

**Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
Groveland StorQuest Project**



Tuolumne County
CALIFORNIA

Lead Agency:
Tuolumne County Community Development Department
48 Yaney Avenue
Sonora, CA 95370
209-533-5633

Owner/Applicant:
Sierra Nevada Engineering and Design

December 1, 2025

Introduction and Regulatory Guidance

This document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et seq.). An initial study is prepared by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15063[a]), and thus to determine the appropriate environmental document. In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15070, a “public agency shall prepare...a proposed negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration...when: (a) The Initial Study shows that there is no substantial evidence...that the project may have a significant impact on the environment, or (b) The Initial Study identifies potentially significant effects but revisions to the project plans or proposal are agreed to by the applicant and such revisions would reduce potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level.” In this circumstance, the lead agency prepares a written statement describing its reasons for concluding that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). By contrast, an EIR is required when the project may have a significant environmental impact that cannot clearly be reduced to a less-than-significant effect by adoption of mitigation or by revisions in the project design. As described in the environmental checklist, the project would not result in any unmitigated significant environmental impacts. Therefore, an IS/MND is the appropriate document for compliance with the requirements of CEQA. This IS/MND conforms to these requirements and to the content requirements of State CEQA Guidelines Section 15071.

Public Review Requirements

Under CEQA, the lead agency is the public agency with primary responsibility for approval of the project. Tuolumne County is the CEQA lead agency. The purpose of this document is to present information to decision-makers and the public about the environmental consequences of implementing the project. This disclosure document is being made available to the public for review and comment. This document will be available for a 30-day public review period from March 12, 2026 to April 13, 2026. Supporting documentation referenced in this document is available for review at:

County of Tuolumne, 2 South Green Street, Sonora, CA 95370, Monday thru Friday, 8 AM-4 PM.

Comments must be postmarked by April 13, 2026, and should be addressed to: Community Development Department Planning Division, cdd@tuolumnecounty.ca.gov, 209-533-5633, County of Tuolumne, 2 South Green Street Sonora CA 95370.

After comments are received from the public and reviewing agencies, the County of Tuolumne may (1) certify the MND and approve the project; (2) require additional environmental analysis; or (3) disapprove the project. If the project is approved, the applicant may proceed with the project.

INITIAL STUDY

Lead Agency: County of Tuolumne

Lead Agency Address: 2 South Green Street Sonora CA 95370

Applicant: Sierra Nevada Engineering and Design, 18898 Plum Industrial Ct. Sonora, Ca 95370

Project Description: Conditional Use Permit CUP22-001 proposes the development of a mini-storage facility, a leasing office with an attached coffee shop with a drive thru, a roof-mounted solar array, universal vehicle charging stations, associated parking, landscaping, fencing, and a stormwater retention pond.

Location: West of the intersection of State Highway 120 and Deer Flat Road, in the community of Groveland, Tuolumne County. APNs: 066-070-014. Coordinates: 37.8368, -120.237385. Township/Range/Section: 1S/16E/20, Mount Diablo Baseline and Meridian. USGS Quad: Groveland

Zoning: C-1 (General Commercial) General Plan: General Commercial (GC)

Table 1. Surrounding Designations

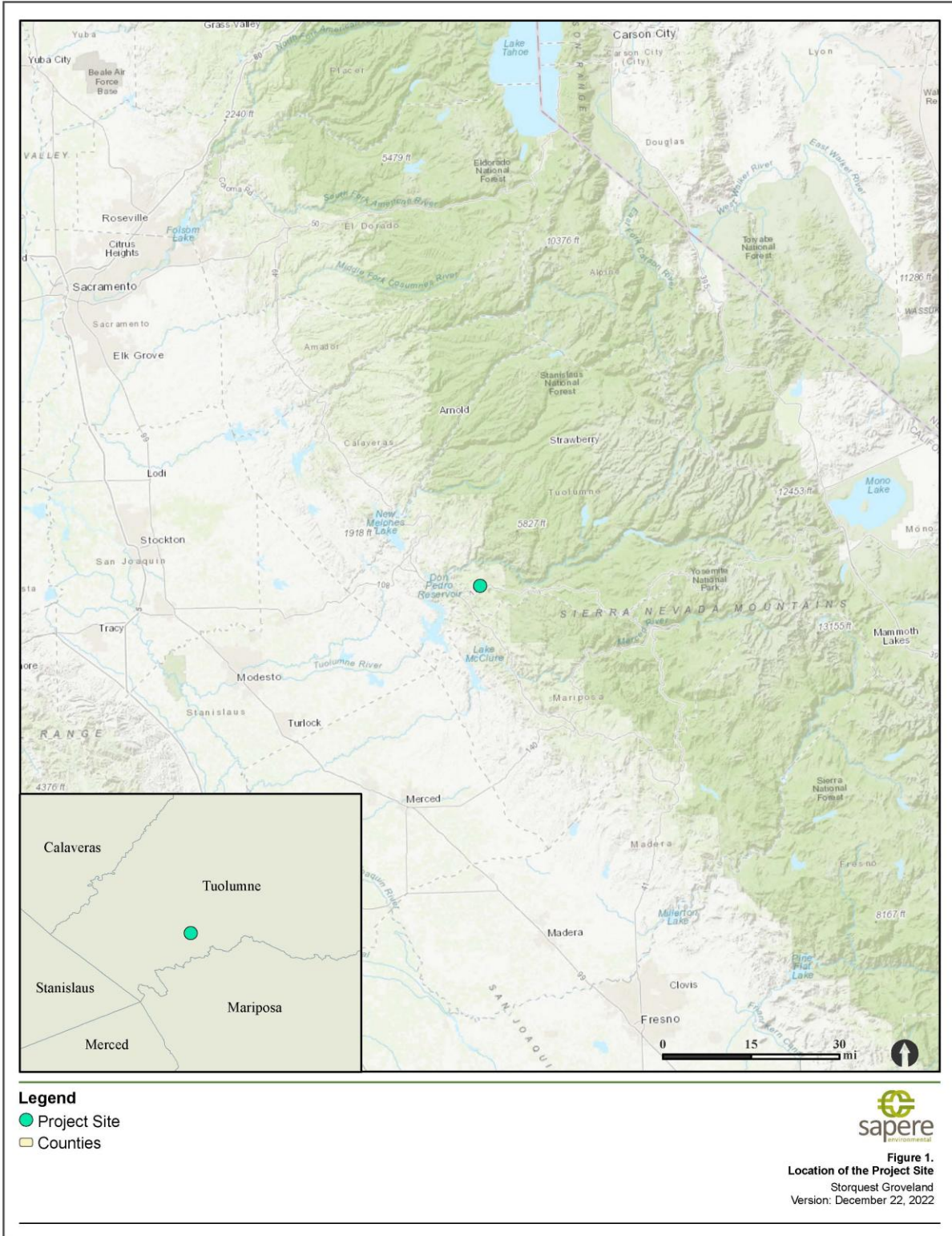
	Surrounding Zoning	Surrounding General Plan
North	Public (P)	Public
South	C-1 and P	General Commercial and Public
East	Mixed Use (MU) and C-1	Mixed Use
West	RE-5 (Residential Estate, five acre minimum) & A-10 (General Agricultural, ten acre minimum) & O (Open Space) and C-K (Commercial Recreation)	Parks and Recreation and Rural Residential

Regional Setting and Surrounding Land Uses

The project is located on the western end of the community of Groveland, in Tuolumne County (Figure 1). Groveland is situated along Highway 120, which serves as a main entrance road into Yosemite National Park. The community of Big Oak Flat is located one mile to the west of the project site, and the area is characterized as rural. Groveland's climate is classified as warm-summer Mediterranean, typical of the Sierra Nevada foothills. The average annual high temperature is 21 °C (70 °F), while the average annual low temperature is 5.3 °C (41.5 °F). Approximately 1,029 mm (40.5 in) of precipitation falls annually, with the majority occurring in winter. The surrounding land includes vacant land to the west and north. To the east, there is vacant land and a single-family residence. To the south, across Highway 120, there are residential homes, Southside Community Connections services, and a CAL FIRE Groveland Station (TCU Unit).

Other Agency Approvals

In addition to County review and approval, the project will require permit issuance approvals from other agencies. These agencies will serve as responsible and trustee agencies pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15381 and Section 15386, respectively. This document provides



the necessary environmental information for discretionary actions by these agencies. The following approvals may be required:

- Caltrans: Encroachment Permit for work within the state right-of-way.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW): Reviews and approves the project for compliance with applicable rules and regulations, specifically regarding impacts to sensitive plant, animal, and wetland/riparian habitat. The CDFW will collect a filing fee for the review of the project environmental document.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Reviews and approves compliance with applicable rules and regulations, specifically concerning impacts to sensitive plant, animal, and wetland/riparian habitat. The authority to contact regarding buffer protection zones for elderberry shrubs.
- Native American Heritage Commission.
- State Water Resources Control Board.
- Groveland Community Services District: For utility permits.
- Tuolumne County: For encroachment permits, grading permits, and building permits.

Tribal Consultation

In accordance with Senate Bill 52, formal consultation letters were sent to the contacts for the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians and the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians Tribes. AB 52 consultation letters were sent on February 26, 2025. No responses were received.

Project Description

The project involves the development of the 10.7 acre commercially zoned property into a StorQuest self-storage facility (Figure 2). This facility will consist of seven storage buildings totaling approximately 62,000 square feet. The storage leasing office and coffee shop will be a 1,500 square-foot wood-framed building (Figure 3). The roof-mounted solar system will support three DC fast chargers. The StorQuest facility will be enclosed by a seven-foot-tall wrought iron fence, which will be landscaped. The existing natural terrain along the State Highway 120 frontage will remain unaltered. A riprap-lined drainage culvert will divert surface water runoff toward a stormwater detention pond located at the southeast corner of the development, adjacent to the State Highway 120/Deer Flat Road intersection. The project site is in a moderately remote location south of the community of Groveland and is accessed by State Highway 120, one of the principal access routes to Yosemite National Park.

Construction activities would occur Monday through Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The grading phase is expected to last approximately two months, utilizing a small fleet of typical earth-moving equipment including excavators, a backhoe, a water truck, a motor grader, a bobcat, and dump trucks. The subsequent approximate eight-month building construction phase would involve light- to moderate-duty equipment such as a bobcat, laser screed, grade box, mini-excavator, forklift, and scissor lift.

Site Description

The project site is vacant and dominated by natural vegetation, including oak trees. The site slopes to the south toward an unnamed drainage. The site comprises a relatively flat plot of forested land running southwest to northeast along Highway 120. The site ranges in elevation

Figure 2. Project Site Plan

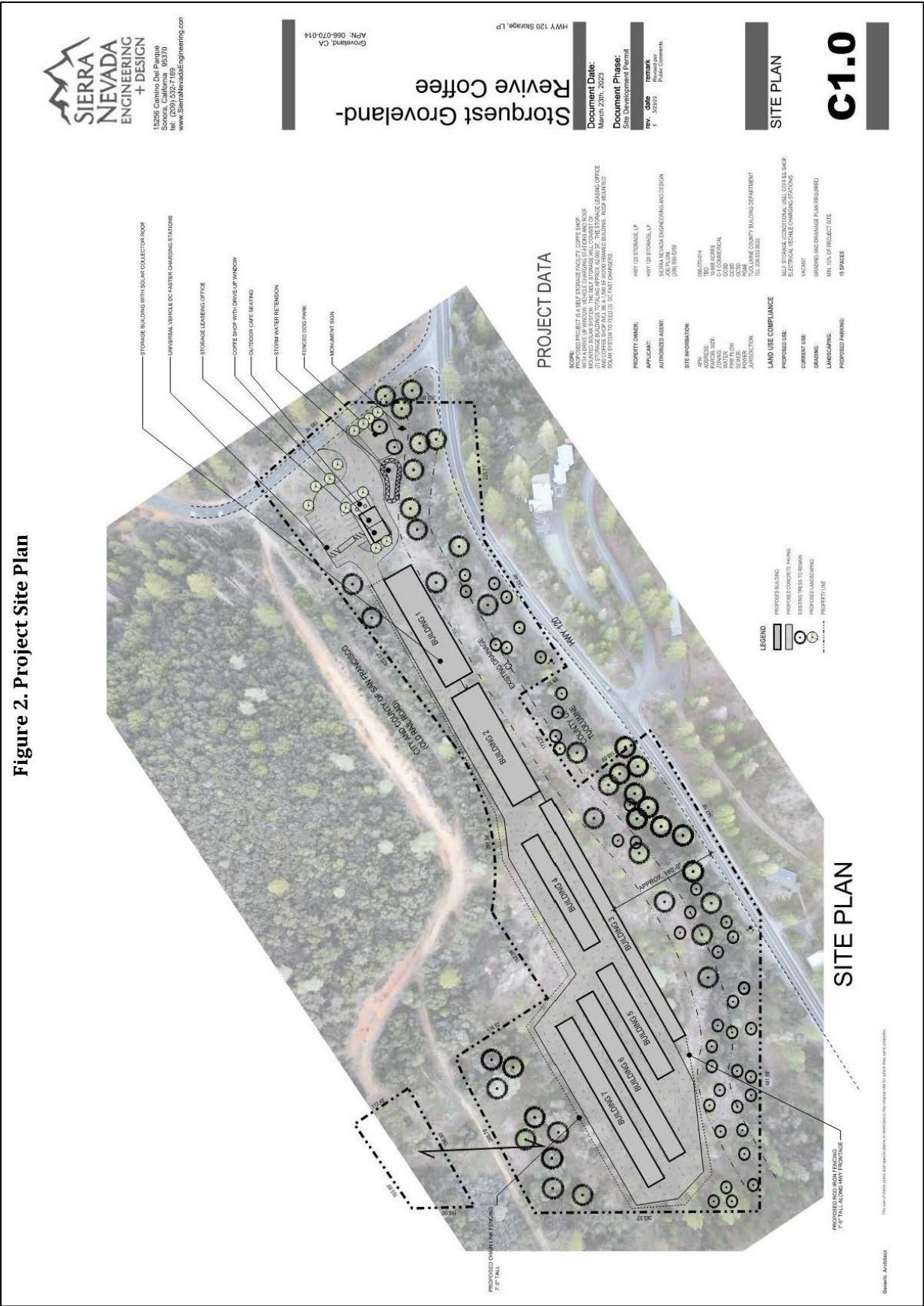


Figure 3. Project Elevations

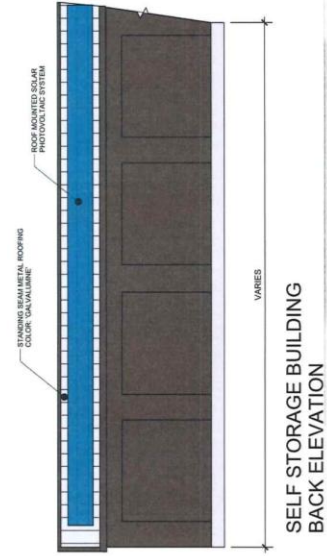
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Community Development
Department



LEASING OFFICE AND COFFEE SHOP
SOUTH ELEVATION



LEASING OFFICE AND COFFEE SHOP
SOUTH ELEVATION



Storquest Groveland -
Revive Coffee

Document Date:
March 23rd, 2023
Document Phase:
Site Development Permit

rev. date remark
1 3/23/23 Public Comments

HMY 120 Storage, LP
Groveland, CA
APN: 066-070-014

ELEVATIONS

A1.0

from approximately 2,930 feet (893 meters) above mean sea level (MSL) at the east end of the site at Deer Flat Road to approximately 3,030 feet (924 meters) at the northwest end of the site. The site is located west of the intersection of State Highway 120 and Deer Flat Road, in the community of Groveland, Tuolumne County.

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a “Potentially Significant Impact,” as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Aesthetics | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agriculture and Forestry Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | Air Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> | Biological Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cultural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Geology/Soils | <input type="checkbox"/> | Greenhouse Gas Emissions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hazards and Hazardous Materials | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hydrology/Water Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> | Land Use/Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mineral Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> | Population/Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tribal Cultural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | Utilities/Service Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wildfire | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mandatory Findings of Significance | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | |

The following terminology from Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines is used in this environmental analysis to describe the level of significance of potential impacts to each resource area:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Potentially Significant Impact | An adverse effect that could be significant under CEQA thresholds and may require preparation of an EIR. |
| Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation | A potentially significant effect that can be reduced to a less-than-significant level with mitigation. |
| Less-than-Significant Impact | An effect that does not exceed CEQA significance thresholds; no mitigation required. |
| No Impact | No adverse or detectable environmental effect; no mitigation required. |

Determination

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- X I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a “potentially significant impact” or “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.

Roger Root, Environmental Coordinator

DATE

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1) A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).

2) All 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.

3) Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.

4) "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from "Earlier Analyses," as described in (5) below, may be cross-referenced).

5) Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:

- a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
- b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
- c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

6) Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7) Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.

1. AESTHETICS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c.	In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

At the federal level, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.) requires federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of their proposed actions, including potential effects on aesthetics. While NEPA primarily applies to federal projects, it sets a precedent for considering visual impacts in environmental reviews. Additionally, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines for scenic byways and highways may influence aesthetic considerations for projects adjacent to federally designated scenic routes.

CEQA Guidelines § 15064(e) states that a project's aesthetic impacts should be evaluated based on the extent to which it would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. Furthermore, the California Government Code § 65302(a) requires local jurisdictions to include policies regarding visual resources in their general plans, emphasizing the importance of aesthetics in land use planning.

At the regional level, Tuolumne County's General Plan includes policies that address aesthetics and scenic resources. The General Plan emphasizes the preservation of natural landscapes and the visual character of the community.

Locally, Tuolumne County has specific zoning codes and design standards that govern aesthetic considerations for new developments. The Tuolumne County Zoning Ordinance outlines requirements for landscaping, building materials, and design elements that contribute to the visual character of the area. Additionally, the County's Community Development Department reviews projects for compliance with these aesthetic standards during the permitting process.

Scenic vistas are generally considered to be areas where the public can experience unique or high-quality views. Typical examples of scenic vistas include mountain ranges, ridgelines, or bodies of water as viewed from a highway, public space, or other area designated for the express purpose of viewing and sightseeing. In general, a project would result in an impact to a scenic vista if development of the project would substantially change or remove a scenic vista. Three officially designated vista points exist within the County and are located on State Highway 120

at miles 19 and 21, which overlook Don Pedro Lake, and mile 44, which overlooks a canyon containing the South Fork of the Tuolumne River.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is located at the northwest corner of Deer Flat Road and State Highway 120 in Groveland, Tuolumne County. This vacant site encompasses a relatively flat area characterized by natural vegetation, including oak trees, shrubs, and grasses. The site slopes gently to the south toward an unnamed drainage, which runs parallel to State Highway 120. The elevation of the site ranges from approximately 2,930 feet (893 meters) at the eastern end near Deer Flat Road to about 3,030 feet (924 meters) at the northwest end. The site is situated within a rural area, with surrounding land uses primarily consisting of vacant land and a single-family residence to the east, while residential homes and community services are located across State Highway 120 to the south.

Visual features of the site include the oak woodland and the drainage, which contribute to the natural aesthetic of the area. The site is visible from both State Highway 120 and Deer Flat Road, placing it within the immediate viewshed of drivers on these public roadways. However, there are no designated scenic highways in Tuolumne County, and the site is not located on or visible from any ridgelines or scenic vistas. The existing visual environment is characterized by the absence of significant sources of light or glare, with the project proposing minimal lighting for security purposes, including downlighting on the new structures.

The proposed development will result in a visual change from the current natural vegetation to built structures, including a 1,500 square foot coffee shop and leasing office, which will utilize natural materials such as stone and brick. The buildings will be set back approximately 180 feet from the edge of the pavement of Highway 120, and landscaping will be implemented around the coffee shop and leasing office to enhance visual integration with the surrounding environment. Vegetation along the drainage will serve as a visual buffer, aiding in screening the new developments from view, particularly from Deer Flat Road. Sensitive viewers, primarily drivers passing the site, will have intermittent views of the project, while there are no direct views from existing residences.

ANALYSIS

a and c. The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. The project site is currently vacant and characterized by natural vegetation, including oak trees, shrubs, and grasses, with notable features such as oak trees and an unnamed drainage. The site is visible from State Highway 120 and Deer Flat Road, both of which are public roadways within a rural setting. The site is not located on or visible from any scenic ridgelines or officially recognized vistas.

While the project would introduce new structures into a currently undeveloped parcel, it is designed to be compatible with the surrounding rural environment and would not substantially alter or obstruct public views. These design features are described above, and include building materials, landscaping, and setbacks. The project design incorporates natural materials such as stone and brick, and lighting would be shielded and directed downward to minimize glare. In addition, ornamental landscaping around the leasing office and coffee shop would soften the visual transition between built and natural elements. Therefore, the project would not have a

substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or degrade the visual character or quality of the area. The impact is considered less than significant.

b. The project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway. The project site is currently vacant and characterized by natural vegetation, with notable visual features such as oak woodlands and an unnamed drainage. The site is visible from State Highway 120 and Deer Flat Road, both of which are public roadways, but there are no designated scenic highways in Tuolumne County. According to the California Scenic Highway Mapping System, State Highway 120 is an Eligible State Scenic Highway; however, it has not been officially designated. Therefore, there will be no impact.

d. The project would create a new source of substantial light or glare that could adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Existing conditions indicate that there are no significant sources of light or glare in the area, which is predominantly rural. The proposed construction will incorporate downlighting for security purposes. While the lighting will be shielded and directed downward to minimize glare, the introduction of new structures and associated lighting represents a visual change from the natural landscape to developed uses. The buildings will be set back at a minimum of approximately 180 feet from Highway 120, and landscaping will be installed at the entrance to provide a visual buffer. However, the project may still result in increased visibility of light sources from nearby roadways, particularly during nighttime hours. Given these factors, without mitigation, the potential for adverse effects on views exists. Therefore, the impact is determined to be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

MITIGATION MEASURE

AES-1: Prior to issuance of building permits, the project applicant shall submit a photometric lighting plan to the Land Use and Natural Resources Division for review and approval. The plan shall demonstrate that all proposed exterior lighting is designed, located, and directed downward to prevent light spillover onto adjacent properties. All lighting fixtures shall be shielded and directed downward to minimize glare and light trespass, consistent with County standards and the International Dark Sky Association's best practices.

MITIGATION MONITORING

AES-1 shall be required prior to the issuance of any building permits that includes exterior lighting. The plan shall be reviewed and verified by the LUNR Division of CDD. Prior to the final building inspection, the LUNR Division shall verify that exterior lighting has been installed in accordance with the approved plans. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.

2. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b.	Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c.	Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources 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))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d.	Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

REGULATORY SETTING

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) regulates timber harvesting and logging on privately owned lands in California. Prior to the conversion of land to a use other than growing commercial timber, a Timberland Conversion permit must be reviewed and approved by CalFire.

California Land Conservation Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the preservation of agricultural land or related open space uses. Land under agricultural production may have its annual assessed valuation for property tax calculations reduced if the owner agrees to place the land under a Williamson Act contract for a duration of 10 years, which is renewable annually. Tuolumne County Resolution 106-04, approved by the Board of Supervisors on June 15, 2004, contains the County's rules and regulations governing land within Agricultural Preserves and land within the Williamson Act Land Conservation Program.

Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1976

Actions related specifically to potential impacts from forest resources could be subject to the provisions of the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1976 which have been promulgated as

the California Forest Practice Rules. Land within Tuolumne County that is subject to the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1976 is indicated by the TPZ (Timberland Production District) zoning district and the TPZ General Plan land use designation. The TPZ zoning district is utilized for the protection of timberland to prevent encroachment by incompatible land uses and to promote the general welfare of the County as a whole. This zone is intended to qualify its land pursuant to the Z'berg-Warren-Keene-Collier Forest Taxation Reform Act of 1976 or other legislative statutes or constitutional authorizations that may be developed for defining a timberland preserve.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Parcels within the Williamson Act must contain the Agricultural Preserve Combining (:AP) zoning, as required by Tuolumne County Resolution 106-04 and be zoned for agriculture. Chapter 8 of the 2018 Tuolumne County General Plan contains the Goals, Policies, and Implementation Programs related to agriculture in Tuolumne County. The project site is designated as commercial by both the County's zoning and General Plan. The site is adjacent to a parcel that is partially zoned A-10.

ANALYSIS

- a. The project site is zoned General Commercial, and a commercial project is proposed to be constructed on the project site. The project site is designated as grazing land by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, however, it is primarily covered in tall vegetation and oak trees, which would not support grazing activities in its current form. The project is not converting Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to a non-agricultural use. Therefore, there will be no impact.
- b. The project site is zoned General Commercial therefore, it will not conflict with any on-site zoning for agricultural use. The site is not under a Williamson Act contract thus, there will be no conflict. Property to the east is partially zoned for agricultural use, but the proposed land use, mini storage, does not create noise or odors, generates a very low trip rate, and is not expected to impact any adjacent agricultural zoning. Therefore, there will be no impact.
- c. The project site is zoned General Commercial; therefore, it will not conflict with any on-site zoning for forest land, timberland, or land zoned for timberland production. Therefore, there will be no impact.
- d. The project site is not considered forest land, nor are the adjacent properties. The construction of the proposed project will not result in the loss of, or the conversion of, forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, there will be no impact.
- e. The project, while vacant, is not located on farmland or forest land. Therefore, the mini storage land use will not result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, there will be no impact.

3. AIR QUALITY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b.	Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Would the project result in other emissions (such as odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) and NAAQS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administers the federal Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. § 7401 et seq.), which establishes a national framework for protecting air quality. EPA has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants: ozone (O₃), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and lead (Pb).

EPA designates each air basin as attainment, nonattainment, or unclassified for each pollutant based on monitored concentrations. States must prepare a State Implementation Plan (SIP) describing how NAAQS will be met and maintained.

Tuolumne County lies in the Mountain Counties Air Basin (MCAB) and is designated attainment/unclassified for all federal standards except ozone. The County was previously classified as moderate nonattainment for the 1997 8-hour ozone standard; although that standard has been revoked, nonattainment New Source Review provisions continue to apply.

California Clean Air Act (CCAA), CAAQS, and CARB Programs

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) administers the CCAA and establishes California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS), which are generally more stringent than federal standards. CARB also administers statewide programs for mobile-source emissions and Toxic Air Contaminants (TACs), including diesel particulate matter regulation through the Air Toxics Program and Airborne Toxic Control Measures (ATCMs).

Tuolumne County is designated nonattainment for state ozone standards and attainment/unclassified for all other state criteria pollutants.

Mountain Counties Air Basin

CARB divides California into air basins based on topographic and meteorological features. The MCAB includes Plumas, Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Mariposa counties. The basin's rugged terrain and elevation gradients influence pollutant transport, ozone formation, and particulate trapping during inversions.

Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District (TCAPCD)

TCAPCD is the local agency responsible for enforcing federal and state air quality standards, issuing stationary-source permits, regulating open burning, and supporting CEQA review. Applicable rules include:

- Rule 202 – Visible Emissions: Limits opacity to Ringlemann No. 1 (20 percent) for more than 3 minutes per hour.
- Rule 501 – Permit Required: Requires permits for stationary emission sources.
- Regulation III – Open Burning: Regulates debris, land-clearing, and agricultural burning.
- Regulation IV – Stationary Source Permitting: Includes New Source Review (NSR) and Nonattainment NSR provisions.

TCAPCD has also established CEQA screening thresholds for determining when project emissions may cause a significant impact:

- ROG: 1,000 lb/day or 100 tpy
- NOX: 1,000 lb/day or 100 tpy
- PM₁₀: 1,000 lb/day or 100 tpy
- CO: 1,000 lb/day or 100 tpy

Tuolumne County General Plan (2018)

The General Plan Natural Resources Element includes policies requiring minimization of construction and operational emissions, dust control, energy-efficient design, reduction of vehicle emissions, and coordination with TCAPCD. Consistency with these policies informs CEQA significance determinations.

Table 2. Attainment Status Summary

Pollutant	Federal Status	State Status
Ozone (8-hour)	Attainment for 2008+ standards; Moderate Nonattainment (1997 standard NSR requirements remain)	Nonattainment
CO	Attainment	Attainment
NO ₂	Attainment	Attainment
SO ₂	Attainment	Attainment
PM ₁₀ / PM _{2.5}	Unclassified/Attainment	Unclassified
Lead (Pb)	Attainment	Attainment

Sensitive Receptors and Health Context

Sensitive receptors include residences, schools, hospitals, elder-care facilities, daycares, and similar uses. The primary receptors in the project area are residential dwellings located east of Deer Flat Road and small commercial uses along State Highway 120.

Exposure concerns include short-term construction dust and exhaust, localized TAC exposure, and odor impacts where applicable. No schools or medical facilities occur within one mile.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Air quality in Tuolumne County is shaped by its elevation, terrain, and meteorological patterns. Regional contributors include:

- transported ozone precursors from the San Joaquin Valley;
- vehicle emissions;
- wood-burning appliances;
- construction dust;
- small stationary equipment; and
- region-wide wildfire smoke events.

Because the County lacks a permanent monitor, representative air quality data come from CARB stations in Pinecrest, Yosemite Village, and Sierra foothill locations. The County generally attains all standards except ozone, which periodically exceeds state standards during summer.

The Mountain Counties Air Basin is characterized by rugged mountains and foothills ranging from several hundred to over 10,000 feet in elevation. The region experiences a Mediterranean climate with warm, dry summers and cool, wet winters. The frost-free period typically ranges from 100 to 150 days. Summer upslope winds help disperse pollutants vertically, while winter temperature inversions trap particulates near the ground. These topographic and climatic conditions drive the seasonal patterns of ozone formation and particulate accumulation within the basin.

The Groveland area features a warm-summer foothill climate with average daily high temperatures near 70°F and roughly 40 inches of annual precipitation. Local air quality is influenced by summer upslope transport of ozone and its precursors from the San Joaquin Valley, while local stationary emission sources remain minimal. In winter, temperature inversions and residential wood burning can contribute to localized particulate matter buildup.

The project site is a 10.7 acre undeveloped parcel at the northwest corner of Deer Flat Road and State Highway 120 in Groveland. The site is zoned C-1 and contains scattered trees and disturbed understory vegetation, with residential and commercial development surrounding it and vacant land to the north. There are no on-site stationary emission sources, and existing emissions are limited to minor dust generated by unpaved surfaces and passing vehicles. Ambient air quality at the site reflects regional background conditions, including occasional elevated ozone levels during summer, low carbon monoxide concentrations due to limited traffic, and episodic particulate matter peaks during wildfire smoke events.

Sensitive Receptors

Sensitive receptors near the project include single-family residences located approximately 200 feet east of the site and commercial uses along State Highway 120, while the nearest schools and medical facilities are more than one mile away. These receptors could experience temporary exposure to construction-related emissions such as dust and diesel exhaust, although long-term operational emissions associated with the proposed coffee shop would be minimal.

Criteria Pollutant Characteristics

Primary pollutants are emitted directly (CO, NOX, ROG, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, SO₂, Pb). Secondary pollutants form through atmospheric reactions (ozone, secondary particulates, oxidants). Short health summaries:

- CO—reduces blood oxygen; localized near traffic.
- Ozone—respiratory irritant formed from NOX + ROG + sunlight.
- NO₂—respiratory irritant; contributes to PM formation.
- PM₁₀/PM_{2.5}—respirable particulates; PM_{2.5} penetrates deep lung tissue.
- SO₂—respiratory irritant; can form acid aerosols.
- Odors—can cause discomfort; associated with agriculture and industrial uses.

ANALYSIS

a. Tuolumne County does not have its own air-quality plan. The County follows the State Implementation Plan and its General Plan, which focus on reducing ozone and dust levels through good construction practices, land-use planning, and energy efficiency.

The self-storage project and small coffee shop would create some temporary dust and exhaust during grading and construction. These short-term emissions are typical for a small project like this and would remain below air-district thresholds. Adhering to the standard dust-control and equipment rules that already apply under the Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District will help keep emissions low.

Once the project is built, traffic and on-site energy use would be minimal and already accounted for in the regional air-quality planning forecasts. The project would not obstruct any air-quality plan. There would be no impact.

b. The Mountain Counties Air Basin is listed as nonattainment for ozone, so the main concern is emissions of ROG and NOx that contribute to ozone formation.

During construction, there would be emissions from dirt moving, truck trips, and equipment exhaust. Based on other small commercial projects of similar size, these emissions would be well below what the district considers significant (around 10 tons per year). Utilizing water for dust control, maintaining engines, and following Rule 202 regarding visible emissions would help manage emissions effectively.

Once built and fully operational, the self-storage use would generate approximately 75 daily trips and the coffee shop 192 trips. A trip is considered “two ways”, so this would be approximately 134 cars in and out the site. While the traffic study assumed these would all be primary, or new trips to the site, it is likely that vehicles already traveling by this site will stop for services from the coffee shop, such as travelers to and from Yosemite National Park. This is a small number of vehicle trips and not enough to noticeably change air quality. Energy and equipment use on the site would also be minimal.

Overall, this project will not significantly contribute to regional pollution levels or exacerbate the County’s ozone problem. Therefore, the impact is less than significant.

c. Nearby sensitive receptors include houses located about 200 feet east of the site across Deer Flat Road, as well as a few small commercial buildings along Highway 120.

Diesel exhaust and dust will be generated from construction equipment; however, those emissions dissipate quickly and decrease with distance. Because the construction work is short-term and utilizes only a few pieces of equipment, pollutant levels at nearby homes will be very low. Contractors will be required to use newer, cleaner diesel engines (Tier 3 or better) and limit idling to five minutes in accordance with state regulations.

After the project is built, emissions will be minimal. A self-storage facility does not generate much traffic or fuel use, and the small coffee drive-through will not create long idling lines. Local background carbon monoxide levels are already low, so the project will not create any hot-spot problems. Although no significant impacts were identified, the County will apply its usual conditions of approval to ensure that construction remains in compliance with TCAPCD and state regulations. These are standard requirements for any project of this type.

Condition of Approval Dust Control (TCAPCD Rule 202):

The contractor will:

- Water active construction areas at least twice a day.
- Cover or wet all haul trucks carrying dirt or debris off-site.
- Maintain speeds on unpaved roads to 15 mph or less.
- Cease grading on windy days (winds over 20 mph or when dust blows off-site).
- Re-stabilize disturbed areas once grading is complete.

Condition of Approval Construction Equipment Exhaust:

All diesel equipment will meet Tier 3 or newer standards (Tier 4 preferred). Idling will be limited to five minutes. Equipment and staging areas will be positioned as far as practical from nearby homes.

These conditions of approval are not mitigation measures, as air-quality impacts are already less than significant before they are applied. They simply ensure that the project adheres to the usual air-district and state requirements. Therefore, the impact is less than significant.

d. Construction will produce some short-term diesel and asphalt odors; however, these odors dissipate quickly once the work ceases. Neither the self-storage facility nor the coffee shop is an odor-producing use, and the small amount of vehicle exhaust from drive-through customers will not be noticeable in this area. Therefore, the impact is less than significant.

4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.	Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
f.	Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

REGULATORY SETTING

Biological resources in California are regulated under a comprehensive framework of federal, state, and local laws designed to protect special-status species, migratory birds, sensitive habitats, jurisdictional waters, and wildlife movement corridors. At the federal level, the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) (16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq.) prohibits the “take” of federally listed threatened and endangered species, with “take” defined broadly to include actions that harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect wildlife. Under FESA Section 7, federal agencies must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) when a project may affect a listed species, resulting in a Biological Opinion and potential authorization of incidental take. Where no federal nexus exists, incidental take may be authorized under Section 10(a) through a Habitat Conservation Plan. Additional federal protections include the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. §§703–712), which prohibits the take of migratory nongame birds, their nests, or eggs; the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. §§668–668d), which specifically protects eagles; and

the Clean Water Act (CWA). Under CWA Section 404, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands; projects seeking a Section 404 permit must also obtain a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), verifying compliance with state water quality standards.

State regulations mirror and expand upon federal protections. The California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish and Game Code §2050 et seq.) prohibits the take of state-listed threatened, endangered, and candidate species absent authorization under Section 2081 of the Fish and Game Code. Unlike FESA, CESA's definition of take does not include "harm" or "harass," and therefore habitat modification alone is not automatically considered take unless direct mortality would occur. The California Fish and Game Code provides additional protections: Section 3503 prohibits take or destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird; Section 3503.5 extends these protections to all raptors; and Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515 identify "Fully Protected Species," for which no take authorization can be issued. Under Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code, a Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is required for any activity that would substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow, or alter the bed, bank, or channel of any river, stream, or lake. The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act grants the State Water Resources Control Board and RWQCB broad authority over "waters of the State," including isolated wetlands and drainages not subject to federal jurisdiction, and allows issuance of Waste Discharge Requirements under State Water Quality Order 2004-0004-DWQ.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.) requires evaluation of a project's impacts on biological resources, including special-status species, sensitive natural communities, wetlands, riparian areas, wildlife movement corridors, and habitats of local, regional, or statewide significance. Special-status species considered under CEQA include federally and state-listed species; CDFW Species of Special Concern; California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Rank 1 and 2 species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern; species identified in recovery plans; and CDFW-recognized special-status invertebrates. CEQA requires feasible mitigation for impacts that would be considered significant, and mandates avoidance, minimization, or compensatory mitigation where appropriate.

Local regulations also contribute to biological resource protection. In Tuolumne County, biological review is guided by the Tuolumne County General Plan (2018) and the Tuolumne County Wildlife Handbook (TCWH). The TCWH maps habitat types throughout the county, ranks habitat sensitivity, and establishes recommended wildlife protection measures. Habitats present on the project site—including montane conifer-hardwood forest, montane chaparral, and riparian/wetland features—are generally classified as second and third-priority habitats, which are common but of biological value. Agricultural or highly disturbed vegetation types are considered fourth-priority, with lower biological sensitivity. Under the General Plan, Implementation Program 16.B.i requires biological evaluation and mitigation for impacts to: (1) federally or state-listed species or candidates; (2) CDFW Species of Special Concern; (3) Fully Protected species; (4) CRPR 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B plants; (5) sensitive natural communities, including wetlands and riparian areas; (6) wildlife movement corridors; and (7) oak woodlands. Implementation Programs 16.B.j, 16.B.j.1, and 16.B.j.2 establish detailed CEQA thresholds, mapping requirements, avoidance buffers, best management practices, and compensatory mitigation requirements for oak woodland conservation, including requirements for easements, planting standards, monitoring plans, and long-term management obligations when oak woodland loss cannot be avoided.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The following description of existing biological conditions is based on the Biological Resources Assessment (Biological Study) prepared for the project and attached to the Initial Study as Appendix A. The project site is located within an undeveloped portion of the community of Groveland and lies at the transition between the Lower Foothills Metamorphic Belt and Upper Foothills Metamorphic Belt subsections of the Sierra Nevada Foothills Section, as defined in the Ecological Subregions of California. The project site consists of a relatively flat, forested area extending southwest to northeast along State Highway 120, ranging in elevation from approximately 2,930 feet above mean sea level at Deer Flat Road to about 3,030 feet at its northwest extent. Soils on the project site are mapped as Musick-Hotaw complex, Nedsgulch-Sites complex, Nedsgulch-Wallyhill complex, and Nedsgulch-Wallyhill-Arpatutu complex; however, past mining activity and vegetation clearing for fuel reduction have altered soil conditions, and field confirmation was not possible. No serpentine, ultramafic, volcanic, or high-clay soils occur on the project site, thereby limiting the potential for special-status plant species that depend on those substrates.

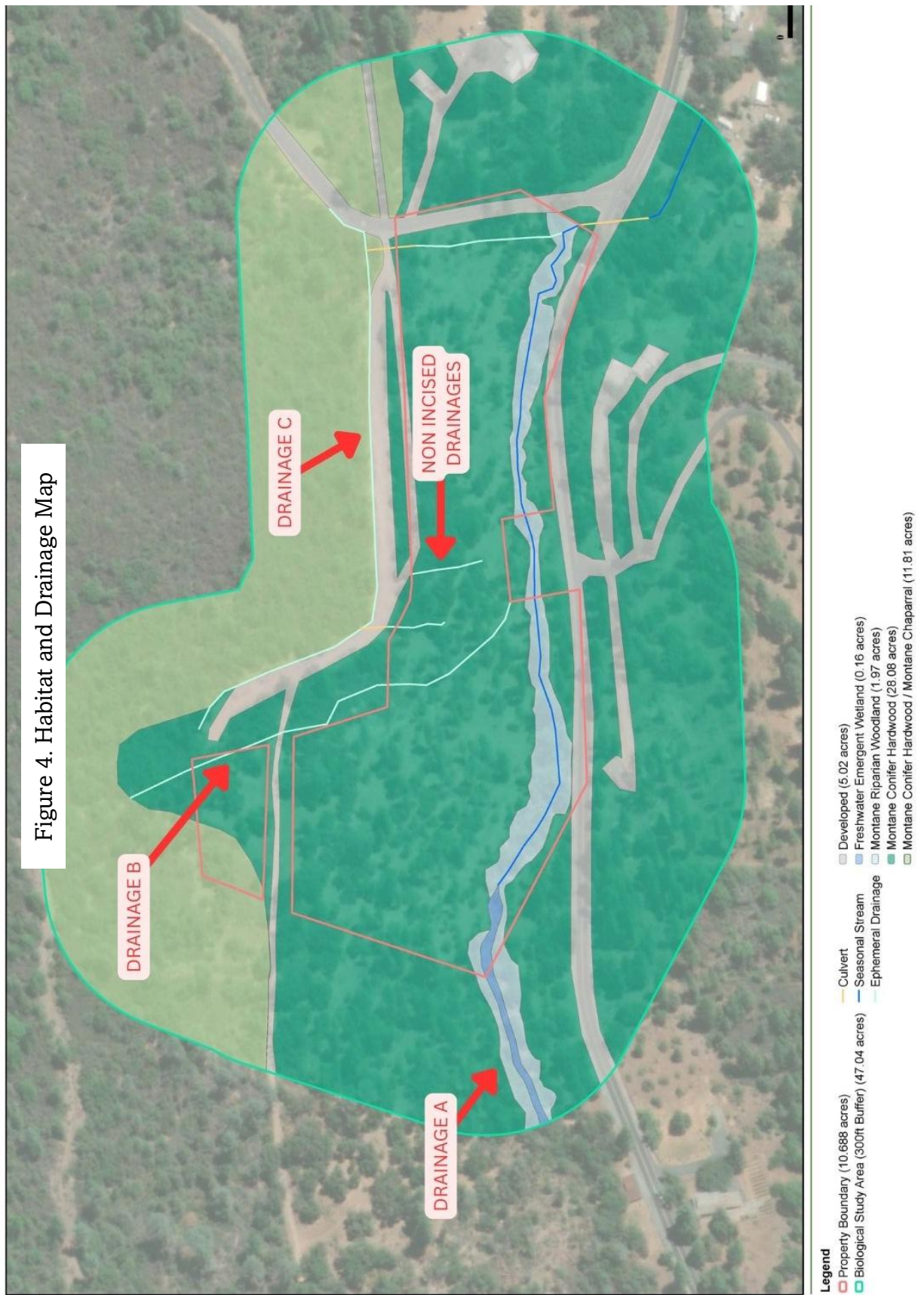
Biological resources on the project site and surrounding area include a mixture of terrestrial and aquatic vegetation communities and wildlife habitats. The dominant vegetation type is montane conifer–hardwood forest, which extends across most of the project site. On slopes north of the parcel—within the broader study area but largely outside the project boundary—this vegetation transitions into montane chaparral. A narrow corridor of montane riparian woodland follows the unnamed seasonal stream that parallels Highway 120, and a small area of freshwater emergent wetland occurs where this stream broadens near the western edge of the project site. These habitat features support a variety of wildlife species typical of the Sierra Nevada foothills. Although the project site and surrounding open areas are accessible to wildlife, Highway 120 forms a partial barrier to wildlife movement and limits the extent of east–west connectivity.

The project has several hydrologic features, which are discussed in the Biological Report and shown on Figure 4. The project site contains one unnamed seasonal tributary (DRAINAGE A) to Pine Mountain Lake that flows parallel to Highway 120, directing water eastward to a culvert at Deer Flat Road before merging with a larger unnamed stream that continues roughly 2.1 miles to Pine Mountain Lake and ultimately to the Tuolumne River. Although absent from USGS blue-line mapping and the California Aquatic Resources Inventory, this tributary exhibits seasonal surface flow and maintains a hydrologic connection to downstream perennial navigable waters. The in-channel wetland likely meets all three criteria as a federal and state jurisdictional wetland, along with its adjacent riparian woodland.

A small, narrowly incised ephemeral drainage crosses the parcel from north to south, originating in the hills to the north and barely intersecting the northern sub-parcel (DRAINAGE B). A third narrow incised ephemeral drainage originates to the north along Deer Creek Road and also collects stormwater from the excavated roadside drainage ditch along the north edge of the dirt road along the northern parcel boundary (DRAINAGE C). It passes through a culvert under the dirt road along the parcel's north boundary, flows south to the intersection of Deer Creek Road and Highway 120. All these drainages connect to the unnamed seasonal tributary and do not support riparian vegetation. Surface flows in these drainages are ephemeral, and the dominant vegetation consists of interior live oak and chaparral shrubs, indistinct from adjacent uplands.

Two smaller non-incised (*i.e.*, there is no defined bed and bank or Ordinary High Water Mark) drainage swales cross the property from northwest to southeast, originating from an excavated

Figure 4. Habitat and Drainage Map



roadside drainage ditch along the north edge of the dirt road along the northern parcel boundary. A small culvert conveys storm water under the road for one of the swales. The second swale appears to be an older feature, with a blocked culvert no longer connected upstream. Both these swales do not convey substantial flow, as indicated by the lack of channel incision or scouring. Both swales lack riparian vegetation and terminate on the parcel before reaching the unnamed seasonal tributary next to State Highway 120.

Overall, the biological environment of the project site consists of disturbed foothill forest, patchy riparian and wetland features, chaparral on nearby slopes, and a network of seasonal and ephemeral drainage pathways. These conditions reflect a transitional Sierra Nevada foothill landscape that provides habitat for a range of plant and wildlife species, while also functioning as part of the local hydrologic system that ultimately drains to Pine Mountain Lake and the Tuolumne River.

ANALYSIS

a. The Biological Study concludes that no federal- or state-listed plant species, and no CNPS List 1 or 2 plants, occur or are expected to occur on the project site based on focused surveys in 2022 and 2025; therefore, special-status plants would not be adversely affected. No further surveys or mitigations were recommended for rare plants.

