finalized in 2025. The proposed project does not include expansion of wastewater capacity beyond the limits of the approved system. Therefore, soils on the project site are capable of adequately supporting on-site wastewater disposal, and the project would have **no impact** related to soils that are incapable of supporting septic or alternative wastewater disposal systems.
- 7f: There are no known paleontological resources or unique geological features in or around the Project Parcel. However, any future ground disturbance for future development would be reviewed and appropriate permits/CEQA analysis would be conducted at that time. Direct or indirect damage to paleontological resources is anticipated to be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures: To mitigate unexpected soils presence and impacts from project grading and construction, both on-and off-site, please see **Mitigation Measures 5A and 18A**.

8. Greenhouse Gas Emissions:

Existing Setting: Global climate change refers to changes in average climatic conditions on the earth as a whole, including temperature, wind patterns, precipitation, and storms. Global warming, a related concept, is the observed increase in the average temperature of the earth's surface and atmosphere. One identified cause of global warming is an increase of greenhouse gases (GHGs)

in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are those gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. GHGs are emitted by natural and industrial processes, and the accumulation of GHGs in the atmosphere regulates the earth’s temperature. Events and activities, such as the industrial revolution and the increased combustion of fossil fuels (e.g. gasoline, diesel, coal, etc.), are believed to have contributed to the increase in atmospheric levels of GHGs. GHGs that are regulated by the State and/or EPA are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆) and nitrous oxide (NO₂). Emission inventories typically focus on GHG emissions due to human activities only, and compile data to estimate emissions from industrial, commercial, transportation, domestic, forestry, and agriculture activities. CO₂ emissions are largely from fossil fuel combustion and electricity generation. Agriculture is a major source of both methane and NO₂, with additional methane coming primarily from landfills. Most HFC emissions come from refrigerants, solvents, propellant agents, and industrial processes, and persist in the atmosphere for longer periods of time and have greater effects at lower concentrations compared to CO₂. Global warming adversely impacts air quality, water supply, ecosystem balance, sea level rise (flooding), fire hazards, and causes an increase in health-related problems.

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

In addition, the Governor signed Senate Bill 97 in 2007 directing the California Office of Planning and Research to develop guidelines for the analysis and mitigation of the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and mandating that GHG impacts be evaluated in CEQA documents. CEQA Guidelines Amendments for GHG Emissions were adopted by OPR on December 30, 2009. The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) has prepared a guidance document, Guidelines for Assessing Air Quality Impacts of Land Use Projects, which includes mitigations for general air quality impacts that can be used to mitigate GHG emissions when necessary. Continuing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is critical for the protection of all areas of the state, but especially for the state’s most disadvantaged communities, as those communities are affected first, and, most frequently, by the adverse impacts of climate change, including an increased frequency of extreme weather events, such as drought, heat, and flooding.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?			✓		A, F, 27

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
b. Conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?			✓		A, F, 27

Impact Discussion:

8a,b: The project is not expected to generate greenhouse gases that would result in significant environmental impacts or that would be in conflict with plans for greenhouse gas reductions. Due to the project being a small scale wedding events venue intended for private celebrations, high levels of greenhouse gas emissions are not anticipated. Typically, cumulative impacts are analyzed and mitigated in the County’s General Plan and associated EIR. In this case, the Nevada County General Plan does not address GHG emissions. Therefore, this analysis uses the precautionary principle and acknowledges that the project will make a small, minor contribution to regional and statewide GHG emissions.

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

The thresholds adopted by Placer County APCD include a bright-line threshold of 10,000 metric tons of Carbon dioxide equivalent per year and a De Minimis level of 1,100 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year. A bright-line threshold is a numerical value used to determine the significance of a project’s annual GHG emissions. GHG emissions from projects that exceed 10,000 MT CO₂e/year would be deemed to have a cumulatively considerable contribution to global climate change. The De Minimis Level for the operational phases of 1,100 MT CO₂e/yr represents an emissions level which can be considered as less than cumulatively considerable and be excluded from the further GHG impact analysis.

The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) was used to model the greenhouse gas emissions from the construction and operation of the project. During the operational phase, the unmitigated greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to be 3.70 metric tons of Carbon dioxide equivalent per year. Due to the greenhouse gas emissions from the project being substantially below both of the greenhouse gas significance thresholds, the overall GHG impact is expected to remain at a level that is **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

9. Hazards and Hazardous Materials:

Existing Setting: The project site is not within or adjacent to any hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 (California Department of Toxic Substances Control, 2019). The Project Parcel is in a high fire hazard severity zone as designated by Cal Fire. The project is not located within ¼ mile of an existing or proposed school. The closest residence is approximately 243-feet from the eastern property boundary line. The project is located approximately 9.3 driving miles from the nearest airport, the Grass Valley Service Center Heliport.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?			✓		A, C
b. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?			✓		A, C
c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?				✓	A, K
d. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?				✓	22
e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?				✓	K
f. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?			✓		A, 21
g. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?			✓		21

Impact Discussion:

9a,b: The proposed project involves the continued operation of an existing special events center and does not include industrial activities, manufacturing processes, or the routine use,

storage, transport, or disposal of hazardous materials. Typical on-site activities associated with events would be limited to minor quantities of common consumer products, such as cleaning supplies, fuels contained within vehicles, and incidental materials associated with event setup and cleanup. Any waste generated by events, including materials requiring special handling, would be removed from the site and disposed of at appropriately permitted facilities. The McCourtney Transfer Station, located approximately 0.3 miles north of the project site, provides an existing, authorized facility for the proper disposal of waste and recyclable materials. The project would not involve the transport or disposal of hazardous materials in a manner that would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. In addition, the project does not involve activities that could reasonably result in upset or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials. The site is already developed, no new construction is proposed, and no hazardous materials would be stored on site in quantities that could pose a risk to public health or the environment. Therefore, the proposed project would create a **less than significant** hazard under routine operations or under reasonably foreseeable upset or accident conditions.

- 9c: The project is not located within ¼ mile of an existing or proposed school, **no impact** relative to transport, use, or emissions of hazardous materials within proximity of a school is anticipated.
- 9d: The proposed Project Parcel is not on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5; therefore, there would be **no impact**.
- 9e: The project site is not located within an airport land use plan and is approximately 9.3 driving miles from the Nevada County Airport. The nearest heliport - the Grass Valley Service Center Heliport, located north of the project site, approximately 5.7 driving miles. The Grass Valley Service Center Heliport is a private airstrip that requires permission prior to landing. As a result, the project is anticipated to result in **no impact** to safety hazard for people residing or working near a public airport.
- 9f: The proposed special events venue is not anticipated to interfere with any adopted emergency response or evacuation plans, nor would it expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. The project site is served by the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District and is located within an area designated by CAL FIRE as a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The Nevada County Office of the Fire Marshal reviewed the project and recommended preparation of a Fire Protection and Evacuation Plan to address emergency response during events and to identify preventative measures related to vegetative fuels. Additionally, the project parcel has two point of ingress and egress to help with onsite evacuation during an emergency for fire safety. One being the main access used for the vents off McCourtney Road and the second being the private driveway for the residence located off American Ranch Court. The County Office of Emergency Services does not publish site-specific emergency evacuation plans; however, the Nevada County Sheriff's Department has confirmed that no adopted emergency response or evacuation plans exist for the project parcel. Implementation of the Fire Protection and Evacuation Plan and compliance with applicable fire safety requirements would ensure that the project does not impair or physically interfere with emergency

response or evacuation procedures. Therefore, impacts related to emergency response, evacuation, and wildfire risk would be **less than significant**.

- 9g: All future improvements would require Building Permits and conformance with Title 14 of the Nevada County Code for building and grading standards. As a condition in the project Conditions of Approval, the applicant would be required to provide defensible space around all structures consistent with California Public Resources Code 4291, which requires up to 100 feet of fuels treatment or to the property line, whichever is closer. The proposed project would not expose people or structures to wildland fires and would improve access to the site, and therefore there would be a **less than significant impact**.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

10. Hydrology and Water Quality:

Existing Setting: The project parcel has already been developed with all structures for the special events center including a 4,800 sq ft barn, ceremony area with a pergola, and gravel parking lot. There is one aquatic resource on the property being Dry Creek which is mapped within the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) or National Hydrography Database (NHD). With the location of Dry Creek cutting from the southern border of the project parcel. The project corridor is not located within or near a 100-year flood hazard zone according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Information. The Federal Emergency Management Agency identifies the area as Zone X, which is an area determined to be outside of the 500-year flood or protected by levee from 100-year floods. The project is not in a tsunami or seiche zones.

The California State Water Resources Control Board regulates stormwater discharges from construction sites because of its potential to mobilize pollutants and discharge into waterbodies or watersheds. By regulating these discharges, the State Water Board is preserving, enhancing, and restoring California's waterbodies and its resources.

Sustainable management of groundwater basins is overseen by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) via the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). This project is not located within any groundwater basins or priority basins identified by the DWR Bulletin 118, or the SGMA Basin Prioritization Dashboard. The nearest DWR Bulletin 118 basins are the North and South Yuba Subbasins of the Sacramento Valley Basin (5-21.60 and 5-021.61, respectively) which are more than 15 miles southwest of the project site. No Groundwater Sustainability Agency, no Groundwater Sustainability Plan, and no sustainability criteria or goals have been established for the underlying aquifer of this project.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?			✓		B, C, D
b. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?			✓		A, C
c. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would: i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site; ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or off-site; iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or iv) impede or redirect flood flows?			✓		A, B, K, 23, 30
d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?				✓	K, 23
e. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?				✓	A, B
f. Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?				✓	A, K, 23
g. Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures that would impede or redirect flood flows?				✓	K, 23

Impact Discussion:

10a,c: The proposed special events venue is not anticipated to adversely affect water quality standards or waste discharge requirements, nor would it contribute runoff in amounts that could exceed drainage system capacity or substantially alter existing drainage patterns. All components of the project, including the 4,800-square-foot agricultural barn used as the primary event area, have already been constructed and permitted. No new construction or ground disturbance is proposed as part of this application. The barn area has an

approximate slope of 1%, and the existing graveled parking area has an approximate slope of 5%. Due to these gentle slopes, the previously permitted nature of the improvements, and the absence of new development, a drainage analysis was not required. The project site generally slopes from east to west, consistent with the natural topography of the parcel, with steeper slopes occurring toward the western portion of the property. During permitting of the barn, roof and ground drainage were designed to convey runoff away from the structure in a manner consistent with existing drainage patterns. The project would not trigger the need for coverage under the State Water Resources Control Board's Construction General Permit, as no grading or soil disturbance is proposed. Stormwater runoff from existing impervious and semi-pervious surfaces would continue to be managed through existing site drainage features, and the project would not result in increased stormwater runoff or degraded water quality.

The project parcel contains one mapped aquatic feature, Dry Creek, which is identified in the National Wetlands Inventory and the National Hydrography Database. Dry Creek is located approximately 500 feet from all areas associated with event-related activities, including the barn, driveway, and parking areas. As a result, operations associated with the special events venue would not affect the creek or associated water resources. Based on the existing site conditions, the absence of new construction, and the separation between project activities and aquatic resources, the proposed project would result in **less than significant impacts** related to water quality, waste discharge requirements, stormwater, drainage capacity, and aquatic resources.

10b: The project site is served by two existing groundwater wells. A Class I residential water well, finalized in 1991, provides water service to the primary residence and accessory dwelling unit. In addition, a Class II commercial water well, finalized in 2011, serves the special events venue. The Nevada County Environmental Health Department reviewed the project and included a condition of approval requiring that, if cumulative site activities meet the definition of a small public water system defined as serving at least 25 people per day for a minimum of 60 days per year, the applicant shall obtain a Small Domestic Water Supply Permit from the Environmental Health Department. Water demand associated with the special events venue would be limited, intermittent, and non-continuous, and would not represent a long term or sustained increase in groundwater extraction. The project would utilize existing, permitted wells and would not require well deepening, new well construction, or expanded groundwater withdrawals beyond historical use. Accordingly, the project would not result in a substantial depletion of groundwater supplies or interfere with long term groundwater sustainability. Therefore, impacts related to groundwater supply and water use would be **less than significant**.