However, the Biological Study identifies several special-status wildlife species with potential to occur, including Crotch bumble bee (state candidate), great gray owl (state endangered), as well as nesting raptors and other migratory birds protected under the MBTA and Fish and Game Code, and roosting bats. Project construction, including tree removal and ground-disturbing activities, could result in direct mortality, disturbance of active nests or roosts, or loss of suitable nesting/roosting and foraging habitat.

The Biological Study recommends specific avoidance and minimization measures—preconstruction surveys for special-status species and host plants, seasonal timing of tree removal to avoid nesting season, nest and roost buffers, bat-roost protection protocols, worker environmental awareness training, and use of wildlife-safe erosion control materials—to avoid or substantially reduce these effects.

The Biological Study also recommended that the project minimize habitat loss in areas known to support host/food plants (*Clarkia* spp.) for the crotch bumble bee. However, it will not be known if there are areas with host/food plants until preconstruction surveys are completed. If host plants are identified on the site, a component of the mitigation plan could be to modify site plans to minimize habitat loss. Therefore, this recommendation from the Biological Study is incorporated into the mitigation plan for the project.

With implementation of mitigation measures, the project would not have a substantial adverse effect on any candidate, sensitive, or special-status species, and the impact would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

MITIGATION MEASURES

BIO-1: A preconstruction survey for host plants of crotch bumble bee shall be performed prior to the start of initial construction activities including vegetation removal and ground disturbance. Host plants, if any, shall be identified in the field with flagging. If any host plants are present within the project site, a plan shall be developed and implemented to avoid, minimize, or

compensate the loss of the species and their habitat. Depending on the species, the plan shall be developed in coordination with CDFW and/or USFS, as necessary. If only *Sierra clarkia* (*C. virgata*; CRPR 4.3; no USFS status) is present, then impacts may be considered less than significant under CEQA.

As a general outline, the mitigation plan shall include the following:

- Precise location and mapping of the location of special-status species, with an estimate of the population size and characterization of site conditions, associated species, etc.
- Description of the impact, including project elements that would contribute to the impact.
- Discussion of efforts to fully avoid or minimize impact through plan revision. Provide a rationale if avoidance is not feasible and would render the project unbuildable.
- Compensatory mitigation for loss of special-status species and its habitat if impacts are unavoidable, preferably through permanent protection of an existing off-site native population. Alternatively, permanent protection of an off-site introduced population or contribution of fees to a mitigation bank or CDFW-approved in-lieu fee program may be suitable, if such opportunities exist. Collection and redistribution of seeds is not preferable, as this method often fails or cannot be completed on land that the project proponent controls or is committed to maintain.
- Detailed accounting of how much mitigation will be provided (*i.e.*, number of plants, area of habitat, etc.) and for how long, and how success will be measured.
- Description of methods for monitoring, documenting, and reporting on the status of the mitigation effort, including reasons for failures or setbacks, and remedial actions to be undertaken to ensure success criteria are met.

If surveys confirm absence of special-status *Clarkia* species, then avoidance and minimization measures are not necessary.

BIO-2: Tree removal, pruning, or grubbing activities should be conducted in the fall during the nonbreeding season (*i.e.*, between September 1 and January 31), if possible, to avoid impacts to nesting birds.

If project construction begins during the breeding season (February 1 to August 31), preconstruction nesting bird surveys shall be conducted within the Project footprint and a 50-foot buffer for migratory birds and a 300-foot buffer for raptors, by a qualified biologist no more than 2 weeks prior to equipment or material staging, pruning/grubbing, or surface disturbing activities. If no active nests are found, no further mitigation is necessary.

If active nests (*i.e.*, nests with eggs or young birds present) are found, non-disturbance buffers shall be established at a distance sufficient to minimize disturbance based on the nest location, topography, cover, the nesting pair's tolerance to disturbance, and the type/duration of potential disturbance. The non-disturbance zone may be further reduced if a qualified biologist is present to educate workers about the sensitivity of working in proximity to active nests and be on site to monitor the nest during work adjacent to the buffer to determine if project activities are causing nest disturbance. The qualified biologist shall conduct monitoring at least once per week when construction activities occur within the established buffer of an active nest to document nest phenology and potential for disturbance during the different nest stages. Monitoring frequency may be increased at the discretion of the qualified biologist based on species sensitivity (including raptors), nest stage, and the proximity and intensity of construction activities. If buffers are established and it is determined that project activities are resulting in nest disturbance, work shall cease immediately, and the CDFW and the USFWS Migratory Bird Regional Permit Office

shall be contacted for further guidance. Buffers shall remain in place until the qualified biologist determines that the nest is no longer active (e.g., young have fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest site).

BIO-3: To minimize impacts to fringed myotis bat, hoary bat, long-eared myotis bat, pallid bat, and silverhaired bat, the following mitigation measures shall be implemented:

If tree removal or trimming is necessary, a preconstruction bat survey shall be conducted within the project footprint by a qualified biologist no more than two weeks prior to vegetation removal or ground disturbing activities to identify maternity sites or day roosts.

All suitable roost habitat including man-made structures, snags, rotten stumps, decadent trees with broken limbs, exfoliating bark, bole cavities or hollows, dense foliage, downed logs, rock outcrops, etc. shall be surveyed. Sensitive habitat areas and roost sites shall be avoided to the maximum extent practicable. If no suitable roost sites are identified, no further minimization measures are necessary.

If potential tree roost sites (trees, snags, downed logs, rock outcrops, etc.) are to be removed or trimmed, limbs smaller than 3 inches in diameter shall be cut and the tree left overnight to allow any bats that may be using the tree/snag time to locate another roost. A qualified biological monitor shall be present during the trimming or removal of trees, snags, or stumps to inspect the downed limbs and foliage for roosting bats.

If live bats of the species identified above are detected as roosting in the project impact area, work shall cease and CDFW should be consulted on how to proceed. A non-disturbance buffer zone of 50 feet should be established until guidance from CDFW is obtained.

BIO-4: A worker environmental training program shall be conducted for all construction personnel including subcontractors. The training shall include, at a minimum, a description of the great grey owl, Crotch bumble bee, area; an explanation of the status and protection under state and federal laws; the avoidance and minimization measures to be implemented to reduce the potential of take; communication and work stoppage protocols in case a listed species is observed within the study area; and an explanation of the environmental sensitive areas and wildlife exclusion fencing and the importance of maintaining these structures. A fact sheet conveying this information shall be prepared and distributed to all construction personnel. Upon completion of the program, personnel shall sign a form stating that they attended the program and understand all the avoidance and minimization measures and implications of the governing environmental regulations.

BIO-5: To prevent special-status wildlife from becoming entangled or trapped in erosion control materials, plastic mono-filament netting (i.e., erosion control matting) or similar material shall not be used within the Project footprint. This includes products that use photodegradable or biodegradable synthetic netting, which can take several months to decompose. Acceptable materials include tackified hydroseeding compounds and natural fibers such as burlap, jute, or twine with a wide aperture mesh.

BIO-6: Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) and erosion control best management practices (BMPs) shall be developed and implemented to minimize wind or water-related erosion. The construction contracts shall include provisions to include Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures (AMMs) to protect sensitive areas and wildlife. Protective measures regarding BMPs shall include, at a minimum:

- No discharge of pollutants from vehicle and equipment cleaning is allowed into any storm drains or water courses.
- Vehicle and equipment fueling and maintenance operations must be at least 100 ft away from the canal (water courses). Concrete wastes are collected in washouts and water from curing operations is collected and disposed of and not allowed into water courses.
- Spill containment kits shall be maintained onsite at all times during construction operations and/or staging or fueling of equipment.
- Dust control shall be implemented, including use of water trucks and tackifiers to control dust in excavation and fill areas, covering temporary access road entrances and exits with rock (rocking), and covering temporary stockpiles when weather conditions require.
- Coir rolls or straw wattles shall be installed along or at the base of slopes during construction to capture sediment.
- Protection of graded areas from erosion using a combination of silt fences, fiber rolls along toes of slopes or along edges of designated staging areas, and erosion control netting (such as jute or coir) as appropriate on sloped areas.
- Permanent erosion control measures such as bio-filtration strips and swales to receive storm water discharges from the highway, or other impervious surfaces should be incorporated to the maximum extent practicable.

BIO-7 The following site restrictions shall be implemented to avoid adversely affecting sensitive habitats and harm or harassment to listed species:

- A speed limit of 15 miles per hour (mph) in the action area in unpaved areas shall be enforced to reduce dust and excessive soil disturbance.
- Temporary construction access, staging, storage, and parking areas shall be located within the study area outside of any designated environmentally sensitive habitat or at environmentally cleared areas outside of the study area. Access routes and the number and size of staging and work areas shall be limited to the minimum necessary to construct the proposed project. Routes and boundaries of roadwork shall be clearly marked prior to initiating construction or grading.
- All food and food-related trash items shall be enclosed in sealed trash containers and removed completely from the site at the end of each day.
- No pets from project personnel shall be allowed anywhere in the action area during construction.
- All equipment shall be maintained such that there will be no leaks of automotive fluids such as gasoline, oils or solvents and a Spill Response Plan shall be prepared.
- Hazardous materials such as fuels, oils, solvents, etc. shall be stored in sealable containers in a designated location that is at least 100 ft from wetlands and aquatic habitats.
- Servicing of vehicles and construction equipment including fueling, cleaning, and maintenance shall occur at designated areas away from sensitive habitats. Staging areas may occur closer to the project activities as required.

MITIGATION MONITORING

BIO-1, BIO-2, and BIO-3 shall be verified by the Tuolumne County Land Use and Natural Resources (LUNR) Division of the Community Development Department (CDD) prior to initiation of construction or tree removal on the site. The LUNR Division shall review the preconstruction survey reports and verify that they have been conducted within the appropriate timeframes. If any identified species are present, the LUNR division will ensure that appropriate actions are taken based on the mitigation language. BIO-4 will be verified by the LUNR Division prior to

initiation of construction. Prior to the issuance of a grading permit, the training materials and fact sheet shall be submitted to the LUNR Division. Signed attendance sheets shall be maintained on site and copies shall be provided to the LUNR Division upon request. The Tuolumne County Department of Public Works shall be responsible for verifying implementation of BIO-6 prior to issuance of grading permits. Before a grading permit is issued, Public Works shall confirm that a SWPP has been prepared and submitted with applicable BMPs. Public Works shall verify compliance during routine grading inspections. The Tuolumne County Department of Public Works and Community Development Department shall be responsible for verifying compliance with BIO-5 and BIO-7 during construction activities on the site during any inspections. Any grading plans or building plans shall demonstrate compliance with the measures. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.

b, c. The project site contains several habitat types, the most sensitive of which occur along Drainage A, an unnamed seasonal tributary that parallels Highway 120. This feature supports a continuous corridor of montane riparian woodland, dominated by interior live oak and red willow (*Salix laevigata*), with valley oak and ponderosa pine scattered throughout. The understory includes Himalayan blackberry, Pacific rush, seep monkeyflower, and poison oak. Based on the Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program, this riparian community corresponds to the *Salix laevigata* Woodland Alliance (red willow thickets).

Although not mapped in the National Wetland Inventory, the drainage would be classified as Riverine, Intermittent Streambed, Vegetated under the Cowardin system. A segment of the tributary on the western portion of the study area has a gentle gradient and accumulated sediment that supports an in-channel freshwater emergent wetland, dominated by Pacific rush, California blackberry, curly dock, annual beard grass, and young willow. This wetland corresponds to the *Juncus effusus* Herbaceous Alliance (soft rush marsh) and likely meets all three federal and state wetland criteria: hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology. Both the riparian corridor and the in-channel wetland are considered waters of the state at minimum, and likely jurisdictional waters/wetlands regulated under state and federal law.

Outside of Drainage A, other on-site drainages (Drainages B and C) are ephemeral, lack riparian vegetation, have no defined bed or bank, and do not exhibit an Ordinary High Water Mark. Two shallow non-incised swales are similarly upland stormwater conveyances and are not sensitive communities.

The proposed development has been intentionally designed to avoid all riparian woodland, in-channel wetlands, and the hydrologically connected portion of Drainage A (Figure 5). No grading, fill, culvert extension, hydrologic diversion, vegetation removal, or construction staging is proposed within these sensitive areas. The project footprint remains fully outside the dripline of the riparian canopy, which represents the regulatory boundary for waters of the state.

During construction, implementation of a SWPPP and associated erosion and sediment control BMPs will prevent sedimentation and protect downstream aquatic resources. Without BIO-8 and BIO-9, grading or equipment encroachment into the riparian corridor and wetland along Drainage A could occur, resulting in fill or degradation of jurisdictional waters and sensitive habitat—a significant impact under CEQA. The required avoidance design, fencing, and, if necessary, permitting reduce this to a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated. These additional measures shall be required to ensure impacts are less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

BIO-8: Prior to the issuance of a grading permit, the applicant shall demonstrate to the County that the project has been designed to fully avoid disturbance of the riparian woodland, in-channel wetland, and associated sensitive habitat along Drainage A. The improvement plans submitted for grading permit review shall clearly show the project footprint, limits of disturbance, and the boundary of avoidance relative to the sensitive habitat areas.

If the County determines that complete avoidance of the riparian or wetland habitat cannot be achieved based on the final grading plans, the applicant shall obtain a formal wetland delineation prepared according to current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers methodology. If the delineation identifies jurisdictional waters or wetlands that would be affected, the applicant shall obtain all applicable state and federal permits, which may include, but are not limited to:

- Clean Water Act Section 404 authorization
- Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification
- California Fish and Game Code Section 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement

All avoidance measures, delineation results if applicable, and permit documentation, if applicable, shall be submitted to the County prior to issuance of a grading permit.

BIO-9: Before any ground-disturbing activity begins, the applicant shall install high-visibility orange webbed construction fencing along the outer edge of the riparian canopy and wetland boundary (i.e., outside the dripline and wetland extent) to establish a no-disturbance buffer. The fencing shall be staked securely, maintained in good condition, and remain in place for the duration of construction. No construction equipment, materials, or personnel shall enter the fenced exclusion area.

MITIGATION MONITORING

The Tuolumne County Department of Public Works shall be responsible for verifying implementation of BIO-8 and BIO-9 prior to issuance of grading permits and throughout construction. Before a grading permit is issued, Public Works shall confirm that the applicant has clearly demonstrated avoidance of the riparian woodland, in-channel wetland, and Drainage A on the final grading plans, or—if avoidance is not possible—that a formal wetland delineation has been completed and all required federal and/or state permits have been obtained. Prior to any ground-disturbing activity, Public Works shall verify that high-visibility orange construction fencing has been installed along the edge of the sensitive habitat, outside the dripline and canopy of the riparian and wetland vegetation. Public Works shall periodically inspect the site during construction to ensure the fencing remains in place, no encroachment or disturbance occurs within the protected habitat, and all permit conditions are adhered to where applicable. The County will not issue grading permits for work affecting these features unless the applicant demonstrates full compliance with applicable USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW permitting requirements. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.

d. The Biological Study describes the project site as part of a larger mosaic of montane conifer hardwood forest, chaparral, and developed lands in the Groveland area. State Highway 120 and local roads (Deer Flat Road, local driveways) already function as partial barriers and sources of mortality for wildlife, but they are not considered significant barriers to movement. The site itself is relatively small and currently supports typical foothill wildlife use; development of a single commercial use on this parcel, surrounded by existing residential and commercial development and roads, would not appreciably diminish landscape-scale connectivity or block any identified regional wildlife corridor.

Nursery and roost sites for sensitive species (nesting birds, bats) could occur in trees and riparian areas, but these are addressed under Impact (a) through preconstruction surveys, buffers, and timing restrictions. With those measures in place, the project would not substantially interfere with wildlife movement or nursery sites, and the impact would be less than significant.

e. The project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances that protect biological resources. The Tuolumne County General Plan contains conservation policies focused on protecting sensitive habitats, riparian corridors, wetlands, special-status species, and significant natural communities. These include policies requiring avoidance of sensitive biological features where feasible, implementation of appropriate buffers, maintenance of wildlife habitat values, and compliance with state and federal permitting requirements for impacts to wetlands and riparian areas.

As described in the Biological Report, the only sensitive biological feature within or directly adjacent to the project site is the unnamed seasonal tributary (Drainage A) and its associated riparian woodland and in-channel wetland. The project has been designed to avoid this feature, and mitigation measures require the installation and maintenance of protective construction fencing, confirmation during grading permit review that all sensitive habitat will be avoided, and delineation and permitting if avoidance is not feasible. These measures ensure consistency with General Plan policies. With required avoidance and protection measures in place, the project remains fully consistent with local biological resource policies, and no conflicts would occur.

The project was evaluated under Implementation Program 16.B.i, 16.B.j and 16.B.j.1 of the 2018 General Plan regarding oak woodland impact analysis.

The project site supports interior live oak woodland co-dominant with ponderosa pine and other native tree species. The canopy is denser on the west side of the site and more open on the east side due to past thinning activities. The 12.40-acre site is bordered by existing roadways and remains contiguous with larger areas of woodland habitat in the surrounding vicinity.

Although some oak tree removal would occur, the project would not result in a substantial conversion of oak woodland as defined in Implementation Program 16.B.j. Valley oak woodland is not present, and the site does not contain rare or uniquely structured oak stands. Woodland would remain onsite and maintain connectivity with adjacent habitat areas. The woodland is characterized as mixed montane conifer–hardwood forest with evidence of prior thinning and is not described as old-growth or uniquely structured. Sensitive natural communities onsite are limited to riparian woodland and wetland habitats, which are addressed separately above.

Tree removal associated with the project would occur primarily within previously disturbed or thinned portions of the woodland and would not fragment a large intact woodland block. The site remains contiguous with surrounding woodland habitat, and the project would not result in isolation of oak stands or disruption of wildlife corridors. Given the limited acreage relative to surrounding woodland, the lack of valley oak woodland, the absence of rare or high-quality old-growth stands, and the continued presence of oak woodland onsite and in adjacent lands, the project would not constitute a substantial loss of oak woodland. Therefore, the project would not result in a substantial loss or conversion of oak woodland under CEQA. Therefore, no oak woodland mitigation is required. There would be a less than significant impact.

f. There are no adopted Habitat Conservation Plans, Natural Community Conservation Plans, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plans in Tuolumne County. Similarly, there are no other adopted wildlife management or preservation plans applicable to the project area. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with any adopted habitat or conservation plan, and no impact would occur.

5. CULTURAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Cultural resources in California are governed by an integrated framework of federal, state, and local laws intended to identify, evaluate, and protect historical, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources.

At the federal level, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the President’s Executive Order 11593 (1971) require federal agencies to preserve, protect, and maintain cultural resources and to nominate eligible properties for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Executive Order 11593 further directs federal agencies to survey cultural resources under their jurisdiction and ensure that significant properties are not inadvertently damaged or destroyed.

At the state level, Governor’s Executive Order B-64-80 (1980) requires state agencies to inventory all historic and cultural sites, structures, and objects under their jurisdiction that are more than 50 years old and may qualify for listing on the NRHP. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.) mandates evaluation of potential impacts to historical resources and unique archaeological resources, as defined in PRC §§21083.2 and 50201. The California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) serves as the state’s significance evaluation framework, with eligibility based on association with important events or persons, distinctive physical characteristics, or potential to yield important information (PRC §5024.1). Properties listed in or eligible for the NRHP are automatically significant under CEQA.

Assembly Bill 52 (2014) added specific protections for Tribal Cultural Resources (TCRs) and requires early, formal government-to-government consultation with California Native American tribes (PRC §§21074, 21080.3.1–21082.3). TCRs must be evaluated separately from archaeological resources. For the earlier iteration of this project, AB 52 consultation letters were sent on February 26, 2025 to the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk and Chicken Ranch Rancheria; neither tribe requested consultation or provided comments.

Cultural resources in Tuolumne County include prehistoric, historic, and Native American resources. Prehistoric occupation of the county dates back roughly 2,000 years, with habitation areas commonly located along drainages, springs, and creeks. Historic-era resources in the region are dominated by the remains of Gold Rush–era mining, early timber operations, and agricultural and ranching activities.

Local jurisdictions—including Tuolumne County—supplement federal and state protections through General Plan policies and ordinances requiring evaluation, documentation, avoidance, and mitigation of cultural and tribal resources during discretionary project review. These local requirements operate alongside federal and state statutes to ensure that historical, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources are properly identified, evaluated for significance, and protected during project planning and implementation.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Regionally, Groveland and Big Oak Flat have a long history of mining, transportation, and later, infrastructure development tied to the Big Oak Flat Road and the Hetch Hetchy Water and Power Project. The project site lies within this historically rich corridor but does not retain intact or eligible cultural features due to heavy disturbance from mining, subsequent refuse deposition, and later land uses. Historic-era maps (1877, 1880, 1897, 1901) show early transportation and settlement features in the vicinity but indicate only generalized mining claims and no recorded structures within the project site itself

The project site is largely defined by the legacy of historic placer mining. Nearly the entire parcel is covered by an “almost unending series of mine tailings” associated with a placer-mined drainage that runs through the center of the site. This drainage trends northeast–southwest, paralleling State Highway 120, and historically served as both the source and depositional area for the mining spoil. The mine tailings extend across the property and onto adjacent land north of the drainage, forming a highly disturbed landform with mixed cobble, gravel, and residual mining debris. Vegetation across the site is highly altered by past mining activity, dense regrowth, and the deposition of tailings, with thick vegetation in some areas reducing visibility during the pedestrian survey. No significant bedrock outcrops occur within the project site except within the actively running stream channel and drainages that bisect the property

In addition to the tailings, the cultural report identifies historic-era features within and adjacent to the site, including four debris concentrations, a barn, and a pump house, most dating from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century. These resources were previously documented as part of site P-55-009507, a historic placer mining locality with associated refuse scatters and outbuildings. The barn, pump house, and one of the debris concentrations are not located within the project boundary but are noted in the report. The other three debris concentrations are located within the northeastern portion of the project site.

ANALYSIS

a. The Cultural Resources Study, which is available for review by qualified professionals at the Community Development Department during regular business hours, identifies historic-era site P-55-009507, consisting of mine tailings, a barn, pump house, and four debris concentrations, most dating from the late 19th century to just after WWII. The study concludes that none of these features meet any criteria for listing on the CRHR. They do not contain associations with important individuals or events (CRHR Criteria 1 or 2), do not embody distinctive construction or artistic merit (Criterion 3), and lack information potential (Criterion 4).

The project will remove three debris concentrations and the bulk of the mine tailings, but no eligible historical resources are present, and the barn, pump house, and Concentration 4 will remain undisturbed (because they are located just off the project site). Because no historical

resources as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 are present, the project will not cause a substantial adverse change, and the impact is less than significant.

b and c. The Cultural Resources Study reports that no prehistoric archaeological sites or cultural features were identified during the pedestrian survey of the project site. Surface visibility in some areas was limited by dense vegetation, but the survey did not identify artifacts, features, or intact subsurface deposits. However, the study notes that the project site has undergone extensive mechanical disturbance from historic placer mining, resulting in widespread tailings deposition and channel modification. These disturbances reduce—but do not eliminate—the possibility that buried archaeological materials may be present beneath mining debris. Accordingly, the report concludes that the project area has a low to moderate potential for containing previously unrecorded archaeological materials below the disturbed surface.

Similarly, no evidence of human remains or burial features was observed during the field investigation, and the mining-modified nature of the site greatly diminishes the likelihood of encountering intact burials. Nonetheless, the possibility of encountering human remains during ground disturbance cannot be entirely ruled out.