10d-g: The proposed special events venue is not in a flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zone and the special events venue will not be storing a substantial amount of hazardous material that could be released if the project was inundated with water. The project does not include the development of new housing and the project site is not within a 100-year floodplain. Therefore, there will be **no impact** to the risk of a release of pollution due to inundation or to flood hazard risks.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

11. Land Use and Planning:

Existing Setting: The project parcel is approximately 23.42-acres in size and is located in Western Nevada County, approximately 4.0 driving miles south of the City of Grass Valley and only 0.3 driving miles west of the McCourtney Road Transfer Station, at an elevation of approximately 2,392 feet above mean sea level. The project parcel is zoned AG-20 (General Agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 20.00 acres) and has a RUR-20 (Rural with a minimum parcel size of 20.00 acres) General Plan designation. The project parcel is partially developed with residential and commercial activity, including a primary residence, an ADU, pool, an animal husbandry barn, agriculture building, gravel parking lot, ground mount solar, a well, and a septic system. The parcel topography generally slopes east to west towards McCourtney Road with slopes ranging from 1% to 30%+, however the project area has previously experienced ground disturbance activities, including previously graded areas for the driveway coming from McCourtney Road, the parking area, and agriculture building. The project parcel is bordered by six (6) parcels zoned General Agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 20-acres (AG-20) to the north, east, south, and west. The parcel is accessed from American Ranch Court for the primary residence and emergency access, while primary access for special events shall be provided via a private driveway from McCourtney Road. The project parcel is surrounded by parcels that have been developed with a single-family residential home and accessory structures to the west, and undeveloped parcels to the north and south.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Physically divide an established community?			✓		A, K
b. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?			✓		A, K

Impact Discussion:

11a: Land surrounding the project site is developed with low-density residential and rural uses. The development of the special events venue is intended to create opportunities for the public to rent out the special events venue for private celebrations. The special events venue is proposed on areas of the parcel that have already been previously disturbed by previously building permits, such as the agriculture building and private driveway. Due to the size, purpose, and location, the project will not disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an existing community. In addition, a Condition of Approval will be implemented for events anticipated to exceed 75 attendees, the property owner shall provide notification to owners and occupants of properties located within 500 feet of the project site at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled event to make every attempt to avoid dividing the established community. Therefore, the proposed project would have **a less than significant impact** related to division of an existing community.

11b: The development of a special events venue is proposed on a parcel with a Rural-20 (RUR-20) General Plan Land Use designation. The RUR-20 designation is intended to provide for development of compatible uses within a rural setting. The development of a special events venue is compatible with the AG-20/RUR-20 land use designation because pursuant to Table 12.02.030: Rural Districts Allowable Uses and Permit Requirements; special event venues are allowed subject to the approval of a Use Permit. The project also meets all site development standards of the General Agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 20-acres (AG-20) zoning district identified in Table 12.02.030.E of the Nevada County Code. The maximum height of structures in the AG zoning district is 45 feet or three stories and the special events venue barn is 24 feet 5 inches tall at the highest point. With the proposed plan, 95 parking spaces, consisting of 92 standard spaces located within a graveled parking area delineated by landscape trees in barrels to define parking aisles, along with two ADA-compliant spaces, and one van accessible space in compliance with Sec. 12.03.109 Parking of the Nevada County Code. The only proposed improvement to the project is the addition of three 15 gallon barrel trees to the center isle in the parking area, not to grow over 20ft in height and 1-1.5 inch trunk diameter for understory trees. The special events venue will not occur on steep slopes, will not encroach on any non-disturbance buffers for environmentally sensitive areas, and no trees protected by the Nevada County Code will be removed. Table 12.02.030E. states that the maximum impervious surface within the AG zoning district is 10%. Approximately 12,960 sq ft of the 551,177 sq ft parcel (2.34%) are covered by impervious surfacing, and therefore the proposed project will not exceed the maximum allowable impervious surface coverage. The project includes a landscaping plan that was prepared by a licensed landscape architect as required by Section 12.04.107 Landscaping of the Nevada County Code, and the landscaping plan is consistent with the landscaping standards identified in Section 12.04.107 Landscaping. The project parcel is bordered by six (6) parcels zoned General Agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 20-acres (AG-20) to the north, east, south, and west. The project site will consist mostly of rural and residential uses, which is compatible with the surrounding properties, which also include the utilization of rural and residential uses. The proposed event area location will consist of amplified music or a live band within the barn. The sound thresholds at the property line do not exceed live music or a DJ and will implement Mitigation Measure 13A, which requires sound monitoring during events, in order to comply with the Nevada County Noise Standards identified in Section 12.04.070 of the Nevada County Code. Therefore, the project will have a **less than significant impact** in regards to any conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

12. Mineral Resources:

Existing Setting: Mineral resources, particularly gold, have played a major role in the history of Nevada County. Since 1849, when gold was first discovered in the area, to the years preceding World War II, most of the County's population was economically supported, directly or indirectly, by the local gold mining industry. Other metals produced in the County since 1880 include silver, copper, lead, zinc, chromite, and small amounts of tungsten and manganese. Industrial minerals

include barite, quartz for silicon production, and small amounts of limestone, asbestos, clay, and mineral paint. Also, significant deposits of sand, gravel, and rock types suitable for construction aggregate are exposed throughout the County. (Mineral Land Classification of Nevada County, State Division of Mines and Geology, 1990).

In order to promote the conservation of the state's mineral resources, and ensure adequate reclamation of mined lands, the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) was enacted. SMARA requires that the State Geologist classify land in California for its mineral resource potential. Local governments are required to incorporate the mineral and classification reports and maps into their general plans and consider the information when making land use decisions.

Areas subject to mineral land classification studies are divided into various Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ) categories that reflect varying degrees of mineral potential. Mineral deposits of all types which are designated MRZ-2a or MRZ-2b, are used for areas underlain by mineral deposits where geologic data indicate that significant measured or indicated (MRZ-2a) or inferred (MRZ-2b) resources are present.

The Project Parcel is not mapped within a Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ), or area of known valuable mineral deposits.

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

Impact Discussion:

12a-b: The proposed project is not mapped within a known mineral resource area or MRZ and would not change existing residential agricultural land uses on the project site. The project parcel does not contain any known or designated mineral resources. Therefore, the proposed project would have **no impact** on mineral resources.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

13. Noise:

Existing Setting: The project site is located in a rural area of Nevada County characterized by agricultural uses, low-density residential development, and other rural infrastructure. Ambient noise levels in the vicinity are generally low to moderate and are influenced by intermittent sources such as local roadway traffic, agricultural activities, and other permitted rural land uses.

The project parcel currently operates under an approved Outdoor Events Permit, which allows up to eight (8) outdoor events per year. To the County’s knowledge, there have been no documented noise complaints associated with these permitted outdoor events. Event-related noise generated at the site has historically been limited in frequency and duration and has been subject to compliance with the Nevada County Noise Ordinance.

The site is also located within an area affected by existing non-residential noise sources. Notably, the McCourtney Road Transfer Station, located approximately 0.3 miles north of the project parcel, generates regular daytime noise associated with vehicle traffic, equipment operation, and material handling activities. These uses contribute to the ambient daytime noise environment in the area and represent an established background noise condition independent of the project site.

Noise levels applicable to the project are regulated by the Nevada County Noise Ordinance, which establishes exterior noise limits of 55 dB Leq and 75 dB Lmax from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; 50 dB Leq and 65 dB Lmax from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; and 40 dB Leq and 55 dB Lmax from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. These standards apply at receiving property lines and serve as the basis for evaluating potential project-related noise impacts.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess standards established in the local General Plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?		✓			A, 25, 26
b. Generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?			✓		A
c. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				✓	A, K

Impact Discussion:

13a: The proposed project involves the continued operation of an existing special events venue within a permitted 4,800-square-foot agricultural barn. Amplified music associated with events is primarily contained within the barn structure. Limited outdoor amplified sound may occur during wedding ceremonies, typically lasting approximately 20 minutes, after which amplified music is relocated indoors. Barn doors may remain open during events; however, all amplified sound is controlled from within the barn. In lieu of a comprehensive noise study, the property owner has implemented real-time noise monitoring during events using on-site sound monitoring devices. Noise levels are actively monitored throughout the

duration of each event to ensure compliance with the Nevada County Noise Ordinance. According to monitoring data collected from approximately 12 past events, including events ranging from 75 to 250 attendees with an average duration of approximately five hours, measured noise levels at the property lines ranged from 35 to 44 dB Leq, which is below the applicable 50 dB Leq standard for the 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. time period. Events are required to conclude by 10:00 p.m., and no amplified music is permitted after that time. Additionally, Condition of Approval A.10. shall be implemented to keep all amplified music contained within the barn structure, to stay within the Nevada County Noise Ordinance, which establishes exterior noise limits of 55 dB Leq and 75 dB Lmax from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; 50 dB Leq and 65 dB Lmax from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; and 40 dB Leq and 55 dB Lmax from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., and all events must end by 10pm. Mitigation measure 13A shall also be implemented to continue real-time monitoring during events and that the county can request those records at any time.

The project site currently operates under an approved Outdoor Events Permit, which allows up to eight (8) outdoor events per year. To the County's knowledge, no noise complaints have been received related to the operation of these permitted events. This existing operational history provides evidence that event-related noise has been effectively managed and has not resulted in adverse effects on nearby receptors. The project area is also influenced by existing ambient noise sources. Notably, the McCourtney Road Transfer Station, located approximately 0.3 miles north of the project parcel, generates regular daytime noise associated with vehicle traffic, material handling, and operational activities. These existing noise sources contribute to the daytime ambient noise environment in the vicinity and exceed the intermittent and limited-duration noise associated with special events at the project site.

Based on the operational restrictions, existing monitoring data, and continued use of real-time noise monitoring to ensure compliance, the project would not result in a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels beyond standards established by the Nevada County Noise Ordinance. Impacts would be **less than significant with mitigation**, as continued monitoring and enforcement ensure compliance.

- 13b: The project does not involve construction activities, heavy equipment operation, pile driving, or other vibration-generating activities. Event-related noise is limited to airborne sound associated with music and speech, which does not generate ground-borne vibration. Accordingly, the project would not result in excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels. Impacts would be **less than significant**.
- 13c: The project site is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip, within an airport land use plan area, or within two miles of a public or public-use airport. Therefore, the project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels related to airport operations and have **no impact** related to airport noise.

Mitigation Measures: To offset potential operational related noises, the following mitigation measures shall be required as the project continues in operation:

Mitigation Measure 13A. Noise Monitoring: The project operator shall continue to utilize real-time noise monitoring during all events involving amplified sound to ensure compliance with the Nevada County Noise Ordinance. Noise levels shall be maintained below applicable Leq and Lmax thresholds at the property lines. Records of monitoring shall be maintained and made available to the County upon request.

For the Rural zoning district standards, maximum noise levels include:

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

Timing: Duration of project implementation

Reporting: Verification through project approval and ongoing compliance with conditions of approval

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

14. Population and Housing:

Existing Setting: The project use area is designated as a Rural with a minimum parcel size of 20-acres (RUR-20) on the General Plan Land Use Map. The project parcel is zoned AG-20 (General Agricultural with a minimum parcel size of 20-acres) and has been developed with residential and commercial activity, including a primary residence, an ADU, pool, an animal husbandry barn, agriculture building, gravel parking lot, ground mount solar, a well, and a septic system. The vast majority of the surrounding parcels have been developed with single-family residential homes and accessory structures to the west, and undeveloped parcels to the north, south, and east.

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

Impact Discussion:

14a-b: The proposed project is not anticipated to result in impacts to population or housing. No new housing or additional parcels are being proposed with this project. The project parcel has an approved Building Permit for a single-family residence (92036849) and an existing 4,800 square foot shop (231639), an ADU (10002546), and other accessory structures. No second dwellings consistent with zoning could be built on the property due to the parcel size. In addition, the proposed project would not result in population growth or the displacement of housing or people; therefore, no impact relative to displacement of

existing houses or persons would result from approval of this project. The added use of 50 special events per year would not be expected to induce substantial population growth in the area. The special events would likely include 4 event staff, 6 vendors, and 2 staff associated with the project site per event, which would not be substantial. Therefore, it is anticipated that this project will have a less than significant impact on population growth related issues.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

15. Public Services:

Existing Setting: The following services are provided within the project corridor:

Fire: The Nevada County Consolidated Fire Protection District provides fire protection services to the project parcel.

Police: The Nevada County Sheriff Department provides law enforcement services.

Schools: The project site is within the Clear Creek Elementary School District and Nevada Joint Union High School District 1.

Parks: The Bear River recreation district is served by the project parcel.

Water: The project site is served by a private well.

Sewer: Sewage disposal is by individual septic systems.