To address these risks, the Cultural Resources Study provides standard CEQA-compliant inadvertent discovery procedures. These include immediately halting ground disturbance, notifying the County, and retaining a qualified archaeologist to evaluate the discovery. If human remains are encountered, work must stop, the Tuolumne County Coroner must be notified pursuant to Health & Safety Code §7050.5, and if the remains are determined to be Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission must be contacted to identify a Most Likely Descendant (MLD) consistent with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(e).

With implementation of these measures as formal mitigation requirements, the project would avoid or adequately reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURES

CUL-1: If any prehistoric artifacts, fossils, geologic materials of scientific importance, or other indications of archaeological resources are found during grading and construction activities, all work within 100 feet of the find shall cease and the applicant shall retain a qualified archaeologist to evaluate the find(s). If the resource is determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources and project impacts cannot be avoided, data recovery shall be undertaken. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(b)(3)(C), a data recovery plan, which makes provisions for adequately recovering the scientifically consequential information from and about the resource, shall be prepared and adopted prior to any excavation being undertaken. Such studies shall be deposited with the California Historical Resources Regional Information Center. Archeological sites known to contain human remains shall be treated in accordance with the provisions of Section 7050.5 Health and Safety Code. If an artifact must be removed during project excavation or testing, curation may be an appropriate mitigation. The language of this mitigation measure shall be included on any future grading plans and/or utility plans approved by the County for future development on the project site.

CUL-2: If human remains are discovered during grading and construction activities occurring on the project site, further disturbance shall not occur within 100 feet of the vicinity of the find(s) until the Tuolumne County Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin. (California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5) Further, pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 5097.98(b), remains shall be left in place and free from disturbance until a final decision

as to the treatment and disposition has been made. If the Tuolumne County Coroner determines the remains to be Native American, the NAHC must be contacted within 24 hours. The NAHC must then identify the “most likely descendant(s)”. The landowner shall engage in consultations with the MLD. The MLD shall make recommendations concerning the treatment of the remains within 48 hours, as provided in Public Resources Code 5097.98. This language of this mitigation measure shall be included on any future grading plans approved by the County for future development on the project site.

MITIGATION MONITORING

Mitigation Measure CUL-1 and CUL-2 will be required during grading and construction activities on site and will be verified by the Department of Public Works and Community Development Department. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and their responsibility to comply with said measures.

6. ENERGY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b.	Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

REGULATORY SETTING

Energy Policy and Conservation Act (1975) and CAFE Standards

The Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 established nationwide fuel-economy standards to reduce petroleum consumption. Under this Act, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration sets and revises vehicle fuel-economy requirements, while the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) calculates each manufacturer's Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) compliance. CAFE values are based on city/highway test cycles and sales-weighted averages, and the Department of Transportation may impose penalties for noncompliance.

Energy Policy Acts of 1992 and 2005

The Energy Policy Act of 1992 targeted reductions in dependence on foreign oil by promoting alternative fuel vehicles in large fleets. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 expanded tax credits for renewable electricity, provided incentives for rural electrification, and created federal procurement requirements for renewable energy.

Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007

The Energy Independence and Security Act strengthened federal fuel-economy standards for the first time in 30 years, requiring a national fleet average of 35 mpg by 2020 and establishing a Renewable Fuel Standard mandating the use of 36 billion gallons of biofuels by 2022. EISA builds upon prior federal legislation to reduce oil dependence, expand renewable fuel production, and modernize national energy strategy.

California Energy Commission – State Energy Plan

The California Energy Commission (CEC) prepares the State Energy Plan, which outlines long-term strategies for energy supply, demand, conservation, public health, and economic stability. Policies include promoting zero-emission vehicle infrastructure, improving fleet efficiency, reducing vehicle miles traveled, and supporting alternative fuels.

Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) – SB 1078, SB X1-2, SB 350

California's Renewables Portfolio Standard was first established by SB 1078 (2002) and requires electricity providers to supply increasing percentages of energy from renewable sources. Subsequent legislation strengthened these requirements:

- SB X1-2 (2011): 20% by 2013; 25% by 2016; 33% by 2020
 - SB 350 (2015): 50% renewable electricity by 2030 and doubling of statewide energy-efficiency savings
- California has met or exceeded interim RPS targets.

Alternative Fuels and Bioenergy

- AB 1007 (2005): Required the CEC, in partnership with CARB, to develop a comprehensive State Alternative Fuels Plan to increase the use of non-petroleum fuels and reduce GHG emissions.
- Executive Order S-06-06: Established targets for in-state biofuel production (20% by 2010; 40% by 2020; 75% by 2050) and directed state agencies to advance biomass and biopower programs. The 2011 and 2012 Bioenergy Action Plans expanded these objectives.

SB 375 – Reducing VMT Through Land Use Integration

SB 375 (2008) links transportation planning, housing allocation, and GHG reduction targets. Metropolitan Planning Organizations must prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy demonstrating compliance with regional VMT and GHG reduction goals.

Building Energy Efficiency – California Code of Regulations, Title 24

Title 24, Part 6, California's building energy-efficiency standards, was adopted in 1978 and is regularly updated to improve energy performance of new residential and nonresidential buildings. Key milestones:

- 2013 Standards: 23–22% more efficient than 2008 standards
- 2016 Standards: 28% more efficient (residential) and 5% more efficient (nonresidential)
- 2019 Standards (effective 2020): Move toward Zero Net Energy, requiring solar photovoltaic systems on new homes and major increases in efficiency for commercial buildings

Local jurisdictions may adopt more stringent energy standards if cost-effective and justified by local conditions.

Climate Change Legislation Impacting Energy Demand

- AB 32 (2006): Created California's climate framework and required CARB to develop a Climate Change Scoping Plan, establishing statewide GHG reduction goals.
- 2014 Scoping Plan Update: Confirmed that California was on track to meet 2020 GHG reduction targets.
- 2017 Scoping Plan: Established reductions needed to meet 2030 targets consistent with SB 32 and EO B-30-15.
- Executive Order B-30-15: Requires GHG reductions 40% below 1990 levels by 2030.
- SB 32 (2016): Statutorily incorporates the EO B-30-15 target.
- Advanced Clean Cars Program (2012): Requires increasing sales of zero-emission vehicles and cuts fleet-wide GHG emissions for model years 2017–2025.

Local Regulations

2018 Tuolumne County General Plan

The General Plan includes multiple policies designed to reduce energy consumption and increase use of renewable energy systems. Relevant goals and programs include:

- Policy 18.A.5: Promote energy efficiency and alternative energy while reducing overall energy demand.
- Implementation Program 18.A.a: Incorporate GHG-reduction measures such as CALGreen Tier 1 standards for new construction, Zero Net Energy phases, electrification of water heating, recycling initiatives, and protection of riparian lands to support natural carbon sequestration.

Tuolumne County Climate Action Plan (CAP)

The Board of Supervisors adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2022 which:

- Identifies local GHG emission sources
- Sets GHG reduction targets consistent with state mandates
- Establishes policies to improve building efficiency, promote electrification, reduce VMT, expand renewable energy use, and enhance climate resilience
- Provides an implementation and monitoring structure for countywide energy-related strategies.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

California operates within a regional power system supported by a mix of natural gas, petroleum, renewable, hydroelectric, and nuclear generation resources. About one-third of statewide electricity comes from natural gas, with the remainder supplied by renewables (approximately 29 percent), large hydroelectric sources (about 15 percent), and nuclear power (about 9 percent). Actual contributions vary year to year based on precipitation, hydropower availability, and grid conditions.

Electricity in Tuolumne County is provided by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). The county does not have natural gas service, so residential and commercial uses rely on propane for heating and other thermal needs. Local consumption reflects the rural, low-intensity character of communities such as Groveland, with modest commercial and residential energy demands and limited industrial activity. Transportation remains the dominant local energy user; on-road vehicles consume roughly 90 percent of the petroleum used statewide, and Caltrans projections show steady but modest fuel consumption growth in the county.

The project site is undeveloped and currently generates negligible energy use. Adjacent land consists of small commercial uses, dispersed residences, and recreation-oriented destinations, none of which place constraints on local energy availability. State Highway 120 is the primary travel corridor, with limited transit options and some existing EV charging infrastructure.

Construction in the area typically relies on gasoline and diesel for heavy equipment, haul trucks, and worker commutes. Operational energy use for commercial projects in Groveland is generally limited to electricity and propane for lighting, heating, cooling, and small equipment. Because the site lacks existing development, baseline energy use is effectively zero. Overall, the energy environment of the project area is characterized by standard PG&E electrical service, reliance

on propane, transportation-dominated petroleum use, and no unusual constraints in regional energy supply.

ANALYSIS

a. Energy consumption during construction would consist primarily of diesel and gasoline used by off-road equipment, haul trucks, and worker commute vehicles. These activities would be typical of standard construction practices in Tuolumne County and would not involve unusually energy-intensive processes. Contractors must comply with California Air Resources Board regulations, including equipment efficiency and idling restrictions, which further minimize unnecessary fuel use.

Upon completion, operational energy use would include normal commercial electricity demand for the coffee shop and minimal energy usage associated with the mini-storage component. The project also includes electric-vehicle charging stations, which directly support efficient energy use and statewide transportation-electrification goals. All buildings would be designed and constructed in accordance with the California Building Code and the applicable Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which are intended to reduce statewide energy consumption and move California toward its zero-net-energy targets for new development.

The project would comply with all relevant state and local plans, including the Tuolumne County General Plan and the Climate Action Plan. Based on standard construction practices, compliance with mandatory energy codes, and the incorporation of EV charging infrastructure in the project, the project would not result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy. Therefore, there would be no impact.

b. The project would be constructed in compliance with all applicable energy-efficiency requirements, including Title 24 and CALGreen. By incorporating electric vehicle charging stations, the project directly supports state policies promoting renewable energy use, electrified transportation, and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

The project would not interfere with implementation of the California Energy Plan, Renewable Portfolio Standard, SB 350 targets, or the Tuolumne County General Plan and Climate Action Plan. It does not propose any use or development pattern that would preclude renewable energy adoption or contradict established energy-efficiency goals at the state or local level.

Because the project would not obstruct or conflict with any renewable energy or energy-efficiency plan, there would be no impact.

7. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
ai.	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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
aii.	Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
aiii.	Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
aiv.	Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e.	Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f.	Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

The regulatory framework governing geology and soils in California is primarily established through federal and state laws, as well as local ordinances. At the federal level, the Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq.) regulates discharges of pollutants into navigable waters, which includes provisions for protecting water quality from erosion and sedimentation that can arise from soil disturbance. Additionally, the National Environmental Policy Act may apply to projects requiring federal permits, necessitating an assessment of geological impacts. However, the project site is not directly impacted by federal regulations due to the absence of federal involvement.

In California, the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code § 21000 et seq.) mandates the assessment of potential environmental impacts, including those related to geology and soils. CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR § 15000 et seq.) require the evaluation of seismic hazards, soil stability, and erosion potential. The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act (Public Resources Code § 2621 et seq.) is particularly relevant as it aims to mitigate hazards associated with surface faulting. Although Tuolumne County is not included in the Alquist-Priolo mapping program due to its distance from active faults, the potential for seismic activity must still be considered in project planning. Furthermore, the California Building Code (Title 24, Part 2) establishes standards for construction in seismic zones, ensuring that structures are designed to withstand ground shaking.

At the local level, the Tuolumne County General Plan and associated Geotechnical Interpretive Maps provide guidance on geological hazards, including landslide susceptibility and soil erosion. The County Grading Ordinance regulates grading activities to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation impacts on water bodies. The project site is characterized by stable soils, as indicated by the NRCS Soil Survey and the absence of unstable slopes. The project will also adhere to local stormwater management requirements to address runoff from the riprap-lined drainage culvert and stormwater detention pond. The Tuolumne County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan further outlines strategies for addressing geological hazards, emphasizing the importance of proper site assessment and construction practices to mitigate risks associated with seismic activity and soil erosion.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is located in the Sierra Nevada Foothills, situated at the transition between the Lower Foothills Metamorphic Belt and the Upper Foothills Metamorphic Belt. This region is part of the broader Sierra Nevada geomorphic province, characterized by a massive west-tilting fault block with rolling foothills, metamorphic bedrock, and scattered remnants of historical mining activity. The site is visible from State Highway 120, with surrounding terrain characterized by gently to moderately sloped hillsides and seasonal drainages typical of the foothill landscape.

Tuolumne County experiences relatively low seismicity compared to much of California. Although several capable faults exist within the County—including Negro Jack Point, Bowie Flat, Rawhide Flat West, and Rawhide Flat East—the nearest is approximately 12-15 miles west of the project site. The region lies roughly 12-18 miles east of the Foothills Fault System, which has an estimated maximum magnitude of 6.5. Historical earthquake activity has been minimal, with only five events of magnitude 3.5 or greater in the past century. The site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, nor within mapped liquefaction or seismic landslide hazard areas. Predicted peak ground acceleration in the project vicinity does not exceed 20 percent of gravity, contributing to a low potential for damaging ground shaking.

The site is mapped by the USDA NRCS as containing primarily the Nedsgulch–Wallyhill–Arpatutu complex, with slopes ranging from 3 to 30 percent. Approximately 36.3 percent of the site consists of 3–15 percent slopes, while the remainder contains 15–30 percent slopes. These soils are well-drained gravelly loams with significant depth to bedrock (approximately 59–79 inches) and generally exhibit good stability under natural and developed conditions.

Expansive soils develop where geologic parent materials weather into high-plasticity clays, such as smectite or montmorillonite, which have the ability to absorb water and undergo significant volume changes during wet–dry cycles. These clays commonly form from the weathering of

ultramafic rocks, serpentinite, volcanic ash deposits, or other fine-grained mineral sources known to produce shrink–swell behavior.

The soils at the project site—primarily the Nedsgulch–Wallyhill and Nedsgulch–Sites complexes—are classified by the USDA-NRCS as well-drained gravelly loams derived from metamorphic bedrock typical of the Sierra Nevada Foothills. No serpentinite, ultramafic minerals, high-clay soils, or soils associated with shrink–swell expansive behavior are present. These soils:

- Do not originate from ultramafic or serpentine rock.
- Do not contain volcanic ash or ash-derived clay minerals.
- Do not exhibit the fine-grained, high-plasticity clay horizons associated with expansive behavior.
- Have low clay content overall, with textures dominated by sand, gravel, and loam.

NRCS mapping and County geotechnical resources indicate that the site is not susceptible to deep-seated landslides and falls within Landslide Susceptibility Class V, meaning relatively low risk under undisturbed conditions. Naturally occurring landslides in the County are rare and generally associated with improperly graded or disturbed slopes rather than natural terrain.

The site contains an unnamed seasonal tributary flowing parallel to Highway 120, observed to hold flow during May 2022 and May 2025 site visits despite preceding dry periods. This tributary flows east toward Deer Flat Road before entering a culvert beneath Highway 120 and eventually connecting to a larger unnamed drainage flowing approximately 2.1 miles to Pine Mountain Lake. This establishes a surface hydrologic connection to perennial waters of the Tuolumne River watershed. Multiple small ephemeral drainages traverse the site from the north, none of which convey substantial flow or exhibit notable erosion. Planned site improvements include a riprap-lined drainage culvert and a stormwater detention pond at the southeast corner of the development to manage runoff consistent with County stormwater requirements.

While erosion risk within Tuolumne County increases in areas with slopes greater than 30 percent, the project site does not include slopes exceeding this threshold. Erosion concerns in the County typically occur where grading disturbs steep or unvegetated slopes. On-site erosion potential is considered low under natural conditions. Any grading associated with roadway improvements, pads, or utilities will be subject to a SWPPP under the Statewide Construction General Permit, ensuring implementation of best management practices to prevent erosion and sediment transport.

Due to low groundwater levels, soil composition, and regional seismicity, liquefaction and subsidence hazards are minimal in this portion of the County. No expansive soils have been identified at the site, and local soils lack the clay content and mineralogy associated with shrink–swell behavior.

Most of Tuolumne County, including the project site, is not considered sensitive for paleontological resources. Sensitive formations such as marine Paleozoic rocks and Mehrten Formation volcanic deposits do not occur within the project boundaries.

ANALYSIS

ai-iv, c. Available geologic information indicates that the project site is located in a region of overall low seismic hazard, as documented in the Tuolumne County General Plan, the Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, and county geotechnical interpretive maps. Tuolumne

County is not included in any Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, and the site is more than 12 miles east of the Foothills Fault System and approximately 12-15 miles from the closest mapped “capable” fault (Negro Jack Point, Bowie Flat, Rawhide Flat West, or Rawhide Flat East). Historical earthquake activity in the county has been substantially below the California average, with only a small number of moderate events recorded over the past century and no evidence of strong ground-shaking damage in the project vicinity.

The geologic mapping for the project area identifies no active or potentially active faults, no mapped liquefaction zones, and no seismic landslide zones at or near the site. Soil surveys confirm that the site consists of stable, well-drained soils (Nedsgulch-Wallyhill and Nedsgulch-Sites complexes) with no expansive soils identified and no unstable slopes. The area is further classified as having low landslide susceptibility (Landslide Susceptibility Class V), indicating minimal potential for deep-seated slope failure, even during seismic events.

All future construction must comply with the California Building Code (CBC) seismic design standards and the Tuolumne County Grading Ordinance, which collectively ensure structures are engineered to withstand regional ground-shaking conditions. Based on the absence of active faults, low historical seismicity, stable soils, and required compliance with state and local building codes, the project site does not present substantial risks related to surface fault rupture, strong seismic ground shaking, liquefaction, or seismic-related landslides. The impact would be less than significant.

b. The project site contains well-drained, stable soils primarily of the Nedsgulch–Wallyhill and Nedsgulch–Sites complexes, with slopes ranging from approximately 3 to 30 percent. Although the site has been subject to past disturbance from vegetation clearing and historical mining activity, the NRCS soil survey confirms the absence of unstable slopes, high-clay soils, or other characteristics that would elevate erosion risk. The site is also located within Landslide Susceptibility Class V, indicating low susceptibility to deep-seated landslides. Retaining walls are incorporated throughout the project design, further stabilizing cut and fill areas and reducing the potential for erosion.

Construction activities—including grading for building pads, roadway and driveway improvements, utility trenching, and site preparation—have the potential to generate short-term soil erosion or topsoil loss if left unmanaged. However, all ground-disturbing work must comply with Tuolumne County Ordinance Code Title 12, which requires the preparation and approval of an Erosion Control Plan by the Engineering Division. This plan mandates that all disturbed soils be reseeded, hydromulched, or otherwise stabilized as soon as possible and no later than October 15 of the construction year and prohibits continued construction past October 15 if erosion control measures are not fully implemented. Grading for access improvements will be reviewed and approved by the County Engineering Division, while building pad grading will be reviewed by the Division of Building and Safety to ensure compliance with stability and drainage requirements.

Because the project would disturb more than one acre, the developer is also required to obtain coverage under the State Water Resources Control Board’s Construction General Permit and prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. The SWPPP must include best management practices such as silt fencing, straw wattles, temporary erosion blankets, stabilized construction entrances, sediment basins, and phased site stabilization. These measures are designed to prevent sediment discharge to surface waters and minimize erosion throughout construction.

With retaining walls incorporated into the site design, strict adherence to the Tuolumne County Grading Ordinance, implementation of an approved Erosion Control Plan, and full compliance with the Construction General Permit and SWPPP requirements, the project will not result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil. Impacts would be less than significant.

d. The proposed project site is situated within the Sierra Nevada Foothills and is underlain primarily by the Nedsgulch–Wallyhill complex and related soil units, with slopes ranging from 3 to 15 percent. According to the USDA-NRCS Soil Survey, these soils are well-drained, gravelly loams that do not contain the high-plasticity clays typically associated with expansive soil behavior. The soils also lack ultramafic minerals, serpentinite, volcanic ash, or other indicators of shrink-swell potential. Historical ground disturbance from mining and vegetation clearing has not resulted in instability, and no clay-rich or expansive soil horizons were identified in the field or in NRCS mapping.

The California Geological Survey classifies the project area as having low landslide susceptibility (Class V), with only isolated areas of moderate susceptibility countywide and none mapped on the project site. Additionally, the site is located approximately 12 miles east of the Foothills fault system and outside any Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, which further supports the absence of geologic conditions that could exacerbate soil expansion risks. Predicted ground shaking intensities in the region are low, and historical seismic activity has not resulted in significant structural damage, indicating that the site is not subject to geologic forces that would intensify expansive soil hazards.

Project design includes the use of retaining walls in certain areas to manage topography and direct drainage, which will further stabilize soils during and after construction. Compliance with the California Building Code—including mandatory evaluation of soil conditions at the building permit stage—ensures that any isolated pockets of unsuitable soil encountered during grading would be identified and properly engineered.

Given the well-drained, non-expansive soil characteristics, the site's low geological hazard classification, and required adherence to CBC and County standards, the project would not be located on expansive soils that would create substantial risks to life or property. There would be no impact.

e. The proposed project will connect to the public sewer system, thereby eliminating the need for onsite wastewater disposal systems, including septic tanks. There will be no impact.

f. According to the Tuolumne County General Plan EIR, portions of the County may contain sensitive archaeological or paleontological resources, and grading associated with development could disturb previously unknown materials, including fossils. To address this risk, the General Plan includes policies such as Implementation Program 9.B.q, which requires projects subject to CEQA to comply with Public Resources Code §§ 21083.2 and 21084.1 regarding potential impacts to subsurface cultural and paleontological resources.

The project site is underlain by metamorphic units of the Foothills Metamorphic Belt, which are not known to contain significant paleontological resources. Paleontological sensitivity in Tuolumne County is generally associated with volcanic and marine sedimentary formations (e.g., Mehrten Formation), none of which occur on or adjacent to the project site. The site has also been previously disturbed through vegetation clearing and historical surface mining activities, further reducing the likelihood that intact paleontological deposits are present. No unique

geologic features—such as caves, volcanic vents, glacial landforms, or other regionally distinctive formations—were identified during field review or in existing geologic mapping.

However, consistent with the General Plan EIR, it remains possible that unknown subsurface paleontological resources could be present in any part of the County, including the project site. Ground-disturbing construction activities could encounter previously undiscovered fossils or geologic materials of scientific importance. For this reason, the project could potentially result in the direct or indirect destruction of a unique paleontological resource if such materials are present.

Implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the Cultural Resources section of this IS/MND—which require work stoppage, qualified resource evaluation, and appropriate treatment in the event of an inadvertent discovery—would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE

Implement Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 as indicated in the “Cultural Resources” Section above.

MITIGATION MONITORING

See monitoring requirements for CUL-1 and CUL-2.

8. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

While the federal government regulates greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act, CEQA significance thresholds are governed at the state and local levels. Key federal actions include:

- Mandatory Reporting Rule (40 CFR 98) requiring large facilities to report GHG emissions.
- Endangerment Finding (EPA 2009) establishing GHGs as pollutants subject to regulation under the Clean Air Act.
- Fuel economy standards administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and EPA.

Federal regulations do not establish project-level significance thresholds applicable to CEQA. California has the most comprehensive GHG regulatory framework in the nation. Key laws include:

AB 32 (2006) – Global Warming Solutions Act-

- Requires California to reduce statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.
- Led to development of the Scoping Plan, cap-and-trade, low-carbon fuel standards, and renewable energy mandates.

SB 32 (2016)

- Requires emissions to be 40% below 1990 levels by 2030.

Executive Orders

- S-3-05: 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.
- B-30-15: Aligns California with international climate targets; confirms 2030 target.
- B-55-18: Requires carbon neutrality by 2045 and net-negative emissions thereafter.