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

Impact Discussion:

15a: The project is anticipated to have only a minimal impact on fire protection, law enforcement, schools, parks, or other public services because the project would not result in a permanent increase in population that could impact these public services. The special events venue would be used 50 times per year and would hold private celebration events on certain occasions when rented out by a private party. It is likely that a special event would result in a temporary increase in population concentrated on the project site, but due to the special events venue being intended to serve private celebrations only, this

concentration of people would mostly be those that are attending the specific event on the date of the private celebration. The project will not increase the population so service ratios will not be impacted. It is possible that additional people traveling to the special events venue at the same time for a special event could create additional traffic which could impact response times. However, the Nevada County Department of Public Works reviewed the project and did not require a traffic study due to the moderate overall impact on traffic and due to the project having two ingress and egress point to help with circulation and access during events, pursuant to the Nevada County VMT screening threshold states that a project that generated less than 630 VMT per day and is consistent with the jurisdictions general plan and the Regional Transportation Plan would not have to require a Traffic Study.

However, a VMT assessment for the proposed project is based on the following assumptions: each event hosts up to 150 attendees, with an average vehicle occupancy of 2 people per car, up to 50 events per year. At a conservative estimate the calculation does not account for incidental traffic, such as deliveries, staff, vendors, or visits outside of the main events. Based on these assumptions, the annual VMT from all 50 events is averaged across the year, including both weekend and weekday travel, the resulting daily VMT is 556 per day, which is below the Nevada County screening threshold of 630 VMT per day.

Since the special events venue is not anticipated to increase the County-wide population, no significant impact to services is anticipated. Given the existing conditions of the parcel, the existing water storage tanks, and conditions from the Office of the Fire Marshal require defensible space and substantial vegetation reduction surrounding the onsite building related to the event center. Therefore, the impacts are considered to be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

16. Recreation:

Existing Setting: The Project Parcels are located within the Bear River Recreation District. The district provides a variety of recreation programs and cooperative management of several recreation facilities in the Southern Nevada County region. No recreational facilities exist on the subject parcels. The Nevada County General Plan recommends the level of service for recreation needs as three acres per each 1,000 persons, countywide.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?			✓		A

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
b. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?			✓		A
c. Conflict with established recreation uses of the area, including biking, equestrian and/or hiking trails?			✓		A, L

Impact Discussion:

16a-c: The project will not result in an increase in the permanent residential population or residential units that would increase the use of parks or recreational facilities. There are no proposed trails or recreational uses alongside the project parcel. The Bear River Park District provides a variety of recreation programs and cooperative management of several recreation facilities in the Southern Nevada County region. The proposed outdoor events at this site would not disrupt or interfere with any activities in any of the identified recreational areas or prevent recreation in the area; therefore, the proposed project will have **no impact** on established recreation uses on this property and it will have no impact on existing recreational facilities.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

17. Transportation:

Existing Setting: The project parcel has been developed with residential and commercial activity, including a primary residence, an ADU, pool, an animal husbandry barn, agriculture building, gravel parking lot, ground mount solar, a well, and a septic system. Primary access to the special events venue will be provided from McCourtney Road via a dedicated driveway identified on the site plan. This driveway traverses APN 025-580-007, which is also owned by James and Jennifer Flaherty, and will be used exclusively for event access. Secondary access for emergency purposes will be available via the existing driveway from American Ranch Court, which currently serves as the main access to the residence. The closest transit stop is a Route 3GV-McCourtney Road and Allison Ranch Road bus stop serviced by the Nevada County Department of Transit Services, which is approximately 4.3 driving miles north from the project site.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Conflict with a program plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle or pedestrian facilities?			✓		A, B
b. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?			✓		A, B, 28

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
c. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., a sharp curve or dangerous intersection) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?		✓			A, B, L
d. Result in inadequate emergency access?			✓		B, L

Impact Discussion

17a: The Route 6-Penn Valley bus stop, serviced by the Nevada County Department of Transit Services, is approximately 1.9 miles away from the project location. Due to the distance and the unlikelihood of the bus route being substantially used by attendees or staff of the special events venue, it is not anticipated that the construction of the new proposed special events venue will impact the transit facility. Additionally, the site would not conflict with any policies regarding transit, roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities. However, the project would be required to pay its fair share of traffic mitigation fees for trips generated by the project, as determined by the Department of Public Works. Therefore, these impacts would be **less than significant** regarding these policies or services.

17b: The CEQA Section 15064.3 - Determining the Significance of Transportation Impacts describes specific considerations for evaluating a project's transportation impacts. Generally, vehicle miles traveled is the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. For the purposes of this section, "vehicle miles traveled" refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project.

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

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

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

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

in CEQA Guidelines Sections 15303. The specific VMT estimate relies on the vehicle trip generation rate contained in the LCI Technical Advisory for small project screening and average vehicle trip lengths for western Nevada County using the travel forecasting model.

The maximum occupancy of the special events venue at any given event is stated to be up to 150 people by the project design professional and would be for special events only and would not be representative of typical daily use. The special events venue would be used 50 times per year and serves the community by holding private celebration events on specific occasions when rented out by a private party. It is unlikely to create regional draw because access to the special events venue is restricted to private parties who have rented out the special events venue for a private celebration. While the Nevada County Department of Public Works did not require a Traffic Study to be done, a Trip Generation calculation was done by the Public Works Department that concluded that the project as proposed would be expected to result in 21 trips per day. The Nevada County Department of Public Works reviewed the project and the provided Trip Generation and determined it is unlikely to create substantial draw and thus, would only have minimal impacts related to VMT's. Further, the project is consistent with the General Plan and Zoning intensities for the project site and surrounding area. Thus, given the above discussions, the proposed project is anticipated to have **less than a significant impact** on CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b).

- 17c: Operation of the special events venue would result in a temporary and periodic increase in vehicle trips associated with event attendance. However, the project does not propose roadway improvements, modifications to roadway geometry, or changes to traffic control features along McCourtney Road or American Ranch Court. No design features are proposed that would increase traffic hazards or create incompatible uses on adjacent roadways. Potential traffic safety concerns related to event-related parking, site circulation, and emergency access would be addressed through project requirements that ensure all event-related parking occurs on-site, prohibit roadside parking, and limit event access to the McCourtney Road driveway while reserving American Ranch Court for emergency access only. The existing circulation system including onsite access, roads, and parking are adequate to accommodate the projects traffic also referenced in the discussion in 17d below. With implementation of the referenced parking and access requirements, the project would not substantially increase traffic hazards or result in incompatible roadway uses. Therefore, impacts related to traffic hazards would be **less than significant with mitigation**.
- 17d: The proposed project would include temporary and periodic increases in population of up to 150 guests, occurring up to 50 times per year. As a result, the project has the potential to increase the number of individuals who may require evacuation during an emergency event. The project site is located within a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Pursuant to Nevada County Code, discretionary projects within these areas are required to prepare a site-specific Fire Protection and Evacuation Plan, subject to review and approval by the Nevada County Office of the Fire Marshal. The applicant submitted a complete Fire Protection and Evacuation Plan that addresses: proximity to emergency responders and estimated response times; description of primary and secondary access road conditions; identification of emergency water supply or storage facilities; identification of any proposed or required fire sprinkler systems; identification of feasible evacuation routes and evacuation procedures; use of clustered buildings and shared access where feasible; and

preparation of a Fuels Management Plan. The Fuels Management Plan includes identification of defensible space design consistent with California Code of Regulations, Title 14, identification of high fuel load areas, provisions to ensure adequate defensible space through appropriate setbacks or fuel modification zones, mechanisms for ongoing maintenance of defensible space, and the use of fire-resistant landscaping consistent with the most current *Fire-Wise Plant Book* prepared by the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County or similar publication. The County Fire Marshall reviewed the projects Fire Protection and Evacuation plan and had no comments.

Emergency access to the project site is provided via an existing private driveway connecting to McCourtney Road. The driveway was constructed pursuant to an approved grading permit and traverses Assessor’s Parcel Number 025-580-007, also owned by the applicants. The access driveway meets applicable Fire Safe Road standards, including two 10-foot travel lanes, 2-foot shoulders, and 10 feet of vegetation clearance on both sides. The driveway design and configuration were reviewed by the Nevada County Fire Marshal and the Nevada County Department of Public Works, both of whom confirmed that the driveway meets County road and emergency access requirements. The proposed project does not include modifications to the existing access driveway or circulation system that would reduce emergency access or evacuation capability. The project was reviewed by the Nevada County Department of Public Works, the Nevada County Office of the Fire Marshal, and the Nevada County Consolidated Fire Protection District, none of which identified additional adverse impacts related to emergency response, evacuation capacity, or site access. With implementation of the required Fire Protection and Evacuation Plan and continued compliance with applicable fire safety and access standards, the project would not result in inadequate emergency access or evacuation conditions. Therefore, impacts related to fire protection, emergency access, and evacuation would be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures: To offset potential operational related traffic and parking, the following mitigation measures shall be required as the project continues in operation:

Mitigation Measure 17A: Onsite parking requirements.

On-site parking shall be provided for all events, with a minimum of 60 parking spaces available at all times. Event guests shall be directed to park on-site only. Primary access to the venue shall be provided via the McCourtney Road driveway. The American Ranch Court driveway shall be reserved for emergency access only.

Timing: *Duration of project implementation*

Reporting: *Verification through project approval and ongoing compliance with conditions of approval*

Responsible Agency: *Planning Department*

18. Tribal Cultural Resources:

Existing Setting: Assembly Bill 52 (Chapter 532, Statutes 2014) required an update to Appendix G (Initial Study Checklist) of the CEQA Guidelines to include questions related to impacts to tribal cultural resources. Changes to Appendix G were approved by the Office of Administrative Law on

September 27, 2016. Tribal Cultural Resources include sites, features, and places with cultural or sacred value to California Native American Tribes. See Section 5 for additional information regarding tribal resources.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
<p>a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or ii. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe. 		✓			I

Impact Discussion:

18a: Due to the confidentiality and sensitive nature of ancestral lands, it is difficult to determine which tribes have stake in the specific project site. Therefore, the Nevada City Rancheria Tribe, the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, T’si Akim Maidu, and the United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria were all invited to begin Assembly Bill 52 consultation on June 1, 2023. No responses were received from any of the California Native American Tribes regarding consultation. Given that the project site has been previously disturbed and the special events venue components will be built in locations where previous ground disturbance has mostly already occurred, the potential for the proposed project to encounter potentially undiscovered tribal cultural resources is low. While cultural resource discovery has been determined to be unlikely, Mitigation Measure 18A is proposed which would require that a Tribal Representative from a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area be immediately notified if any suspected Tribal Cultural Resources (TCRs) are discovered during ground disturbing construction activities. All work shall cease within 100 feet of the find, or an agreed upon distance based on the project area and nature of the find. With

these protections in place, impacts to Tribal Cultural Resources would be ***less than significant with mitigation***.

Mitigation Measures: To offset potentially adverse cultural or historical resources impacts associated with the construction activities, the following mitigation measures shall be required and shall be included as notes on all future site plans.

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

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

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

Timing: *Prior to issuance of Grading/Improvement/Building permits and throughout construction*

Reporting: *Planning Department Approval of Grading and Construction Permits*

Responsible Agency: *Planning Department*

Mitigation: See **Mitigation Measures 5A.**

19. Utilities and Service Systems:

Existing Setting: The project parcel is currently served by PG&E and a ground mount solar system that was finalized in 2015. The project site is served by two existing groundwater wells. A Class I residential water well, finalized in 1991, provides water service to the primary residence and accessory dwelling unit. In addition, a Class II commercial water well, finalized in 2011, serves the special events venue.

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

Impact Discussion:

19a-c: The proposed project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water supply, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction of which could cause a significant environmental effect. The project parcel is currently served by PG&E and an existing ground-mounted solar system, finalized in 2015. Electrical service demands associated with the project would be accommodated by existing infrastructure, and no upgrades or extensions to electric facilities are required. Water service is provided by two existing groundwater wells, including a Class I residential well finalized in 1991 serving the primary residence and accessory dwelling unit, and a Class II commercial well finalized in 2011 serving the special events venue. No new wells or modifications to existing wells are proposed.

The Nevada County Environmental Health Department reviewed the project and required compliance with Condition C.1., which mandates that if the facility meets the definition of a small public water system, the applicant shall obtain a Small Domestic Water Supply Permit. Implementation of this condition ensures that sufficient water supplies would be available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years. No expansion or relocation of wastewater facilities is proposed. Stormwater drainage would continue to be managed through existing site conditions and natural drainage patterns. The project would not substantially increase impervious surfaces or alter drainage features and therefore would not require construction or expansion of stormwater drainage facilities. In addition, compliance with Condition C.2. requires that all food service operations associated with events be permitted through the Nevada County Environmental Health Department, and Condition C.3. ensures that solid waste generated by the project is properly handled and disposed of in accordance with County standards.