The 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan outlines strategies to achieve 2030 GHG reductions through the measures below. It identifies project-level strategies to reduce emissions such as incorporating EV infrastructure, promoting bicycle and pedestrian access, and reducing vehicle trips.

- Transportation electrification
- Building energy efficiency
- Renewable energy expansion

- Short-lived climate pollutant reduction
- Sustainable community strategies
- Waste reduction and alternative fuel transitions

Tuolumne County Climate Action Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2022 and:

- Establishes GHG inventories and reduction pathways
- Identifies Countywide strategies for transportation, buildings, waste, agriculture, and wildfire resilience
- Includes implementation programs to reduce long-term emissions from new development
- Encourages electrification, efficient building systems, and reductions in vehicle miles traveled

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Greenhouse gases occur both naturally and through human activities. They allow sunlight to enter the atmosphere while preventing a portion of the outgoing heat from escaping into space—a natural process known as the greenhouse effect. Without it, the Earth's average surface temperature would be too cold to sustain life. However, elevated atmospheric concentrations resulting from industrialization, transportation, agriculture, energy generation, and land-use changes have intensified this effect and contributed to global climate change.

The primary GHGs relevant to CEQA include:

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂) – emitted primarily from fossil fuel combustion, cement production, and land-use changes.
- Methane (CH₄) – from livestock, landfills, wastewater treatment, and fossil fuel extraction.
- Nitrous oxide (N₂O) – from agricultural soils, industrial processes, and combustion.
- Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) – used in refrigeration and industrial applications.
- Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) – emitted from aluminum production and semiconductor manufacturing.
- Sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆) – from electrical transmission equipment.

These gases differ in atmospheric lifespan and heat-trapping capacity, measured using Global Warming Potential (GWP). CO₂ has a GWP of 1; methane has a GWP of 21; sulfur hexafluoride exceeds 23,000.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finds it extremely likely that most of the observed warming since the mid-20th century is attributable to anthropogenic GHG emissions.

Effects linked to climatic shifts include:

- Increased frequency of extreme heat events
- Reduced snowpack and altered hydrology in the Sierra Nevada
- Greater wildfire frequency and severity
- Shifts in species distribution and habitat viability
- Increased drought susceptibility, particularly in foothill and mountain communities
- Higher risk of flooding associated with intense precipitation events

These changes have direct implications for Tuolumne County, where water supply, forest health, wildfire risk, and rural infrastructure are sensitive to climatic conditions.

Tuolumne County is a rural, low-density county with GHG emissions generated primarily by:

- Transportation (the largest sector)
- Residential and commercial energy use
- Off-road equipment related to forestry, recreation, and construction
- Agriculture and livestock
- Wastewater and solid waste management

The Tuolumne County Regional Blueprint Greenhouse Gas Study (2012) estimated countywide GHG emissions at 782,846 metric tons CO₂e in 2010. Emission intensities are shaped by the County's dispersed settlement pattern, long travel distances, limited transit alternatives, and reliance on imported electricity and propane.

The project site itself is undeveloped and currently generates negligible GHG emissions, limited to minor biological respiration and no operational energy demand. Operational emissions will arise from vehicle trips, minimal natural gas/propane use, electricity consumption, and area sources, though project design features (EV charging equipment, new energy-efficient commercial structure) will minimize these loads.

Climate conditions specific to the Sierra Nevada foothills include:

- High wildfire susceptibility due to prolonged summer dryness
- Temperature increases affecting local heating/cooling energy demand
- Drought cycles affecting forestry, water supply, and hydrology
- Increased storm intensity that could affect infrastructure, drainage, and erosion control

These localized climate stressors underscore the importance of GHG reduction measures and resilience strategies in new development.

ANALYSIS

a. Construction of the project would generate short-term greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from off-road equipment, haul trucks, and worker commute trips. Construction activities would occur Monday through Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and would be limited in duration and scale. The grading phase is expected to last approximately two months, utilizing a small fleet of typical earth-moving equipment including excavators, a backhoe, a water truck, a motor grader, a bobcat, and dump trucks. The subsequent approximate eight-month building construction phase would involve light- to moderate-duty equipment such as a bobcat, laser screed, grade box, mini-excavator, forklift, and scissor lift.

The quantity and horsepower of this equipment represents a small construction fleet, and the work is confined to daytime hours, which limits idling and unnecessary equipment cycling. Construction GHG emissions are temporary, short-lived, and cease completely once construction is complete. With implementation of standard practices—such as equipment maintenance, minimizing idling, and consolidating worker trips—construction GHG emissions would remain low and would not constitute a substantial contribution to statewide GHG totals.

Given the limited construction duration, the relatively small amount of equipment involved, and the temporary nature of emissions, construction-related GHG impacts would be less than significant.

Operational GHG emissions from the project would be minimal. The coffee shop represents a small commercial use, and the mini-storage facility generates very low ongoing emissions because it has minimal staffing, low energy demand, and limited customer traffic. As documented in the project description, the site will include electric-vehicle charging stations and will comply

with the California Building Code energy-efficiency standards applicable at the time of construction. These standards materially reduce electricity and heating demand, ensuring the project operates at an efficiency level consistent with statewide GHG-reduction strategies.

The project will also connect to PG&E electrical service and does not include natural-gas infrastructure, which eliminates combustion-related emissions associated with natural-gas use. Because the project replaces an undeveloped site with low-intensity commercial uses, its operational emissions are small and do not represent a substantial net increase relative to existing conditions. Therefore, operational GHG emissions would result in a less-than-significant impact.

b. The Tuolumne County Climate Action Plan adopted November 8, 2022, provides county-level strategies for reducing GHG emissions through energy-efficient building design, waste reduction, transportation improvements, and community-wide adaptation measures. Although the CAP is not a “qualified” CAP for CEQA streamlining purposes, it still provides relevant guidance for evaluating consistency with state and local GHG-reduction goals.

The proposed project was reviewed for consistency with the CAP and does not conflict with any adopted GHG-reduction strategy. Specifically:

- The project incorporates EV charging stations, increasing access to low-emission transportation.
- All structures will be constructed in compliance with the current California Building Code energy-efficiency requirements, reducing electricity and heating demands.
- The project does not require natural-gas infrastructure and therefore avoids direct onsite combustion emissions.
- The mini-storage component generates extremely low operational emissions, consistent with CAP objectives for low-intensity commercial uses.
- The coffee shop’s emissions are typical of small-scale commercial activity and will be reduced through building-code compliance, energy-efficient fixtures, and mandatory solid-waste diversion requirements.

Because the project does not obstruct or conflict with any state or local plan adopted to reduce GHG emissions—including AB 32, SB 32, Executive Order B-55-18, or the County CAP—the impact is less than significant.

9. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d.	Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
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 or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f.	Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
g.	Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Hazardous materials use, storage, transport, and disposal in California is governed by an integrated framework of federal, state, and local regulations. These regulations apply to both construction activities (e.g., fuels, lubricants, solvents) and long-term commercial operations such as a small coffee shop and mini-storage facility.

Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA): Regulates the manufacture, use, and disposal of industrial chemicals, including asbestos-containing material (ACM) and lead-based paint (LBP). Any building demolition or renovation must comply with TSCA and applicable OSHA work-practice requirements if ACM or LBP are present.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA): Establishes “cradle-to-grave” oversight of hazardous waste. In California, the U.S. EPA has delegated enforcement authority to the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).

Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA/ SARA Title III): Requires local emergency planning and public access to information on hazardous materials storage and releases.

U.S. Department of Transportation: Regulates the safe transportation of hazardous materials on public roadways (49 CFR). This applies to deliveries of fuels, chemicals, and any hazardous waste that must be hauled off-site.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA): Authorizes federal action at contaminated sites. No CERCLA-listed or National Priorities List sites exist in the Groveland area or on the project site.

Clean Water Act (CWA) – Spill Prevention: Facilities with significant fuel or oil storage capacity must implement Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) plans. The proposed project does not involve storage volumes near SPCC thresholds.

California Accidental Release Prevention (CalARP) Program: Applies only to facilities handling regulated substances above threshold quantities. The proposed project involves no such materials and would not trigger CalARP requirements.

California Government Code §65962.5 – Cortese List: Requires identification of contaminated properties. DTSC's EnviroStor and the State Water Board's GeoTracker show no hazardous materials sites, cleanup sites, or leaking UST cases on or adjacent to the project site.

Hazardous Waste Control Act: Requires proper labeling, handling, manifesting, and disposal of hazardous waste at licensed facilities.

Hazardous Materials Business Plan (HMBP) Program: Implementing California Health & Safety Code §25500 et seq., this requires businesses storing certain amounts of hazardous materials to prepare an inventory, site map, and emergency response plan. A mini-storage facility and coffee shop would typically store only small consumer quantities of cleaning products and fuels below HMBP thresholds.

Cal/OSHA Worker Safety Regulations: Require safe handling practices, training, and hazard communication for any hazardous substances used during construction or operation.

CAL FIRE Regulations (Title 14 CCR): Set minimum fire safety standards, including access, water supply, vegetation clearance, and ignition-resistant construction in the State Responsibility Area.

Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA): Tuolumne County Environmental Health Division serves as the CUPA and oversees hazardous materials business plans, hazardous waste generation, underground storage tanks, and emergency response coordination.

Tuolumne County General Plan (2018): The Safety and Public Safety Elements contain policies addressing wildfire hazards, emergency access, hazardous materials, and airport safety.

Tuolumne County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018): Identifies hazards including wildfire, seismic activity, hazardous materials, flooding, and extreme weather, and outlines coordinated response and mitigation strategies.

Tuolumne County Emergency Operations Plan: Guides County response to disasters. Evacuations are directed by the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Office, with public warnings issued through the Everbridge notification system.

Household Hazardous Waste Management Programs: Household and small-quantity hazardous waste is accepted at the Groveland Transfer Station and East Sonora Cal Sierra Transfer Station.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

During construction, limited quantities of diesel fuel, lubricants, hydraulic oil, adhesives, and solvents will be used. These are common construction materials regulated by standard state and federal requirements.

Operational hazardous materials will be minimal—primarily small quantities of cleaning products, consumer-grade chemicals, and typical materials used by a coffee shop. Mini-storage operations may involve tenant-stored household goods but will not involve processing, manufacturing, or storing regulated industrial chemicals. All stored materials must comply with facility rules and cannot include hazardous materials in violation of state law.

The nearest school is Tenaya Elementary School, located approximately 1.3 miles east of the project site. No hospitals, daycare centers, or other sensitive receptors are immediately adjacent to the site (residences 200 feet away).

A review of DTSC's EnviroStor and the State Water Board's GeoTracker databases found:

- No cleanup sites, hazardous waste facilities, or leaking underground storage tanks on or near the project site.
- No Cortese List properties in the immediate project vicinity.

Tuolumne County does not maintain a static evacuation plan. Evacuations are declared by the Sheriff's Office. The project has direct access to Highway 120, the primary east-west evacuation corridor.

The site is within a State Responsibility Area (SRA) and a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). Development must comply with CAL FIRE defensible space requirements, fire-resistant construction, emergency access standards, and any conditions imposed by the Groveland Community Services District Fire Department.

Routine solid waste and any small quantities of hazardous waste generated during operations will be disposed of at approved facilities, including the Groveland Transfer Station. The project will not generate substantial hazardous waste or require specialized disposal facilities.

ANALYSIS

a and b. Construction of the project would involve the temporary use of hazardous materials commonly associated with grading and building activities, including diesel fuel, gasoline, hydraulic fluids, lubricants, and solvents used for equipment operation and maintenance. Grading is expected to occur over approximately two months using equipment such as excavators, backhoes, a water truck, a motor grader, a bobcat, and dump trucks. Construction over the following eight months would use equipment such as a bobcat, laser screed, grade box, mini-excavator, forklift, and scissor lift. These materials would be present in small quantities,

limited to daytime construction hours (Monday–Friday, 6 a.m. to 4 p.m.), and are not considered acutely hazardous.

All hazardous materials used during construction must comply with applicable federal, state, and local regulations governing storage, handling, worker protection, and spill prevention. OSHA regulations (29 CFR) require proper labeling, training, and use of protective equipment, and standard construction BMPs—such as secondary containment, drip pans, spill kits, and proper waste disposal—further reduce risk. Given these regulatory safeguards, the likelihood of an accidental release resulting in a significant hazard is very low.

During operation, the project would not routinely use, transport, or dispose of hazardous materials in quantities that pose a public risk. Mini-storage facilities do not inherently require hazardous materials; however, tenants may attempt to store household chemicals. Facility rental agreements will explicitly prohibit storage of hazardous or flammable materials beyond typical consumer quantities, limiting the potential for improper storage. The coffee shop would use small amounts of cleaning agents and disinfectants typical of food service operations. These products would be stored, used, and disposed of in accordance with manufacturer instructions and applicable hazardous materials regulations.

Any hazardous household waste generated by tenants or the coffee shop can be properly disposed of at the Groveland Transfer Station through Tuolumne County’s Household Hazardous Waste Program. A review of the DTSC EnviroStor and State Water Board GeoTracker databases shows no hazardous materials sites on or adjacent to the project site, and no known contamination that could be mobilized during ground disturbance.

Given the temporary and small-scale nature of construction materials, strict regulatory oversight, prohibition on hazardous material storage in the mini-storage units, and the limited household-grade cleaning products used by the coffee shop, the project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through routine use or through reasonably foreseeable upset or accident conditions. The impact is less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

c. The project site is not located within one-quarter mile of any existing or proposed school. Additionally, the proposed project does not include any uses that would involve the emission or handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste. Therefore, the project would not result in hazardous emissions or handling of hazardous materials near a school, and no impact would occur.

d. A review of the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) database, known as EnviroStor, which includes lists of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to California Government Code Section 65962.5, did not identify any sites on or adjacent to the project site that have used, stored, disposed of, or released hazardous materials. Additionally, the site is not listed on the State Water Resources Control Board’s GeoTracker database. Therefore, there will be no impact.

e. The project is located over two miles from the Pine Mountain Lake Airport and will not include any land uses that would result in a safety hazard or excessive noise. Therefore, there will be no impact.

f. Tuolumne County does not maintain a static, predetermined emergency response or evacuation plan due to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of wildfire and other natural hazards. The County does not designate fixed evacuation routes because wildfires may occur

anywhere in the region and may render certain roadways unsafe. Instead, real-time evacuation decisions are managed by the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Office, which is the entity responsible for declaring and directing evacuations. During an emergency, the Sheriff's Office provides public notifications through the Everbridge Emergency Notification System, local media, and door-to-door communication when feasible. Broader emergency response strategies and hazard information are included in the County's Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Emergency Operations Plan.

The proposed project consists of a mini-storage facility and a small coffee shop along Highway 120. The project does not propose any physical changes to Highway 120 or surrounding public roadways that would interfere with emergency access or evacuation operations. The proposed modifications discussed in the Transportation Section below relative to the Deer Flat Road/State Highway 120 intersection geometry would not interfere with emergency access or evacuations. With these improvements, the intersection and access would meet required Caltrans design standards. All internal roads, drive aisles, and parking areas will be required to comply with the access and fire-safe development standards of Titles 11, 12, 15, and 16 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code. Access improvements will be reviewed by the Tuolumne County Fire Prevention Division and the Engineering Division to ensure compliance with applicable local and State requirements, including adherence to adequate width, surface, grade, and turning radius standards for emergency response vehicles.

The land uses proposed—mini storage and a coffee shop—are low-intensity commercial uses that do not generate substantial on-site populations and would not obstruct or alter evacuation patterns. The project has been reviewed for consistency with Chapter 9 (Public Safety) and Chapter 17 (Natural Hazards) of the 2018 Tuolumne County General Plan and has been found consistent with applicable goals, policies, and implementation programs relating to emergency response, access, and wildfire preparedness.

Given compliance with County standards, the low-intensity nature of the use, and the absence of circulation changes that could impair evacuation, the project would not interfere with adopted emergency response or evacuation planning. The impact is less than significant.

g. The project site is located within a State Responsibility Area and mapped within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. These designations reflect regional wildfire risk associated with slope, vegetation types, and local climate conditions typical of the Sierra Nevada Foothills. The project has been reviewed by the Tuolumne County Fire Prevention Division, which issued conditions of approval to ensure compliance with Titles 11, 12, 15, and 16 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code, the California Building Code, and the California Fire Code. Conditions include requirements for adequate fire flow, fire hydrants, sprinkler systems, defensible space, and road and driveway standards. Consistency with the following Tuolumne County General Plan policies has also been demonstrated:

- Policy 9.A.1: Fire protection agencies must be involved in land use planning decisions. The Fire Prevention Division has been fully consulted and its conditions incorporated.
- Policy 9.E.3: Require new development to meet all State and County fire-protection regulations.
The project will undergo both site improvement and building plan review to ensure compliance with State Fire Safe Regulations, California Fire Code requirements, and County fire-protection standards.
- Policy 17.E.2: Require maintenance of defensible space where wildland fire hazards exist.

The project must comply with required defensible space setbacks and vegetation-management regulations.

- Policy 17.E.3: Require new development to have adequate fire protection and design features that minimize wildfire-related losses.
Fire Prevention Division conditions include fire-resistant construction, hydrant placement, and adequate emergency access.

The mini-storage and coffee shop uses do not create a significant concentration of people on the site and do not involve activities that substantially elevate ignition hazards. In the event of a wildfire, the relatively small number of customers and employees would be able to evacuate quickly via direct access to Highway 120, a primary regional evacuation route.

Through compliance with State Fire Safe Regulations, General Plan policies, CAL FIRE access requirements, and the Fire Prevention Division's conditions of approval, the project would not create or exacerbate wildfire risk or expose people or structures to substantial wildfire hazards. The impact is less than significant. Please refer to the "Wildfire" Section below for additional information and analysis.

10. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site; ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite; iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e.	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

REGULATORY SETTING

Hydrology and water quality in California are regulated through a combination of federal, state, and local programs designed to prevent pollution, manage stormwater, and ensure safe and reliable water supply and wastewater treatment.

At the state level, construction activities that disturb one acre or more must comply with the State Water Resources Control Board's Construction General Permit (CGP) (Order 2009-0009-DWQ, as amended). The CGP requires the applicant to file a Notice of Intent (NOI), prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, and use appropriate erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs). The permit also requires monitoring, reporting, and inspections by Qualified SWPPP Practitioners/Developers (QSP/QSD) to ensure that sediment, construction pollutants, and stormwater discharges do not reach waters of the state.

At the local level, the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code includes several provisions applicable to the project. Chapter 12.20 (Grading Ordinance) requires grading permits, erosion control

plans, and compliance with County drainage standards. Chapter 17 (Natural Hazards) requires new development to avoid or mitigate flood hazards, erosion potential, and drainage impacts. Tuolumne County stormwater standards further require that post-development peak stormwater flows be maintained at or below pre-development levels through the use of retention and detention facilities.

Potable water and wastewater services for the project area are provided by the Groveland Community Services District (GCSD). GCSD supplies treated municipal water and provides sewer collection and wastewater treatment at its regional facility located on Ferretti Road. Because the proposed project will connect to the GCSD potable water and sewer systems, it will not rely on groundwater extraction or onsite wastewater treatment, thereby eliminating risks commonly associated with private wells, septic systems, and subsurface disposal fields. GCSD's wastewater treatment operations are regulated by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, ensuring long-term compliance with state water quality objectives.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is located within the Sierra Nevada Foothills in Groveland, along the State Highway 120 corridor. The site is currently undeveloped and drains generally from west to east toward an existing roadside drainage corridor that parallels Highway 120. A seasonal drainage feature crosses the site in this direction, ultimately conveying runoff toward an existing culvert system that transports flows under Deer Flat Road. These natural drainage patterns represent the primary hydrologic movement across the property.

The proposed development will substantially increase the amount of impervious surface due to building pads, drive aisles, parking areas, and associated improvements. To maintain existing peak flow characteristics and prevent downstream flooding, a detention basin will be constructed at the low point near the project entrance. This facility will receive stormwater from the developed site, temporarily store it, and release it in a controlled, metered discharge to the existing drainage culvert beneath Deer Flat Road. The basin is designed as a detention—not treatment—facility.

As discussed in the Biological Resources Section above, the project site contains a riparian corridor and in-channel wetland that are likely jurisdictional waters/wetlands regulated under state and federal law. The site also contains a seasonal drainage swale, which functions as part of the local stormwater conveyance network. However, the project has been designed to avoid these features. Mitigation Measures BIO-6, BIO-8, and BIO-9 would ensure no impact to these areas and require state and federal permits as applicable.

Erosion potential is currently low due to well-drained soils, moderate slopes, and sparse vegetation. However, construction activities have the potential to mobilize sediment if unmanaged. Implementation of a project-specific SWPPP will control erosion and sedimentation during grading and earthwork.

Municipal water and sewer infrastructure operated by GCSD is available adjacent to the site. Potable water will be supplied by GCSD, and wastewater will be conveyed to and treated at the district's regional treatment facility on Ferretti Road. Because no onsite wells or septic systems are proposed, the project does not pose a risk of groundwater contamination or failure of onsite wastewater treatment systems.

Overall, existing hydrologic and water quality conditions at the site are typical of the Groveland area, with a west-to-east drainage gradient, no history of flooding, and available municipal water

and sewer services. The planned detention basin and CGP-required BMPs will ensure that the project does not increase off-site runoff, sedimentation, or pollutant discharges.

ANALYSIS

a. During construction, the project could generate typical short-term pollutants such as sediment, fuels, lubricants, concrete washout, and trash associated with grading and equipment use. However, because the project will disturb more than one acre, it must obtain coverage under the State Water Resources Control Board's Construction General Permit, file a Notice of Intent, and prepare and implement a project-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. The SWPPP will include erosion and sediment control best management practices, good housekeeping measures, spill prevention and response procedures, and monitoring/inspection by a Qualified SWPPP Practitioner/Developer. Compliance with the CGP and the Tuolumne County Grading Ordinance, including an approved erosion control plan, will prevent substantial degradation of surface water quality during construction.

Operationally, the project will consist of low-intensity commercial uses with no industrial process water, no outdoor washing or fueling operations, and no onsite wastewater treatment. Runoff from roofs and paved areas will be collected and routed to an onsite detention basin at the low point near the project entrance, then discharged in a controlled manner to the existing drainage culvert under Deer Flat Road. Routine urban contaminants (e.g., trace oils, metals, and sediments from parking areas) will be minimized through standard source-control and site-maintenance practices (e.g., trash control, sweeping, proper handling of small quantities of cleaning products and food-service chemicals). All sanitary wastewater will be conveyed to and treated at the Groveland Community Services District wastewater treatment facility on Ferretti Road under existing Regional Water Quality Control Board permits, avoiding any direct discharge to groundwater or surface waters from the site.

With adherence to the CGP, County grading and drainage standards, and GCSD water/sewer requirements, the project would not violate water quality standards or waste discharge requirements, and it would not substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality. Impacts would be less than significant.

b. The project will be served by GCSD municipal water and will not install or operate any groundwater wells. Wastewater will be discharged to the GCSD sewer system and treated at the existing regional facility, not in onsite septic systems or leach fields. As a result, the project will not directly extract groundwater or introduce contaminants into the subsurface through onsite wastewater disposal.

Development of the mini-storage facility, coffee shop, and associated pavement will increase impervious surface coverage and thereby reduce onsite infiltration compared to existing undeveloped conditions. However, the project footprint is small relative to the size of the broader groundwater basin, and the incremental reduction in recharge from this single site is negligible. In addition, stormwater runoff will be temporarily detained in the onsite basin before being discharged to the existing drainage system, which maintains the overall drainage pattern and does not involve large-scale interception or diversion of regional recharge areas.

Because the project does not depend on groundwater supplies, does not include groundwater extraction, and represents only a very small change in local infiltration patterns, it would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge in a way

that would impede sustainable groundwater management. Impacts would be less than significant.

ci-iv. Existing drainage at the site generally flows from west to east toward the roadside drainage that parallels State Highway 120, ultimately entering the culvert system under Deer Flat Road. The project will introduce new impervious surfaces (building pads, drive aisles, and parking areas), which will alter onsite drainage pathways but will maintain the overall pattern and discharge location. Stormwater from the developed areas will be collected and routed to an onsite detention basin located at the low point near the project entrance, then discharged at a controlled rate to the existing drainage culvert under Deer Flat Road.

For erosion and siltation, construction activities will disturb soils and could temporarily increase erosion potential. However, compliance with the Construction General Permit, implementation of a SWPPP, and adherence to County grading and erosion control requirements (including seasonal limits and stabilization of disturbed soils) will effectively control sediment and prevent substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site. Post-construction, the combination of hardscape, landscaping, and stabilized outfalls will further reduce erosion potential.

For runoff and flooding, the detention basin and project drainage design will be required to meet Tuolumne County stormwater standards, which generally require that post-development peak flows do not exceed pre-development peak flows for design storm events. By detaining and metering runoff before discharging to the existing culvert, the project will avoid a substantial increase in the rate or amount of surface runoff that could cause on-site or downstream flooding.

For drainage system capacity and polluted runoff, the project will direct flows to the existing culvert and roadside drainage facilities that are part of the established drainage network along Highway 120 and Deer Flat Road. The detention basin is explicitly intended to prevent peak flows from exceeding the capacity of those facilities. Operational pollutants will be limited to typical commercial urban runoff (e.g., trace petroleum residues and sediments). With detention, BMPs, and ongoing site maintenance, the project will not generate substantial additional sources of polluted runoff or exceed storm drainage system capacity.

For flood flows, the site is not within a mapped riverine floodway or special flood hazard area, and the project does not involve channelizing or filling a stream or river. The detention basin and grading plan are designed to convey localized flows safely through and off the site; they will not divert, block, or concentrate flood flows in a way that would increase risk to adjacent properties. Accordingly, while the project will modify onsite drainage patterns and add impervious surfaces, it would not do so in a manner that causes substantial erosion, flooding, drainage system overload, polluted runoff, or redirection of flood flows. There would be a less than significant impact.

d. The project site is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills near Groveland, far inland and well above any area subject to tsunamis or seiche hazards. It is also not within a mapped FEMA 100-year flood zone or designated riverine floodway. Site drainage consists only of seasonal flows, which will be controlled through the onsite detention basin and discharge to the existing culvert under Deer Flat Road.

Even in a severe storm, only localized ponding within the detention basin or adjacent paved areas could occur, and the project does not store bulk hazardous materials that could be released during flooding. Operational materials would be limited to small quantities of routine commercial cleaners and supplies.

Because the site is outside tsunami, seiche, and major flood hazard zones, and because it would not store significant hazardous materials, the project would not pose a risk of pollutant release due to inundation. There will be no impact.

e. Surface water quality in the project area is regulated under the applicable Basin Plan adopted by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. The project will comply with the State Water Resources Control Board's Construction General Permit, implement a SWPPP, and adhere to Tuolumne County's grading, drainage, and stormwater requirements, all of which are designed to be consistent with Basin Plan objectives. Operational stormwater will be detained and discharged through the existing drainage system, and all wastewater will be routed to GCSD's permitted treatment facility. The project does not propose any discharges that would conflict with Basin Plan requirements or other applicable water quality control provisions.

The project does not include groundwater extraction or onsite wastewater disposal and therefore will not materially affect groundwater levels or quality. The project area is not identified as part of an overdrafted adjudicated basin with an adopted Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Groundwater Sustainability Plan that would be compromised by this development. Because the project relies on municipal water and sewer services and represents a small change in local impervious surface area, it will not interfere with any current or foreseeable sustainable groundwater management measures.

Accordingly, the project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of an applicable water quality control plan or a sustainable groundwater management plan. There will be no impact.

11. LAND USE AND PLANNING

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Physically divide an established community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Land use in Tuolumne County is governed by a combination of state planning laws, the Tuolumne County General Plan, and the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code (zoning and development regulations). The California Planning and Zoning Law (Government Code §65000 et seq.) requires counties to adopt a General Plan that provides long-term direction for land use, circulation, public services, natural resources, and hazards. All discretionary development projects must be consistent with the adopted General Plan.

The Tuolumne County General Plan includes policies to ensure compatible development, protect public safety, manage natural hazards, and maintain adequate infrastructure. Relevant policies address wildfire risk, stormwater and drainage, emergency access, and land use compatibility along the Highway 120 corridor. The Tuolumne County Zoning Ordinance implements these policies through parcel-level standards. The project site is zoned for commercial use, and both the mini-storage facility and coffee shop are allowed uses. Development must comply with applicable zoning requirements, including setbacks, height limits, landscaping, lighting, access, and design standards.

Other applicable local regulations include:

- County Grading and Drainage Regulations: Requires grading permits, erosion control plans, compliance with County drainage standards and on-site retention or detention.
- Fire Code and Building Code Compliance: The Tuolumne County Fire Prevention Division applies the California Fire Code, California Building Code, and relevant Titles 11, 12, 15, and 16 of the Ordinance Code.
- Local Agency Formation Commission requirements: GCSD water and sewer service extensions must be consistent with district service boundaries and permit requirements.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The surrounding area supports a mix of dispersed commercial uses, rural residential properties, recreation-oriented services, and large tracts of undeveloped land. The parcel itself is currently undeveloped and has been historically disturbed through vegetation clearing and limited grading. There is no cohesive residential subdivision or established neighborhood immediately adjacent to the site.

The parcel is fully within a commercial land use designation under the Tuolumne County General Plan, and the zoning matches this designation. Existing land uses along State Highway 120 include lodging, restaurants, small-scale commercial services, and recreational amenities that

primarily serve local residents, travelers, and visitors to Yosemite National Park. The proposed mini-storage and coffee shop land uses are consistent with the commercial character of the corridor and compatible with surrounding development patterns.

Public services and utilities are available to serve the site. Water and sewer service are provided by GCSD. The site will also be served by PG&E for electricity, and compliant roadway access improvements will be reviewed by the Tuolumne County Engineering Division and Fire Prevention Division.

The site lies within a State Responsibility Area and is mapped as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone; therefore, all new development must incorporate defensible space, fire-resistant construction features, hydrants, fire flow, and adequate access under State and County codes. The site is not located within a FEMA 100-year flood zone and is not within any airport safety zone or incompatible land use overlay.

There are no unique community features, circulation routes, schools, or community gathering areas that would be physically divided by development of the site. The existing roadway network will remain intact, and project access will be taken directly from Deer Flat Road without altering regional or local connectivity.

ANALYSIS

a. The project site is located along the State Highway 120 corridor at the edge of the Groveland community, in an area characterized by dispersed commercial uses, rural residences, and vacant parcels. The site does not lie within a cohesive residential neighborhood or circulation network that could be disrupted by new development. The proposed mini-storage facility and coffee shop would be contained entirely within the project parcel and would not introduce new roads, barriers, or infrastructure that could separate existing residential areas, alter established travel patterns, or impede community cohesion. The project does not involve any features—such as walls, new highways, major arterials, or restricted-access facilities—that could physically divide an established community. Accordingly, the project would not divide an existing community, and impacts would be less than significant.

b. The project site is designated and zoned for commercial use under the Tuolumne County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, and both the mini-storage facility and coffee shop are consistent with the allowable uses in the applicable zoning district. The project has been reviewed for consistency with General Plan policies related to public safety, natural hazards, stormwater management, wildfire, compatibility with surrounding land uses, and infrastructure availability. No variances, exceptions, or overrides of adopted environmental protection policies are required.

The project connects to GCSD water and sewer services, complies with County drainage and grading standards, implements stormwater detention required under County stormwater regulations, and incorporates fire protection conditions imposed by the Tuolumne County Fire Prevention Division. These measures ensure consistency with the County's policies that mitigate environmental effects, including those related to wildfire, drainage and flooding, hazardous materials, and visual quality along the highway corridor. The project would not conflict with any adopted plan, policy, or regulation intended to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

12. MINERAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

REGULATORY SETTING

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) (Public Resources Code §2710 et seq.) establishes a system for identifying and protecting important mineral resources throughout California. The California Geological Survey (CGS) maps these resources using a classification system known as Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs):

- MRZ-1: Areas with little or no mineral resource significance.
- MRZ-2: Areas where significant mineral deposits are present or likely to exist.
- MRZ-3: Areas with undetermined mineral resource potential.
- MRZ-4: Areas with unknown mineral resource significance (not studied).

Local agencies are expected to consider these designations when approving projects that could affect access to significant mineral deposits.

The Tuolumne County General Plan (Natural Resources Element, 2018) recognizes the importance of mineral resources while noting that only a small portion of the County contains economically significant deposits.

To manage these areas effectively, the County employs an MRZ Overlay Zone in its General Plan. This overlay identifies sites classified as MRZ-2 or other important mineral resource areas and mandates that development proposals consider potential conflicts with mining or resource extraction. Projects within the overlay may be subject to additional review or restrictions to safeguard access to the resource.

The Groveland area, including the project site, is not located within the County’s MRZ Overlay Zone, and there are no active or permitted mines nearby, as listed in the County or State databases.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Tuolumne County is situated in the Sierra Nevada foothills, an area with a long history of gold mining and other mineral extraction activities. The County’s geology consists of ancient metamorphic rocks and granitic formations that contain hard-rock and placer gold, as well as limited deposits of sand, gravel, and other construction materials.

Most active or potentially important mineral areas in Tuolumne County are located in the southern and central foothill belt, closer to Columbia, Jamestown, and Chinese Camp. The site lies within an area historically influenced by mining activities associated with the Sierra Nevada Mother Lode. Although the site is currently vacant and supports disturbed foothill vegetation, the property contains evidence of historic mining features. Portions of the site include earthen piles, linear tailings deposits, and disturbed substrates consistent with small-scale placer or hydraulic mining operations that historically occurred throughout the Groveland region.

The surrounding area consists of rural residential, commercial, and recreational uses, with no existing mining operations in proximity to the project site. Given the limited and heavily disturbed nature of the tailings deposits and the absence of recognized mineral resource value, the site does not represent an important or economically viable mineral resource area today

ANALYSIS

a. The site is not located in a known mineral resource area and is not mapped as MRZ-2 or any other zone with mineral potential. While there is evidence of tailings associated with the drainage on the site, these features appear to be reworked, dispersed, and partially vegetated and are not of current commercial value. No standing mining structures, adits, shafts, or equipment were identified, and no active or recently inactive mining claims exist on or adjacent to the property. The site is not mapped by the California Geological Survey as containing regionally significant mineral deposits, nor is it designated as a Mineral Resource Zone where important mineral resources are known or inferred to be present. Therefore, there will be no impact.

b. The County's mineral resource maps indicate that there are no mining sites or valuable deposits on the property. There are no active or proposed mines in proximity to the project site. Therefore, there will be no impact.

13. NOISE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	b. Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

REGULATORY SETTING

Tuolumne County does not have a stand-alone noise ordinance. Noise regulation for discretionary projects is governed by Chapter 5 (Noise Element) of the Tuolumne County General Plan, which establishes planning-level thresholds for acceptable noise exposure and criteria for evaluating noise from new development.

Key elements of the General Plan Noise policies include:

- Ensuring that new development does not expose existing sensitive receptors to excessive noise.
- Applying maximum allowable noise exposure standards for stationary sources, which limit daytime (7 a.m.–10 p.m.) hourly Leq to 50 dBA and nighttime (10 p.m.–7 a.m.) hourly Leq to 45 dBA at noise-sensitive property lines.
- Reviewing development projects for potential increases in cumulative CNEL/Ldn at nearby noise-sensitive land uses consistent with the General Plan.

No federal or state noise regulations apply directly to this project beyond workplace standards enforced by OSHA and the requirement that construction staging and operations comply with standard industry practices.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is currently vacant and undeveloped. Existing ambient noise conditions are dominated by traffic on State Highway 120, which is located immediately south of the project site and is the primary source of continuous background noise. Secondary noise sources include vehicles on Deer Flat Road and normal activity associated with nearby rural residential and small commercial uses.

Typical daytime noise levels along State Highway 120 corridors in this portion of Tuolumne County generally fall within the 50–60+ dBA Leq range, depending on traffic volume, distance from the roadway, and topography. Noise decreases with distance toward the northern portions of the site.

There are no noise-sensitive receptors—such as schools, hospitals, daycare centers, or nursing facilities—within 0.25 miles of the project site. The nearest homes are rural residences located at typical spacing for the Groveland area and already experience ambient noise influenced by adjacent roadways.

The site is not located within the Pine Mountain Lake Airport Influence Area, is several miles from the airport, and is well outside any airport noise contour. Therefore, no airport-related noise compatibility issues apply to this project.

Noise expected from the project includes:

- Construction noise, which would be temporary, intermittent, and limited to daytime hours. Construction equipment could include excavators, loaders, compactors, trucks, and small tools typical for site grading, utility installation, building foundations, pavement, and building construction.
- Operational noise, which would be minimal.
 - Mini-storage operations typically produce low noise levels associated with customer vehicle movements and occasional accessing of storage units.
 - The coffee shop would generate normal commercial noise such as vehicle traffic, drive-through activity (if applicable), HVAC operation, and short-term customer presence.

No significant vibration sources are present on or near the site, and construction vibration would be minor and short-term.

ANALYSIS

a. Operation of the proposed mini-storage facility and coffee shop is not expected to generate a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels. Both uses are low-intensity commercial activities consistent with the State Highway 120 corridor and do not attract large groups or continuous noise-generating activity. Operational noise would consist primarily of sporadic vehicle movements, door openings, customer activity, and typical commercial equipment such as HVAC units. These sources are well within the range of normal rural-commercial noise and are not expected to exceed Tuolumne County’s stationary noise standards at the nearest residence approximately 200 feet east of the site.

Importantly, the coffee shop does not include a drive-thru speaker system. Customers will order in person at a walk-up or a drive-up window, eliminating the amplified speech and repetitive speaker noises typically associated with drive-thru operations. This significantly reduces potential operational noise and aligns the use with typical small-scale commercial activity already present in the area.

Construction of the project would temporarily increase noise levels due to the use of heavy equipment for grading, excavation, paving, and building construction. Noise levels vary depending on the type and operation of the equipment, and construction noise could temporarily exceed General Plan noise thresholds at the nearest residence. However, these effects would occur only during the daytime and would cease once construction is complete.

With implementation of construction-phase noise controls, temporary noise increases would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURES

NOI-1: Hours of exterior construction on the project site shall be limited to 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Exterior construction shall be prohibited on Sunday and County holidays.

NOI-2: Noise generated by operation of the project shall comply with the Tuolumne County exterior noise standards applicable to the receiving property. At the property line of any parcel zoned MU, R-3, R-2, R-1, RE-1, RE-2, RE-3, RE-5, RE-10, C-O, C-1, C-S, or BP, project-generated noise shall not exceed 50 dB Leq (1-hour) during daytime hours (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) or 45 dB Leq (1-hour) during nighttime hours (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.). “Leq (1-hour)” refers to the average noise level measured over a one-hour period. Compliance with these limits shall be demonstrated through project design, equipment selection, and operational practices to ensure that noise levels at nearby sensitive receptors remain within applicable standards.

MITIGATION MONITORING

Mitigation Measure NOI-1 will be required during construction activities on site. Mitigation Measure NOI-2 will be on-going. These conditions will be monitored through citizen complaints. Confirmed violations will be referred to the Code Compliance Officer for processing consistent with established code compliance procedures outlined in Chapter 1.10 of the Ordinance Code. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.

b. Project operation would not involve activities that generate groundborne vibration or groundborne noise. Potential vibration would be limited to construction activities, primarily grading, compaction, and paving. Equipment capable of generating noticeable vibration—such as vibratory rollers—would operate at least 200 feet from the nearest residence.

Construction-related vibration would be temporary, short-distance, and would occur only during permitted daytime hours in accordance with Mitigation Measure NOI-1. At these distances, vibration levels from typical construction equipment would not approach thresholds associated with structural damage or human annoyance.

Because vibration would be temporary, intermittent, limited to daytime hours, and occur at distances that substantially reduce vibration levels, the project would not expose people or structures to excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise. The impact is therefore less than significant.

c. The project is not located within two miles of a public airport or in the vicinity of a private airstrip. Therefore, there would be no impact.

14. POPULATION AND HOUSING

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b.	Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

REGULATORY SETTING

The project site is designated General Commercial under the Tuolumne County General Plan and zoned C-1. This zoning allows a range of commercial uses, including retail, offices, food service, and storage facilities, subject to applicable permits. Surrounding land use designations include General Commercial and Public to the north and east, and Rural Residential and Parks and Recreation to the west, reflecting a mixed commercial–rural transition area along the State Highway 120 corridor.

Locally, population and housing patterns are guided by the Tuolumne County General Plan and zoning ordinance. The project is consistent with both the General Plan designation and the underlying zoning district and does not require any amendments or exceptions. The Groveland Community Services District oversees water and sewer services in the area; the site is already adjacent to existing GCSD utilities, so no infrastructure extension or capacity-driven growth inducement would result.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is located on the western edge of the community of Groveland along State Highway 120, the primary corridor leading to Yosemite National Park. Groveland and nearby Big Oak Flat are small rural foothill communities with commercial activity concentrated along the highway.

The 10.7 acre site is currently vacant, disturbed land with direct access from Deer Flat Road. It contains no existing housing, no businesses, and no residents. Surrounding development includes scattered rural residences, commercial uses, community facilities, and open space. Utilities including water, sewer, and electrical service are available immediately adjacent to the site, and access is provided via existing public roads.

The proposed mini-storage facility and coffee shop would serve existing community needs and highway travelers. The project may generate a small number of new jobs (approximately five).

ANALYSIS

a. The proposed mini-storage facility and coffee shop would be developed on a vacant, commercially zoned site and would not introduce housing or uses that attract new residential population. The project is intended to serve existing residents and travelers along State Highway 120 and does not expand infrastructure in a way that could induce growth; water and sewer lines already exist adjacent to the site, and no utility extensions are required. Employment generated by the project (approximately five positions) is minimal and can be accommodated by the existing local labor force. Because the project does not include housing, does not displace existing residents, and does not trigger new demand for public services or utilities beyond what already exists, it would not induce substantial population growth. No impact would occur.

b. The project site is vacant and contains no housing or residents. Development of a mini-storage facility and coffee shop will not remove existing housing, displace people, or require construction of replacement housing. The project is fully consistent with the site's commercial General Plan designation and C-1 zoning, and it neither conflicts with the County's Housing Element nor affects RHNA obligations. All necessary utilities and access are already available, and the project does not require relocation of any existing businesses. Therefore, the project would not displace housing or people, and no impact would occur.

15. PUBLIC SERVICES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 public services: Fire protection? Police protection? Schools? Parks? Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Public services in Tuolumne County are governed by a combination of County policies, State laws, and service-area requirements. The Tuolumne County General Plan includes goals and policies addressing fire protection, emergency response, law enforcement, schools, and parks to ensure new development does not adversely affect service levels. Chapter 9 (Public Safety) and Chapter 17 (Natural Hazards) provide direction for ensuring adequate emergency access, wildfire protection, and response capabilities.

The County’s adopted 2024 emergency response time standard requires that emergency responders arrive on scene within 14 minutes, 90 percent of the time.

The Groveland Community Services District provides water, wastewater, fire protection (through a CAL FIRE Schedule A contract), and park services within its service boundaries. GCSD also administers fire impact fees and requires commercial development exceeding 7,200 square feet to annex into or form a Community Facilities District to offset fiscal impacts on fire services.

School facility impacts are addressed under State law through school impact fees collected at the time of building permit issuance. Park impact fees are collected locally under GCSD’s authority.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Fire and emergency response services are provided by the Tuolumne County Fire Department (TCFD), operating under contract with CAL FIRE, with mutual aid provided by GCSD Fire, CAL FIRE, and the U.S. Forest Service. GCSD Fire Station #78 is fully staffed and houses multiple Type-1 and Type-3 engines. The CAL FIRE Groveland Station provides seasonal staffing under its Schedule B operations. Automatic and mutual aid agreements ensure the closest available engine responds, regardless of jurisdiction. The project site lies within the GCSD service boundary and the State Responsibility Area.

Law enforcement services are provided by the Tuolumne County Sheriff’s Office, with patrol coverage typically consisting of six deputies across the county. Response times range from

approximately 5–35 minutes depending on call priority and location. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) provides traffic enforcement along State Highway 120 and assists with emergency response. The nearest CHP office is in Jamestown.

The project area is served by the Big Oak Flat–Groveland Unified School District. The nearest schools are:

- Tioga High School, approximately 2.5 miles northeast; and
- Tenaya Elementary School, approximately 1.3 miles east.

The project will not generate new housing and therefore will not increase student enrollment.

Groveland residents and visitors have access to extensive recreational amenities including Yosemite National Park, Stanislaus National Forest, and Mary Laveroni Community Park, the nearest public park at approximately 2.3 acres. GCSD operates local parks and collects park impact fees for new development.

ANALYSIS

a. The project, which consists of a mini storage facility and a small coffee shop, is not expected to attract new residents to the area that would increase the demand for public facilities or necessitate the construction of new facilities to maintain acceptable service times or performance objectives. The project will be required to comply with conditions of approval provided by the Fire Prevention Bureau. Furthermore, the project is located within the GCSD service district, and the district did not provide comments indicating the need for new or expanded facilities. The GCSD did indicate that, as applicable, GCSD Fire and Park Impact Fees must be paid at the time of building permit issuance. Additionally, the GCSD stated that commercial developments exceeding 7,200 square feet must form or annex to a Community Facilities District to offset fiscal impacts to their services. The formation of the CFD is overseen by the GCSD. Since the project will not generate new students in the area, there will be no need for new school facilities. With the payment of required fees and compliance with the conditions of approval, the project will have a less than significant impact.

16. RECREATION

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks such that substantial physical deterioration would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b.	Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

REGULATORY SETTING

Recreational resources in Tuolumne County are governed by federal, state, and local policies that ensure parks and open space are properly maintained as communities develop. Yosemite National Park and the Stanislaus National Forest are managed under federal land-use plans, but the proposed project is not located on federal land and does not require federal approvals.

At the state level, the California Department of Parks and Recreation oversees state parks in the region. The Quimby Act applies only to residential development and therefore does not apply to this non-residential project.

Locally, the Tuolumne County General Plan includes policies supporting adequate recreational facilities and access to public lands. The Groveland Community Services District (GCSD) manages local parks and recreation services and collects park impact fees from new development to help maintain service levels.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Tuolumne County provides extensive recreational opportunities, including Yosemite National Park, the Stanislaus National Forest, state parks, and local parks operated by public agencies such as GCSD and the Tuolumne County Recreation Department. The County maintains approximately 341 acres of parkland. The nearest recreational facility to the project site is Mary Laveroni Community Park, located approximately 2.3 acres in size with playgrounds, open turf, picnic areas, and a skate park.

ANALYSIS

a. The project site does not include residential uses that would bring new users to recreational facilities in the area. The mini storage business would likely be utilized by existing residents, and the coffee shop would serve both residents and visitors; however, it would not generate additional users of recreational facilities. Therefore, there will be no impact.

b. The project includes a mini storage facility and a coffee shop. It does not include recreational facilities nor does it require the construction of any recreational facilities. Therefore, there will be no impact.