With implementation of Conditions C.1-3., the project would not require new or expanded utility infrastructure and would have **less than significant impacts** related to utilities and service systems.

19d: The operational phase of the proposed project has the potential to result in a temporary, periodic increase in the production of solid waste from baseline conditions due to the increased capacity of the special events venue, because the proposed project would allow for up to 150 guests up to 50 times per year. This temporary, periodic increase in capacity is not anticipated to impact the attainment of solid waste goals. To ensure that solid waste is being disposed of and taken care of properly, a condition of approval for the applicant to provide trash enclosures consistent with Sec. 12.04.200 of the Nevada County Code is required as a part of the proposed project. Therefore, with the implementation of the condition of approval to require trash enclosures consistent with Sec. 12.04.200 of the Nevada County Code and the implementation of Mitigation Measure 19A, which requires that all toxic waste not accepted by the regional landfill shall be properly disposed of in compliance with existing regulations and facilities, impacts are expected to be **less than significant with mitigation**.

19e: The development and operation of the proposed special events venue has the potential to result in temporary, periodic significant amounts of solid waste due to the project proposed up to 150 guests up to 50 times per year; however, any waste generated would be required to comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Additionally, in order to ensure that all solid waste is being disposed of and taken care of properly, a condition of approval for the applicant to provide trash enclosures consistent with Sec. 12.04.200 of the Nevada County Code is required as a part of the proposed project. Therefore, with the implementation of the condition of approval to require trash enclosures consistent with Sec. 12.04.200 of the Nevada County Code, project related impacts to these regulations are anticipated to be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures: To offset potentially adverse impacts related to construction waste, the following mitigation measure is recommended:

Mitigation Measure 19A: Appropriately Dispose of Vegetative and Toxic Waste: Industrial toxic waste (petroleum and other chemical products) is not accepted at the McCourtney Road transfer station and if encountered, shall be properly disposed of in compliance with existing regulations and facilities. This mitigation measure shall be included as a note on all improvement plans, which shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Department prior to permit issuance.

Timing: Duration of project implementation

Reporting: Verification through project approval and ongoing compliance with conditions of approval

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

20. Wildfire:

Existing Setting: The Project Parcel is within Nevada County Consolidated Fire District and falls within a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone as designated by CalFire. Primary access to the special events venue will be provided from McCourtney Road via a dedicated driveway identified on the site plan. This driveway traverses APN 025-580-007, which is also owned by James and Jennifer Flaherty, and will be used exclusively for event access. Secondary access for emergency purposes will be available via the existing driveway from American Ranch Court, which currently serves as the main access to the residence. The Project Parcel is also located approximately 8.8 miles of an existing Nevada County Consolidated Fire Station 88, which is located at 14400 Golden Star in Grass Valley, CA. The Safety Element of the Nevada County General Plan addresses wildfire hazards in Nevada County and has several policies to improve fire safety. Nevada County has also adopted a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) that was updated in May 2018. Additionally, there is a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Nevada County that was updated in April 2016.

The Nevada County Office of Emergency Services published a Wildfire Evacuation Preparedness Action Plan in 2020. The plan highlights five initiatives to reduce wildfire risk in Nevada County:

1. Create safer evacuation routes countywide to save lives.
2. Improve early warning systems and emergency communications to reach everyone.
3. Establish defensible space around our homes and neighborhoods by reducing hazardous vegetation and encouraging voluntary compliance with defensible space standards.
4. Provide a coordinated approach to wildfire response preparedness through planning, community engagement, and project implementation.
5. Enhance critical infrastructure needed to respond to wildfires such as evacuation route improvements, water storage, fire hydrants, communication systems, and green waste facilities.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact	Reference Source (Appendix A)
a. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?			✓		A, G, L, 24
b. Due to slope, prevailing winds, or other factor, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrollable spread of wildfire?			✓		A, B, G, L, 21, 2-7
c. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?			✓		A, G, L
d. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?			✓		A, G, K, L, 12, 18

Impact Discussion

20a,c The proposed project is not anticipated to conflict with emergency plans or result in negative environmental impacts due to infrastructure installation. The Safety Element of the Nevada County General Plan addresses wildfire hazards in Nevada County and has several policies to improve fire safety. The Safety Element discusses the importance of ingress and egress by roadways, and Policy FP-10.7.3 requires that a condition of development is to maintain private roads, including the roadside vegetation. Nevada County has also adopted a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) that was updated in May 2018. Objective 3.6 of the LHMP is to improve communities’ capabilities to prevent/mitigate hazards by increasing the use of technologies. Goal 4 of the LHMP is to reduce fire severity and intensity, with Objective 4.4 to promote the implementation of fuel management on private and public lands. A condition of approval from the Nevada County Deputy Fire Marshal will require vegetation clearance around structures that meets the minimum requirements of Public Resources Code Section 4291. Additionally, due to the High Fire Severity Zone designation, a Fire Protection and Evacuation Plan was submitted. A Condition of Approval provided by the Nevada County Fire Marshal to reduce the fire risk is that the applicant shall be required to create and maintain a 10 foot wide vegetative fuel modification zone along both sides of the driveways, measured from the shoulder, by removing any vegetation that contributes to a significant risk of fire, and that all structures shall be compliant to PRC 4291 Defensible Space requirements. Therefore, with the implementation of the recommended Conditions of Approval, and Nevada County Code requirements, the project impacts relative to compliance with emergency plans, impacts relative to increased fire risk, and impacts to the environment through the minimal work along these existing routes would be a **less than significant impact**.

20b,d: The project parcel generally slopes east to west towards McCourtney Road with slopes ranging from 1% to 30%+, however the project area itself has been previously graded, and is in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Wildfires are ongoing issue in rural areas of California and wildfire smoke can impact vast regions. There are no factors that could be reasonably anticipated to expose occupants to pollutant concentrations from wildfire more than they would be in similar regions of rural California. Additionally, due to the defensible space, water supply, and irrigated vegetation, the project is not expected to expose populations to the uncontrollable spread of wildfire. Additionally, the project has already been developed and the special events center will be utilizing existing structures, so no grading activities would be required that would affect soil disturbance or drainage. Furthermore, the project area is not in an area that is mapped with high landslide activity. Therefore, the project would have a **less than significant** impact on exposing populations to wildfire-related pollutant concentrations or wildfire, flooding or landslides.

Mitigation Measures: None required.