17. TRANSPORTATION

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Transportation impacts in California are governed by federal, state, and local regulations. Under state law, CEQA requires evaluation of potential transportation impacts, including vehicle miles traveled, roadway operations, and safety.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) establishes statewide roadway and intersection performance standards. Relevant standards include:

- California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD), which provides signal warrant criteria. Per the project’s Traffic Impact Study (TIS), the Deer Flat Road/State Highway 120 intersection does not meet the Peak Hour Signal Warrant #3 threshold for signalization.
- Highway Capacity Manual (HCM), 7th Edition, used to determine delay and Level of Service (LOS) for intersections. The TIS relied on Synchro/HCM methodologies, consistent with state practice.

Locally, the Tuolumne County General Plan (2018) provides transportation performance standards.

Policy 4.A.3 and Implementation Program 4.A.k require maintaining LOS C on State highways and intersections under most conditions, and no worse than LOS D when constraints such as safety, right-of-way, or environmental impacts limit improvements. The TIS followed these evaluation standards.

Tuolumne County also applies Vehicle Miles Traveled Screening Guidelines to development projects. The TIS concluded that the mini-storage use qualifies as a “small project” (under 110 daily trips) and the coffee shop qualifies as “local-serving retail.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project is located at the northwest corner of the Deer Flat Road and State Highway 120 intersection in Groveland. The surrounding roadway network is rural with two-lane facilities and no dedicated pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure.

The Deer Flat Road/State Highway 120 intersection operates as a one-way stop-controlled (OWSC) intersection.

Based on traffic counts collected on August 27, 2025, the existing intersection operates at:

- LOS B in the AM peak (11.1 sec delay)
- LOS B in the PM peak (11.8 sec delay)

Under “Existing + Project” conditions, operational performance remains LOS B in both peak hours, with changes in average delay of less than one second. The CA MUTCD signal warrant analysis indicates that a traffic signal is not warranted.

Based on ITE Trip Generation Manual, 11th Edition, the project is estimated to generate:

- 267 daily primary trips, including:
 - 38 AM peak hour trips (20 inbound, 18 outbound)
 - 19 PM peak hour trips (9 inbound, 10 outbound)

Trip assignment shows project traffic distributing along State Highway 120 and Deer Flat Road consistent with existing travel patterns.

A five-year collision history along State Highway 120 within 200 feet of Deer Flat Road shows 3 total collisions and higher-than-average “Fatal + Injury” and “Total” collision rates, but lower fatal collision rates. Collision types included broadside, hit-object, and overturn collisions. Primary collision factors were alcohol influence and improper turning.

The proposed driveway spacing of 200 feet north of State Highway 120 on Deer Flat Road meets Caltrans stopping sight distance requirements for 30 mph roadways. Driveway throat depth exceeds 50 feet, which accommodates anticipated queueing.

Corner sight distance (CSD) along State Highway 120 is currently constrained by roadway curvature and slopes, and the TIS identifies improvements such as cutting slopes and adding a westbound acceleration lane to achieve required sight distance. These improvements also resolve truck-turning conflicts for SU-30 trucks

Drive-through queue observations at comparable facilities showed a maximum queue of 3 vehicles (60 feet). The project provides approximately 100 feet of on-site queue storage, sufficient to prevent spillback into circulation areas or Deer Flat Road

ANALYSIS

a. The project is consistent with Tuolumne County General Plan circulation policies and applicable roadway standards; however, the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) identified two specific geometric and safety issues that must be corrected to achieve full consistency with state and local circulation requirements.

Caltrans Highway Design Manual (HDM) requires a minimum stopping-sight-distance (SSD) of 200 feet for roadways with a 30-mph design speed. The project’s driveway is spaced 200 feet north of State Highway 120, which satisfies HDM spacing requirements and places the driveway outside the functional area of the Deer Flat Road/State Highway 120 intersection. The driveway’s 50-foot throat depth also provides adequate storage for the short egress queues anticipated.

However, the TIS determined that corner sight distance at the Deer Flat Road/State Highway 120 intersection does not meet Caltrans minimums for both right-turn and left-turn movements. These deficiencies would be corrected through the following required improvements:

1. Construct a westbound acceleration lane on State Highway 120 to meet the minimum CSD for right-turn movements from Deer Flat Road.
2. Cut back slopes on both sides of State Highway 120 to obtain minimum CSD for left-turn movements.

Truck-turn analysis also identified conflicts for ingress/egress at the project driveway and for movements at Deer Flat Road/ State Highway 120. To comply with County roadway standards and avoid operational safety issues, the following improvements are required:

- Widen Deer Flat Road along the project frontage and widen the project driveway to accommodate truck ingress/egress and eastbound left-turn truck movements from State Highway 120.
- Widen the northwest corner of the intersection and construct a 280-foot westbound acceleration lane (with a 245-foot taper) to accommodate southbound right-turn truck movements and to resolve sight-distance constraints.

With implementation of these improvements—identified in the TIS and shown in Figure 9 in the TIS— and implementation of Mitigation Measure TRAN-1, the project will not conflict with any circulation system plan, program, or policy, and impacts will be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

TRAN-1: The applicant shall implement the following roadway and access improvements prior to occupancy, and all improvements shall be constructed to the satisfaction of Tuolumne County and Caltrans and shall be consistent with the avoidance requirements of Mitigation Measure BIO-8.

Prior to issuance of a grading permit for any roadway, intersection, slope modification, acceleration lane, or related transportation improvement, the applicant shall submit improvement plans demonstrating that all work fully avoids disturbance to the riparian woodland, in-channel wetland, and associated sensitive habitat along Drainage A, consistent with BIO-8. The plans shall clearly identify the limits of disturbance, grading extents, slope cut areas, staging areas, and construction access relative to the mapped boundaries of sensitive habitat.

If the County determines that complete avoidance of the riparian or wetland habitat cannot be achieved based on the final improvement plans, the applicant shall comply with all requirements of BIO-8, including preparation of a formal wetland delineation and acquisition of all applicable federal and state permits prior to issuance of a grading permit.

1. Widen Deer Flat Road along the project frontage to accommodate required truck-turn movements and safe ingress/egress.
2. Widen the project driveway to meet design requirements for 30-foot single-unit truck maneuvers in both directions.
3. Provide a minimum driveway throat depth of 50 feet to ensure adequate on-site queue storage for outbound vehicles.
4. Construct a westbound acceleration lane on State Highway 120, consisting of:
 - 280-foot acceleration lane, and
 - 245-foot taper, to address southbound right-turn truck movements and achieve minimum corner sight distance for right-turning vehicles from Deer Flat Road.

5. Cut back slopes on the north side of State Highway 120 east of Deer Flat Road to achieve minimum required CSD for left-turn movements from Deer Flat Road.
6. Cut back slopes on the south side of State Highway 120 west of Deer Flat Road to achieve minimum required CSD for eastbound left-turn movements onto Deer Flat Road.
7. Widen the northwest corner of the State Highway 120/Deer Flat Road intersection to accommodate southbound right-turn truck traffic and eliminate turning conflicts.

All temporary construction access, staging, grading, slope modification, and erosion control activities associated with these improvements shall also avoid disturbance to the sensitive habitat areas identified in BIO-8.

MITIGATION MONITORING

Prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, the applicant shall obtain all required Caltrans Encroachment Permits for work along State Route 120 and all Tuolumne County Encroachment Permits for improvements along Deer Flat Road and at the project driveway. All transportation improvements required under Mitigation Measure TRAN-1 shall be fully constructed and inspected before occupancy and shall be verified by the Department of Public Works and Community Development Department. The improvements as discussed above shall be demonstrated on any site grading plans. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.

b. Under SB 743 and CEQA Guidelines §15064.3(b), level of service (LOS) is no longer a measure of significance and projects must be evaluated based on VMT. Tuolumne County's adopted VMT screening criteria, adopted by Resolution 74-20, indicate that "small project" and "local-serving retail" projects screen out. Resolution 74-20 indicates that for mixed use projects, each land use type shall be considered separately for VMT evaluations. The TIS concluded that the mini-storage use qualifies as a "small project" (under 110 daily trips) and the coffee shop qualifies as "local-serving retail. Therefore, the project is screened out from further VMT analysis and is consistent with §15064.3(b). The impact is less than significant.

c. The project does not introduce any hazardous geometric features. The site will be accessed via a new full-access driveway on Deer Flat Road with adequate sight distance and standard lane geometry consistent with County and Caltrans design standards, as discussed in TRAN-1 above. With implementation of Mitigation Measure TRAN-1, the project will modify the Deer Flat Road/State Highway 120 intersection geometry (acceleration lane, slope cutting, and widening) to meet Caltrans design standards. With these improvements, the project does not introduce hazardous geometric features. The project does not introduce incompatible roadway users (e.g., agricultural equipment) and does not change existing travel patterns in a manner that would increase collision risk. The TIS found no operational deficiencies or safety impacts associated with project access or circulation. Impacts would be less than significant.

d. Fire apparatus access and emergency response assumptions are based on Deer Flat Road and the project driveway being widened and improved consistent with Mitigation Measure TRAN-1 and Fire Prevention Division requirements. Emergency access will remain fully adequate. The driveway connection on Deer Flat Road provides sufficient width, turning radius, and sight distance to meet the California Fire Code and Tuolumne County Fire Prevention Division requirements. The project does not block or modify evacuation routes, reduce emergency response times, or restrict fire apparatus access. Minimal traffic generated by the project (267 daily trips) will not impede emergency operations along State Highway 120 or Deer

Flat Road. Fire Prevention Division conditions of approval ensure compliance with all emergency access and fire flow standards. Impacts would be less than significant.

18. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
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),	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Cultural and tribal cultural resources in California are protected under a combination of federal, state, and local regulations. At the federal level, the primary authority is the National Historic Preservation Act, which establishes the National Register of Historic Places and requires federal agencies to consider potential impacts to historic properties during federal actions. Although the proposed Groveland project is not a federal undertaking, NHPA significance criteria serve as a foundational framework for evaluating historical and archaeological resources throughout the state. Executive Order 11593 further directs federal agencies to preserve and maintain cultural resources under their jurisdiction, helping form the broader context for cultural resource management nationwide.

At the state level, cultural resources are principally regulated through the California Environmental Quality Act, which requires lead agencies to evaluate potential impacts to historical resources and unique archaeological resources. CEQA defines a historical resource as one listed in, eligible for listing in, or determined significant under the California Register of Historical Resources. Archaeological resources that meet certain criteria for uniqueness must also be evaluated and protected. CEQA Guidelines Sections 15064.5 and 21083.2 establish the requirements for determining significance, assessing impacts, and developing mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts during construction.

Tribal Cultural Resources (TCRs) receive additional protection under Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52), which amended CEQA in 2014 to require early consultation with California Native American tribes. Public Resources Code Sections 21080.3.1 and 21080.3.2 outline the formal consultation

process, requiring lead agencies to notify tribes that have requested consultation within 14 days of determining that an application is complete. Tribes then have 30 days to request consultation. A tribal cultural resource is defined under PRC Section 21074 as a site, feature, place, cultural landscape, sacred place, or object of cultural value to a tribe that is either included in or eligible for inclusion in the CRHR, included in a local register of historical resources, or determined by the lead agency to be significant to a California Native American tribe. For this project, AB 52 consultation letters were sent to the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians and the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians on February 26, 2025. No tribe requested consultation or provided comments.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The region has been occupied by Native peoples for thousands of years, with the Central Sierra Miwok traditionally inhabiting the foothills and mountain landscapes. Ethnographic sources note that the Me-Wuk people utilized a wide range of resources across the foothill and mountain zones, with established settlement and subsistence patterns prior to Euro-American contact.

Beginning in 1848–1849, Euro-American settlement expanded rapidly due to the Gold Rush. The Groveland and Big Oak Flat areas became centers of placer mining, later followed by quartz mining in the late 19th century. The construction of the Hetch Hetchy water project headquarters in Groveland from 1915 to 1925 further contributed to regional development, bringing rail infrastructure, tunneling operations, and worker populations to the area. Deer Flat Road hosted several historic mining claims, including the Mohegan Mine, Italian Mine, De Ferrari, and Quiet Valley Mine.

Consistent with this history, the cultural resource survey prepared for the project (April 2024) documents that the project site is largely covered in placer-mining tailings, representing an “almost unending series” of dredged materials deposited during historic mining operations. Three historic-era debris concentrations, dating from the late 19th through mid-20th centuries, were identified on-site, along with nearby barn and pump house structures located just outside the development footprint. None of these features were found to contain characteristics that would make them eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources. The survey report notes that while prehistoric cultural materials are possible due to the presence of a drainage, extensive tailings have likely disturbed or buried earlier deposits. The potential for intact archaeological deposits is therefore considered low to moderate.

A pedestrian survey of the site was conducted in March 2024 using systematic transects no more than 15 meters apart. No new cultural resources were identified beyond those already documented in previous studies. The Central California Information Center records search identified placer-mining tailings, four historic refuse concentrations, and historic roadway fragments within or adjacent to the site.

ANALYSIS

a. A comprehensive cultural resources study—consisting of background research, a records search at the Central California Information Center, and an intensive pedestrian survey—identified no tribal cultural resources, no prehistoric archaeological sites, and no cultural landscape features within the project boundary. The ground surface throughout much of the site has been substantially disturbed by historic placer mining, which reduced the likelihood that intact tribal resources remain in place. The County initiated AB 52 consultation with the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians and the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians on

February 26, 2025. Neither tribe responded, requested consultation, nor submitted additional information about tribal cultural resources within the project site. Because no tribal comments, concerns, or resource locations were provided, there is no substantial evidence that a tribal cultural resource—either listed or eligible for listing—exists on the project site.

Although no tribal cultural resources have been identified, the potential remains that previously unknown materials could be encountered during subsurface ground disturbance. With the implementation of CUL-1 and CUL-2, there would be a less than significant impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE

Implement Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 as indicated in the “Cultural Resources” Section above.

MITIGATION MONITORING

See monitoring requirements for CUL-1 and CUL-2.

19. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Result in a determination by the waste water 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.	Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Utility services in Tuolumne County are governed by a combination of state, regional, and local regulations designed to ensure adequate capacity, safe operation, and proper handling of water, wastewater, energy, and solid waste.

Water and wastewater services for the project area are regulated by the Groveland Community Services District, which operates under state water regulations, including Department of Water Resources and State Water Resources Control Board standards. GCSD's wastewater treatment system is regulated by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board through Waste Discharge Requirements. Connection to GCSD's systems ensures compliance with applicable state water quality and wastewater regulations.

Solid waste handling in Tuolumne County is governed by Chapter 8.05 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code, which establishes standards for refuse, recycling, on-site storage, and service requirements. Solid waste generation in the County is processed through transfer stations, where recyclables and hazardous materials are separated from the waste stream, with residual disposal occurring at the Highway 59 Landfill in Merced County, a permitted facility with substantial remaining capacity.

Energy service is provided by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) and regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission. Tuolumne County does not have a natural gas distribution system; therefore, commercial development typically relies on electric power and propane. Telecommunications services are provided by private companies and are regulated at the state level under the California Public Utilities Code.

Local land use authority is provided through the Tuolumne County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, which require that new development demonstrate adequate public utility capacity prior to approval.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is served by existing utility infrastructure along the Highway 120 corridor. Pacific Gas and Electric provides electrical power to the area, and electricity is the primary source of energy since no natural gas distribution system exists within Tuolumne County. Propane is available for individual commercial use where required, although the proposed project is not expected to rely on substantial propane demand.

Telecommunication services in the County are available from multiple providers, including AT&T, Xfinity, Conifer Communications, HughesNet, and Cal.net. Cellular coverage in the area is provided primarily by Verizon and AT&T. Existing telecommunications infrastructure is already present along Highway 120, and no major extensions are required for the project.

Water and sewer services are provided by the Groveland Community Services District. Water and sewer mains are located adjacent to the project site, and the project will connect directly to GCSD's potable water system and the wastewater treatment facility located on Ferretti Road. Connection to GCSD eliminates the need for onsite wastewater treatment and avoids potential groundwater impacts.

Solid waste collection is provided by Cal Sierra Disposal, Inc., which is owned by Waste Management. Weekly refuse and recycling collection is available to the site. All solid waste in Tuolumne County is processed at local transfer stations before being transported to the Highway 59 Landfill, which has a permitted remaining capacity of approximately 30 million cubic yards. Cal Sierra Disposal also operates a buy-back recycling center and a yard-waste processing facility in East Sonora for compostable materials.

Overall, the project is located in an area where electricity, water, wastewater, telecommunications, and solid waste services are already available and have adequate capacity to serve the proposed development.

ANALYSIS

a. The proposed project will connect to existing GCSD water and sewer infrastructure, which is already located adjacent to the project frontage on Deer Flat Road. GCSD has not identified any need for system upgrades, extensions, or treatment facility expansion to serve the project. The project's wastewater generation is minimal and well within existing system capacity.

Electric power will be provided by PG&E through existing distribution infrastructure along Highway 120, and no new substations, transmission lines, or off-site electrical facilities are required. Tuolumne County does not have natural gas service; any optional propane use would

be limited to standard small-scale commercial tanks placed onsite, not requiring off-site utility expansion.

Telecommunications services already serve the area and do not require expansion to accommodate the project.

Stormwater management will be provided through an onsite detention basin located at the low point of the site, which will meter stormwater into the existing culvert beneath Deer Flat Road. This is a standard drainage improvement typical of local commercial development and does not involve construction of regional or off-site drainage facilities.

Because the project relies on existing utility networks with only small-scale onsite connections and improvements, it will not require the relocation or construction of new or expanded utility facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. The impact is less than significant.

b. Water service will be provided by the GCSD, which confirmed that water supply and distribution capacity are sufficient to serve the project. The project consists of a mini-storage facility and a small coffee shop, both of which have very low water demand relative to residential or large commercial development. GCSD existing water rights, storage, and treatment capacity are adequate to serve both current customers and the incremental demand generated by the project, even under dry-year conditions.

The project does not introduce substantial new population or long-term water-intensive uses and does not conflict with GCSD's Urban Water Management Plan or water supply reliability planning. The impact is less than significant.

c. Wastewater from the project will be conveyed to GCSD's wastewater treatment facility on Ferretti Road, which has available capacity and routinely serves commercial development of this scale. The project's wastewater generation—primarily restroom facilities for employees and customers of the coffee shop and minimal sanitary loads from the storage facility—is negligible compared to GCSD's treatment capacity and existing commitments. GCSD reviewed the project and did not identify any requirement for treatment plant expansion, collection system upgrades, or other off-site improvements. The impact is less than significant.

d, e. The proposed project will generate a modest amount of solid waste associated with typical commercial operations of a mini-storage facility and a small coffee shop. Solid waste collection and recycling services will be provided by Cal Sierra Disposal (Waste Management), which serves the Groveland area. All waste generated onsite will be transported to a local transfer station where recyclables and hazardous materials are removed prior to landfill disposal. Residual waste is then taken to the Highway 59 Landfill in Merced County, which has a remaining permitted capacity of approximately 30 million cubic yards and is not projected to reach capacity in the foreseeable future.

The amount of waste generated by the project is well within the handling and disposal capacity of the existing solid waste system, and the project will not generate waste in excess of state or local standards or impair the attainment of waste reduction mandates.

The project will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local solid waste regulations, including:

- State recycling and organics diversion laws (AB 341, AB 1826, SB 1383).

- Tuolumne County Ordinance Code Chapter 8.05, which governs refuse handling, storage, and recycling requirements.
- Requirements for commercial waste sorting, prohibited disposal of hazardous materials, and mandatory recycling services.

Because the project generates only limited commercial waste, utilizes a permitted hauler, and complies with all relevant solid waste management regulations, it will not result in significant impacts related to solid waste generation or compliance with waste reduction statutes. There would be a less than significant impact.

20. WILDFIRE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b.	Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

REGULATORY SETTING

Wildfire hazard reduction in Tuolumne County is governed by a framework of state and local regulations intended to reduce ignition risk, improve emergency response, and protect structures located in high-hazard zones.

At the state level, the California Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 4290 and 4291 establish minimum fire-safe standards for development in State Responsibility Areas, including access road width, turnarounds, driveways, signage, and defensible space requirements. The California Building Code (CBC) Chapter 7A imposes ignition-resistant construction standards for structures located within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, including exterior materials designed to resist ember intrusion. The California Fire Code governs fire-flow requirements, hydrant spacing, sprinkler standards, and onsite emergency access.

Tuolumne County is required to adopt and enforce these statewide standards. The County also implements fire protection policies through the 2018 Tuolumne County General Plan, including Public Safety and Natural Hazard policies that require adequate fire protection infrastructure, defensible space, fuel reduction, and compliance with applicable Fire Safe Regulations. These policies emphasize coordination with fire protection agencies and the use of hazard mitigation measures in areas subject to wildfire.

The Tuolumne County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies wildfire as one of the highest-risk hazards in the County. The Plan provides hazard analyses, vulnerability assessments, and recommended mitigation strategies, including enhanced vegetation management, fuel thinning, chipping programs, improved water supply systems, updated evacuation planning, and expanded fire protection planning. The plan notes that CAL FIRE,

Tuolumne County Fire Department, seven local fire districts, and one city department provide coordinated wildfire response, along with the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service. Tuolumne County does not maintain a static evacuation plan because wildfire behavior changes based on wind, terrain, and fire location. Instead, emergency evacuations are directed operationally by the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Office, which issues evacuation orders and route guidance through the Emergency Notification System, media alerts, and, when possible, door-to-door notifications.

The project site is located within the State Responsibility Area and is mapped as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone by CAL FIRE. This designation dictates the use of wildfire mitigation strategies, including ignition-resistant construction, defensible space, and fire-safe access, all of which apply to this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is located along the Highway 120 corridor at the western edge of Groveland in the Sierra Nevada foothills. The site is within the State Responsibility Area and is designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, reflecting regional fuel conditions, slope, and summer weather patterns. Vegetation in the area consists of grasses, shrubs, and scattered oaks and pines typical of foothill fuels. Portions of the site have been historically disturbed by ranching, clearing, and mining-related activities, which have reduced some fuel continuity but do not eliminate wildfire exposure.

The project area is served by the Groveland Community Services District Fire Department, which provides full-time staffed fire protection supported by CAL FIRE under mutual-aid agreements. GCSD, CAL FIRE, and the U.S. Forest Service work collaboratively on wildfire response throughout the region, as described in the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan. The County's adopted emergency response framework relies heavily on interagency cooperation, "closest resource" dispatching, and flexible evacuation operations directed by the Sheriff's Office.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies wildfire as a high-risk hazard, noting that the County's steep terrain, mixed vegetation types, and seasonal weather patterns contribute to conditions suitable for fast-moving wildfires. The Plan includes countywide mitigation goals—vegetation management, fuel-load reduction, code enforcement, improved water systems, and better mapping—intended to reduce vulnerability to wildland fire events. The project site will be subject to these development requirements and will adhere to all applicable Fire Code and Building Code standards.

The proposed mini-storage and coffee shop uses do not involve dense concentrations of people and do not introduce residential populations into the VHFHSZ. The project will include fire-safe access compliant with PRC 4290, defensible space, and hydrants and fire-flow consistent with GCSD and Tuolumne County Fire Prevention Division requirements. Internal site circulation has been designed to ensure clear emergency access.