21. Mandatory Findings of Significance:

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

Impact Discussion:

- 21a, c: As discussed in Sections 1 through 20 above, development of the proposed project would comply with all local, state, and federal laws governing general welfare and environmental protection. Construction and operation of the special events venue could result in potentially adverse impacts to Air Quality, Biological Resources, Noise, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, and Utilities/Service System. Mitigation measures are proposed to reduce potential impacts relative to air quality. Due to possible impacts to migratory birds and nesting raptors, mitigation has been added to reduce potential impacts. Although cultural, tribal cultural, and paleontological resources are not known to be present, mitigation has been added for their protection if resources are found. To mitigate potentially adverse soil or erosion impacts from project grading and construction, mitigation measures have been included to follow the requirements of the geotechnical report. To minimize the disruption to surrounding parcels during the operational phase of the project, mitigation has been included to continue noise monitoring. To minimize transportation impacts a mitigation measure has been added to limit the parking area. Lastly, mitigation has been added to reduce potential impacts related to operation. Each of the potential adverse impacts are mitigated to levels that are **less than significant levels with mitigation**, as outlined in each section.
- 21b: A project’s cumulative impacts are considered significant when the incremental effects of the project are “cumulatively considerable,” meaning that the project’s incremental effects are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past, current, and probable future projects. Reasonably foreseeable projects that could have similar impacts to the proposed project include other anticipated projects within the project vicinity that could be constructed or operated within the same timeframe as the project. All the proposed project’s impacts, including operational impacts, can be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of the mitigation measures identified in this Initial Study and compliance with existing federal, state, and local regulations. Therefore, the proposed project would have **less than significant** environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable.

Mitigation Measures: To offset potentially adverse impacts to Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Noise, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, and possible impacts to Utilities/Service, see Mitigation Measures 3A, 4A, 5A, 13A, 17A, 18A and 19A.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE PROJECT PLANNER

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

_____ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

_____ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or a "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

_____ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Alaena Church

2/18/2026

Aleena Church, Assistant Planner

Date

APPENDIX A – REFERENCE SOURCES

- A. Planning Department
 - B. Department of Public Works
 - C. Environmental Health Department
 - D. Building Department
 - E. Natural Resource Conservation Service/Resource Conservation District
 - F. Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District
 - G. Nevada County Consolidated Fire Protection District
 - H. Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Region)
 - I. North Central Information Service, Anthropology Department, CSU Sacramento
 - J. California Department of Fish & Wildlife
 - K. Nevada County Geographic Information Systems
 - L. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire)
 - M. Nevada County Transportation Commission
 - N. Clear Creek Union School District
-
- 1. "California State Scenic Highway System Map." ArcGIS Web Application, California Department of Transportation of Transportation, <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465df3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>.
 - 2. Nevada County. *Nevada County Zoning Regulations*, adopted July 2000, and as amended.
 - 3. *California Department of Conservation Maps - Agriculture*. Department of Conservation, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/agriculture/>.
 - 4. *Williamson Act Parcels 2017*. Nevada County, <https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/30242/2017-Parcels-Affected-By-Williamson-Act-PDF>.

5. "California Air Resources Board." *Maps of State and Federal Area Designations | California Air Resources Board*, <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/maps-state-and-federal-area-designations>.
6. *A GENERAL LOCATION GUIDE FOR ULTRAMAFIC ROCKS IN CALIFORNIA - AREAS MORE LIKELY TO CONTAIN NATURALLY OCCURRING ASBESTOS*. Division of Mines and Geology, <https://www.placerair.org/DocumentCenter/View/1433/General-Location-Guide-PDF>.
7. California Emissions Estimator Model. California Air Pollution Control Officers Association, <https://www.caleemod.com/>.
8. *National Wetlands Inventory*, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, <https://fwsprimary.wim.usgs.gov/wetlands/apps/wetlands-mapper/>.
9. "Information for Planning and Consultation." *IPaC*, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, <https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/location/YAJJ2XYESVDB5AM5YXQ4XMJZHY/resources#endangered-species>.
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11. "SoilWeb." *SoilWeb: An Online Soil Survey Browser | California Soil Resource Lab*, University of California Davis Agriculture and Natural Resources, <https://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/gmap/>.
12. Wills, C.J., et al. *Susceptibility to Deep-Seated Landslides in California*. California Geological Survey, https://www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/Documents/Publications/Map-Sheets/MS_058.pdf.
13. *U.S. Quaternary Faults*, USGS Geologic Hazards Science Center Golden, CO, <https://usgs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5a6038b3a1684561a9b0aadf88412fcf>.
14. *Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones*. California Department of Conservation, <https://www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/alquist-priolo>.
15. *Web Soil Survey*, United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>.
16. *Online Soil Erosion Assessment Tool*. Institute of Water Research - Michigan State University, <http://www.iwr.msu.edu/rusle/kfactor.htm>.
17. California, State of. *Fault Activity Map of California*, California Department of Conservation, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/fam/>.
18. "Site Check ✓." *Site Check ✓*, Office of Planning and Research, <https://sitecheck.opr.ca.gov/>.
19. "2022 Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings for the 2022 Building Efficiency Standards." *California Energy Commission*, California Energy Commission, <https://www.energy.ca.gov/publications/2022/2022-building-energy-efficiency-standards-residential-and-nonresidential>.
20. "CalGreen." *Calgreen*, California Building Standards Commission, <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/BSC/CALGreen#guide>.
21. *FHSZ Viewer*, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, <https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/>.
22. *EnviroStor Database*, California Department of Toxic Substances Control, <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?myaddress=Sacramento&tour=True>.
23. *Flood Maps*. Federal Emergency Management Agency, <https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps>.
24. Nevada County. *Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update*. August 2017. <https://www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/19365/Nevada-County-LHMP-Update-Complete-PDF?bidId=>
25. Nevada County. *Nevada County Zoning Regulations*, adopted July 2000, and as amended.

26. Nevada County. 1995. *Nevada County General Plan: Volume 1: Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Implementation Measures*. Prepared with the assistance of Harland Bartholomew & Associates, Inc. (Sacramento, CA). Nevada County, CA.
27. California Environmental Quality Act Thresholds of Significance, Placer County Air Pollution Control District, <https://www.placer.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2061/Threshold-Justification-Report-PDF>
28. Senate Bill 743 Vehicle Miles Traveled Implementation, Nevada County Transportation Commission, July 6, 2020