Given the site's location, vegetation, topography, and jurisdictional responsibilities, the primary wildfire risks arise from regional wildland fire behavior rather than project operations. Compliance with state and local regulations and the existing fire protection infrastructure significantly reduces potential wildfire hazard exposure.

ANALYSIS

a. Tuolumne County does not maintain a static emergency response or evacuation plan, as evacuations are directed dynamically by the Sheriff's Office based on real-time fire conditions. Emergency response and evacuation coordination rely on the County's Emergency Operations Plan and the Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan, which provide the framework for emergency notifications, evacuation procedures, and wildfire response. The project will take access from Deer Flat Road and is required to meet all applicable fire access, road width, turn-around, and signage standards enforced by the Tuolumne County Fire Prevention Division and the California Fire Code. The project consists of a mini-storage facility and a coffee shop—uses that do not generate high on-site populations and do not alter roadway capacity or circulation patterns. The improvements identified under the Transportation Section above would not adversely affect impacts related to evacuation and would not change the assessment of evacuation. Because the project complies with all emergency access requirements and does not change established evacuation corridors, it will not obstruct, interfere with, or impair emergency evacuation or response procedures. There would be no impact.

b. The site is located in a State Responsibility Area within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Vegetation on and around the site is already disturbed and partially cleared, and development will be required to comply with defensible space requirements under PRC 4291 and Title 14, including vegetation clearance, fuel modification, and ignition-resistant construction materials. The Fire Prevention Division has conditioned the project to provide adequate fire flow, hydrants, sprinklers as required, and emergency access improvements that meet State and County fire safety standards. The project does not include residential uses or significant on-site occupancy, and the mini-storage use has low staffing levels and minimal visitor presence. Development will not introduce uses, materials, or activities that elevate ignition potential beyond typical commercial operations. Given compliance with all fire protection requirements and the project's low on-site occupancy, the project will not exacerbate wildfire risks or expose people to substantial smoke, pollutant concentrations, or uncontrolled wildfire spread. There would be no impact.

c. The project will utilize existing infrastructure along Deer Flat Road and State Highway 120. No new off-site roads, power line extensions, or fire-suppression infrastructure are required beyond standard on-site improvements such as hydrants, fire flow upgrades, and internal access drive aisles that meet Fire Code specifications. These improvements will be built to current CAL FIRE and County standards and are specifically designed to reduce wildfire risk, not exacerbate it. The project does not require new fuel breaks or major utility corridors and does not introduce infrastructure known to increase ignition potential. Construction-related disturbance will be temporary and subject to standard construction BMPs. Because required infrastructure is minimal, on-site, and designed to improve fire safety, the project will not create new wildfire hazards or operational risks. There would be no impact.

d. The project site consists of moderate slopes and disturbed terrain. It is not located in an area with known landslide hazards, unstable slopes, or post-fire debris-flow risk zones. The drainage system includes an on-site detention basin at the property's low point, designed to meter stormwater to the existing culvert under Deer Flat Road. This system manages runoff both during normal conditions and following extreme storm events. The land uses—a mini-storage facility and coffee shop—are low-occupancy commercial uses and do not introduce new structures in areas with documented post-fire instability. The project will not alter regional hydrology, steepen slopes, or create conditions that would expose people or structures to post-fire flooding or slope

failure. As such, the risk of downstream or downslope hazards remains very low. The impact is less than significant.

21. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANALYSIS

a. As described in the Biological Resources section, the project site contains suitable nesting habitat for migratory birds and potential roosting habitat for bats. Mitigation measures requiring pre-construction surveys and avoidance buffers will ensure protection of these species and prevent impacts to active nests or bat roosts.

As discussed under Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources, ground-disturbing activities always have the potential to encounter previously unknown archaeological materials or human remains. Mitigation has been included requiring construction stoppage, professional evaluation, and appropriate treatment and tribal notification procedures in accordance with state law should any such resources or remains be discovered.

The project also incorporates an aesthetics mitigation measure to address short-term construction-related impacts on scenic quality along State Highway 120.

The project also incorporates improvements at the Deer Flat Road/State Highway 120 intersection and the project driveway to comply with County and Caltrans roadway standards as discussed under the Transportation Resources Section.

With implementation of these measures, the project would not degrade biological or cultural resources, and all impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

b. As demonstrated throughout this Initial Study, all potentially significant impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant levels with mitigation. The remaining issue areas—such as air quality, GHG emissions, hazards, hydrology, noise, wildfire, utilities, and land use—were found

to result in either no impact or less-than-significant impacts without the need for additional measures.

Mitigation for biological resources, cultural and tribal cultural resources, and aesthetics addresses localized, site-specific construction-period impacts. These effects would not combine with other past, present, or foreseeable projects in a manner that would create cumulatively significant impacts. The operational characteristics of the project—a low-intensity mini-storage facility and a small coffee shop—do not introduce long-term environmental burdens that would contribute meaningfully to cumulative regional effects.

Therefore, the project's incremental contribution to cumulative impacts would not be cumulatively considerable. All impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Table 3. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
AES-1	<p>Prior to issuance of building permits, the project applicant shall submit a photometric lighting plan to the Land Use and Natural Resources Division for review and approval. The plan shall demonstrate that all proposed exterior lighting is designed, located, and directed downward to prevent light spillover onto adjacent properties. All lighting fixtures shall be shielded and directed downward to minimize glare and light trespass, consistent with County standards and the International Dark Sky Association’s best practices.</p>	<p>Shall be required prior to the issuance of any building permits that includes exterior lighting. The plan shall be reviewed and verified by the LUNR Division of CDD. Prior to the final building inspection, the LUNR Division shall verify that exterior lighting has been installed in accordance with the approved plans. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>	Project Applicant	CDD – LUNR Division
BIO-1	<p>A preconstruction survey for host plants of crotch bumble bee shall be performed prior to the start of initial construction activities including vegetation removal and ground disturbance. Host plants, if any, shall be identified in the field with flagging. If any host plants are present within the project site, a plan shall be developed and implemented to avoid, minimize, or compensate the loss of the species and their habitat. Depending on the species, the plan shall be developed in coordination with CDFW and/or USFS, as</p>	<p>Prior to vegetation removal and ground disturbance the LUNR Division shall review the preconstruction survey reports and verify that they have been conducted within the appropriate timeframes. If any identified species are present, the LUNR division will ensure that appropriate actions are taken based on the mitigation</p>	Project Applicant	CDD – LUNR Division

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<p>necessary. If only <i>Sierra clarkia</i> (<i>C. virgata</i>; CRPR 4.3; no USFS status) is present, then impacts may be considered less than significant under CEQA.</p> <p>As a general outline, the mitigation plan shall include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precise location and mapping of the location of special-status species, with an estimate of the population size and characterization of site conditions, associated species, etc. • Description of the impact, including project elements that would contribute to the impact. • Discussion of efforts to fully avoid or minimize impact through plan revision. Provide a rationale if avoidance is not feasible and would render the project unbuildable. • Compensatory mitigation for loss of special-status species and its habitat if impacts are unavoidable, preferably through permanent protection of an existing off-site native population. Alternatively, permanent protection of an off-site introduced population or contribution of fees to a mitigation bank or CDFW-approved in-lieu fee program may be suitable, if such opportunities exist. Collection and redistribution of seeds is not preferable, as this method often fails or cannot be 	<p>language. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>		

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<p>completed on land that the project proponent controls or is committed to maintain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed accounting of how much mitigation will be provided (<i>i.e.</i>, number of plants, area of habitat, etc.) and for how long, and how success will be measured. • Description of methods for monitoring, documenting, and reporting on the status of the mitigation effort, including reasons for failures or setbacks, and remedial actions to be undertaken to ensure success criteria are met. <p>If surveys confirm absence of special-status <i>Clarkia</i> species, then avoidance and minimization measures are not necessary.</p>			
BIO-2	<p>Tree removal, pruning, or grubbing activities should be conducted in the fall during the nonbreeding season (<i>i.e.</i>, between September 1 and January 31), if possible, to avoid impacts to nesting birds. If project construction begins during the breeding season (February 1 to August 31), preconstruction nesting bird surveys shall be conducted within the Project footprint and a 50-foot buffer for migratory birds and a 300-foot buffer for raptors, by a qualified biologist no more than 2 weeks prior to equipment or material staging, pruning/grubbing, or surface disturbing activities. If no active nests are found, no further mitigation is necessary.</p>	<p>Within 2 weeks prior to disturbance during nesting season the LUNR Division shall review the preconstruction survey reports and verify that they have been conducted within the appropriate timeframes. If any identified species are present, the LUNR division will ensure that appropriate actions are taken based on the mitigation language. A Notice of Action will be</p>	<p>Project Applicant / Contractor</p>	<p>CDD – LUNR Division</p>

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<p>If active nests (i.e., nests with eggs or young birds present) are found, non-disturbance buffers shall be established at a distance sufficient to minimize disturbance based on the nest location, topography, cover, the nesting pair's tolerance to disturbance, and the type/duration of potential disturbance. The non-disturbance zone may be further reduced if a qualified biologist is present to educate workers about the sensitivity of working in proximity to active nests and be on site to monitor the nest during work adjacent to the buffer to determine if project activities are causing nest disturbance. The qualified biologist shall conduct monitoring at least once per week when construction activities occur within the established buffer of an active nest to document nest phenology and potential for disturbance during the different nest stages. Monitoring frequency may be increased at the discretion of the qualified biologist based on species sensitivity (including raptors), nest stage, and the proximity and intensity of construction activities. If buffers are established and it is determined that project activities are resulting in nest disturbance, work shall cease immediately, and the CDFW and the USFWS Migratory Bird Regional Permit Office shall be contacted for further guidance. Buffers shall remain in place until the qualified biologist determines that</p>	<p>recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>		

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	the nest is no longer active (e.g., young have fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest site).			
BIO-3	<p>BIO-3: To minimize impacts to fringed myotis bat, hoary bat, long-eared myotis bat, pallid bat, and silverhaired bat, the following mitigation measures shall be implemented:</p> <p>If tree removal or trimming is necessary, a preconstruction bat survey shall be conducted within the project footprint by a qualified biologist no more than two weeks prior to vegetation removal or ground disturbing activities to identify maternity sites or day roosts.</p> <p>All suitable roost habitat including man-made structures, snags, rotten stumps, decadent trees with broken limbs, exfoliating bark, bole cavities or hollows, dense foliage, downed logs, rock outcrops, etc. shall be surveyed. Sensitive habitat areas and roost sites shall be avoided to the maximum extent practicable. If no suitable roost sites are identified, no further minimization measures are necessary.</p> <p>If potential tree roost sites (trees, snags, downed logs, rock outcrops, etc.) are to be removed or trimmed, limbs smaller than 3 inches in diameter shall be cut and the tree left overnight to allow any bats that may be using the tree/snag time to locate another roost. A qualified biological monitor shall be</p>	<p>Within 2 weeks prior to tree removal the LUNR Division shall review the preconstruction survey reports and verify that they have been conducted within the appropriate timeframes. If any identified species are present, the LUNR division will ensure that appropriate actions are taken based on the mitigation language. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>	Project Applicant / Contractor	CDD – LUNR Division

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<p>present during the trimming or removal of trees, snags, or stumps to inspect the downed limbs and foliage for roosting bats.</p> <p>If live bats of the species identified above are detected as roosting in the project impact area, work shall cease and CDFW should be consulted on how to proceed. A non-disturbance buffer zone of 50 feet should be established until guidance from CDFW is obtained.</p>			
BIO-4	<p>BIO-4: A worker environmental training program shall be conducted for all construction personnel including subcontractors. The training shall include, at a minimum, a description of the great grey owl, Crotch bumble bee, area; an explanation of the status and protection under state and federal laws; the avoidance and minimization measures to be implemented to reduce the potential of take; communication and work stoppage protocols in case a listed species is observed within the study area; and an explanation of the environmental sensitive areas and wildlife exclusion fencing and the importance of maintaining these structures. A fact sheet conveying this information shall be prepared and distributed to all construction personnel. Upon completion of the program, personnel shall sign a form stating that they attended the program and understand all the avoidance and minimization measures and</p>	<p>BIO-4 will be verified by the LUNR Division prior to initiation of construction. Prior to the issuance of a grading permit, the training materials and fact sheet shall be submitted to the LUNR Division. Signed attendance sheets shall be maintained on site and copies shall be provided to the LUNR Division upon request. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>	Project Applicant	CDD – LUNR Division

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	implications of the governing environmental regulations.			
BIO-5	To prevent special-status wildlife from becoming entangled or trapped in erosion control materials, plastic mono-filament netting (i.e., erosion control matting) or similar material shall not be used within the Project footprint. This includes products that use photodegradable or biodegradable synthetic netting, which can take several months to decompose. Acceptable materials include tackified hydroseeding compounds and natural fibers such as burlap, jute, or twine with a wide aperture mesh.	The Tuolumne County Department of Public Works and Community Development Department shall be responsible for verifying compliance with BIO-5 and BIO-7 during construction activities on the site during any inspections. Any grading plans or building plans shall demonstrate compliance with the measures. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.	Contractor	CDD & Public Works
BIO-6	<p>Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) and erosion control best management practices (BMPs) shall be developed and implemented to minimize wind or water-related erosion. The construction contracts shall include provisions to include Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures (AMMs) to protect sensitive areas and wildlife. Protective measures regarding BMPs shall include, at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No discharge of pollutants from vehicle and equipment cleaning is allowed into any storm drains or water courses. • Vehicle and equipment fueling and maintenance operations must be at least 	The Tuolumne County Department of Public Works shall be responsible for verifying implementation of BIO-6 prior to issuance of grading permits. Before a grading permit is issued, Public Works shall confirm that a SWPP has been prepared and submitted with applicable BMPs. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures	Project Applicant	Public Works

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<p>100 ft away from the canal (water courses). Concrete wastes are collected in washouts and water from curing operations is collected and disposed of and not allowed into water courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spill containment kits shall be maintained onsite at all times during construction operations and/or staging or fueling of equipment. • Dust control shall be implemented, including use of water trucks and tackifiers to control dust in excavation and fill areas, covering temporary access road entrances and exits with rock (rocking), and covering temporary stockpiles when weather conditions require. • Coir rolls or straw wattles shall be installed along or at the base of slopes during construction to capture sediment. • Protection of graded areas from erosion using a combination of silt fences, fiber rolls along toes of slopes or along edges of designated staging areas, and erosion control netting (such as jute or coir) as appropriate on sloped areas. • Permanent erosion control measures such as bio-filtration strips and swales to receive storm water discharges from the highway, or other impervious surfaces should be incorporated to the maximum extent practicable. 	<p>and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>		

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
BIO-7	<p>BIO-7 The following site restrictions shall be implemented to avoid adversely affecting sensitive habitats and harm or harassment to listed species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A speed limit of 15 miles per hour (mph) in the action area in unpaved areas shall be enforced to reduce dust and excessive soil disturbance. • Temporary construction access, staging, storage, and parking areas shall be located within the study area outside of any designated environmentally sensitive habitat or at environmentally cleared areas outside of the study area. Access routes and the number and size of staging and work areas shall be limited to the minimum necessary to construct the proposed project. Routes and boundaries of roadwork shall be clearly marked prior to initiating construction or grading. • All food and food-related trash items shall be enclosed in sealed trash containers and removed completely from the site at the end of each day. • No pets from project personnel shall be allowed anywhere in the action area during construction. • All equipment shall be maintained such that there will be no leaks of automotive fluids such as gasoline, oils or solvents and a Spill Response Plan shall be prepared. 	<p>The Tuolumne County Department of Public Works and Community Development Department shall be responsible for verifying compliance with BIO-5 and BIO-7 during construction activities on the site during any inspections. Any grading plans or building plans shall demonstrate compliance with the measures. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>	Contractor	CDD & Public Works

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazardous materials such as fuels, oils, solvents, etc. shall be stored in sealable containers in a designated location that is at least 100 ft from wetlands and aquatic habitats. • Servicing of vehicles and construction equipment including fueling, cleaning, and maintenance shall occur at designated areas away from sensitive habitats. Staging areas may occur closer to the project activities as required. 			
BIO-8	<p>Prior to the issuance of a grading permit, the applicant shall demonstrate to the County that the project has been designed to fully avoid disturbance of the riparian woodland, in-channel wetland, and associated sensitive habitat along Drainage A. The improvement plans submitted for grading permit review shall clearly show the project footprint, limits of disturbance, and the boundary of avoidance relative to the sensitive habitat areas.</p> <p>If the County determines that complete avoidance of the riparian or wetland habitat cannot be achieved based on the final grading plans, the applicant shall obtain a formal wetland delineation prepared according to current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers methodology. If the delineation identifies jurisdictional waters or wetlands that would be affected, the applicant shall obtain all applicable</p>	<p>The Tuolumne County Department of Public Works shall be responsible for verifying implementation of BIO-8 and BIO-9 prior to issuance of grading permits and throughout construction. Before a grading permit is issued, Public Works shall confirm that the applicant has clearly demonstrated avoidance of the riparian woodland, in-channel wetland, and Drainage A on the final grading plans, or—if avoidance is not possible—that a formal wetland delineation has been completed and all required federal and/or state permits have been obtained. Prior to any ground-disturbing activity, Public Works shall verify that high-visibility orange construction fencing has</p>	Project Applicant	Public Works

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<p>state and federal permits, which may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Water Act Section 404 authorization • Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification • California Fish and Game Code Section 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement <p>All avoidance measures, delineation results if applicable, and permit documentation, if applicable, shall be submitted to the County prior to issuance of a grading permit.</p>	<p>been installed along the edge of the sensitive habitat, outside the dripline and canopy of the riparian and wetland vegetation. Public Works shall periodically inspect the site during construction to ensure the fencing remains in place, no encroachment or disturbance occurs within the protected habitat, and all permit conditions are adhered to where applicable. The County will not issue grading permits for work affecting these features unless the applicant demonstrates full compliance with applicable USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW permitting requirements. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>		
BIO-9	<p>BIO-9: Before any ground-disturbing activity begins, the applicant shall install high-visibility orange webbed construction fencing along the outer edge of the riparian canopy and wetland boundary (i.e., outside the dripline and wetland extent) to establish a no-disturbance buffer. The fencing shall be staked securely, maintained in good condition, and remain in place for the duration of construction. No construction equipment,</p>	<p>The Tuolumne County Department of Public Works shall be responsible for verifying implementation of BIO-8 and BIO-9 prior to issuance of grading permits and throughout construction. Before a grading permit is issued, Public Works shall confirm that the applicant has clearly demonstrated avoidance of the</p>	Contractor	Public Works

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	materials, or personnel shall enter the fenced exclusion area.	riparian woodland, in-channel wetland, and Drainage A on the final grading plans, or—if avoidance is not possible—that a formal wetland delineation has been completed and all required federal and/or state permits have been obtained. Prior to any ground-disturbing activity, Public Works shall verify that high-visibility orange construction fencing has been installed along the edge of the sensitive habitat, outside the dripline and canopy of the riparian and wetland vegetation. Public Works shall periodically inspect the site during construction to ensure the fencing remains in place, no encroachment or disturbance occurs within the protected habitat, and all permit conditions are adhered to where applicable. The County will not issue grading permits for work affecting these features unless the applicant demonstrates full compliance with applicable USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW permitting requirements. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures		

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
		and the responsibility to comply with said measures.		
CUL-1	<p>If any prehistoric artifacts, fossils, geologic materials of scientific importance, or other indications of archaeological resources are found during grading and construction activities, all work within 100 feet of the find shall cease and the applicant shall retain a qualified archaeologist to evaluate the find(s). If the resource is determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources and project impacts cannot be avoided, data recovery shall be undertaken. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(b)(3)(C), a data recovery plan, which makes provisions for adequately recovering the scientifically consequential information from and about the resource, shall be prepared and adopted prior to any excavation being undertaken. Such studies shall be deposited with the California Historical Resources Regional Information Center. Archeological sites known to contain human remains shall be treated in accordance with the provisions of Section 7050.5 Health and Safety Code. If an artifact must be removed during project excavation or testing, curation may be an appropriate mitigation. The language of this mitigation measure shall be included on any future grading plans and/or utility plans approved by the County for future development on the project site.</p>	<p>Mitigation Measure CUL-1 and CUL-2 will be required during grading and construction activities on site and will be verified by the Department of Public Works and Community Development Department. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and their responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>	Contractor	CDD & Public Works

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
CUL-2	<p>CUL-2: If human remains are discovered during grading and construction activities occurring on the project site, further disturbance shall not occur within 100 feet of the vicinity of the find(s) until the Tuolumne County Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin. (California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5) Further, pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 5097.98(b), remains shall be left in place and free from disturbance until a final decision as to the treatment and disposition has been made. If the Tuolumne County Coroner determines the remains to be Native American, the NAHC must be contacted within 24 hours. The NAHC must then identify the “most likely descendant(s)”. The landowner shall engage in consultations with the MLD. The MLD shall make recommendations concerning the treatment of the remains within 48 hours, as provided in Public Resources Code 5097.98. This language of this mitigation measure shall be included on any future grading plans approved by the County for future development on the project site.</p>	<p>Mitigation Measure CUL-1 and CUL-2 will be required during grading and construction activities on site and will be verified by the Department of Public Works and Community Development Department. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and their responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>	Contractor	CDD & Public Works
NOI-1	<p>Hours of exterior construction on the project site shall be limited to 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Exterior construction shall be prohibited on Sunday and County holidays.</p>	<p>Mitigation Measure NOI-1 will be required during construction activities on site. This will be monitored through citizen complaints. Confirmed violations will</p>	Contractor	CDD

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
		<p>be referred to the Code Compliance Officer for processing consistent with established code compliance procedures outlined in Chapter 1.10 of the Ordinance Code. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>		
NOI-2	<p>Noise generated by operation of the project shall comply with the Tuolumne County exterior noise standards applicable to the receiving property. At the property line of any parcel zoned MU, R-3, R-2, R-1, RE-1, RE-2, RE-3, RE-5, RE-10, C-O, C-1, C-S, or BP, project-generated noise shall not exceed 50 dB Leq (1-hour) during daytime hours (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) or 45 dB Leq (1-hour) during nighttime hours (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.). "Leq (1-hour)" refers to the average noise level measured over a one-hour period. Compliance with these limits shall be demonstrated through project design, equipment selection, and operational practices to ensure that noise levels at</p>	<p>Mitigation Measure NOI-2 will be ongoing and will be monitored through citizen complaints. Confirmed violations will be referred to the Code Compliance Officer for processing consistent with established code compliance procedures outlined in Chapter 1.10 of the Ordinance Code. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>	Property Owner	CDD

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	nearby sensitive receptors remain within applicable standards.			
TRAN-1	<p>TRAN-1: The applicant shall implement the following roadway and access improvements prior to occupancy, and all improvements shall be constructed to the satisfaction of Tuolumne County and Caltrans and shall be consistent with the avoidance requirements of Mitigation Measure BIO-8.</p> <p>Prior to issuance of a grading permit for any roadway, intersection, slope modification, acceleration lane, or related transportation improvement, the applicant shall submit improvement plans demonstrating that all work fully avoids disturbance to the riparian woodland, in-channel wetland, and associated sensitive habitat along Drainage A, consistent with BIO-8. The plans shall clearly identify the limits of disturbance, grading extents, slope cut areas, staging areas, and construction access relative to the mapped boundaries of sensitive habitat.</p> <p>If the County determines that complete avoidance of the riparian or wetland habitat cannot be achieved based on the final improvement plans, the applicant shall comply with all requirements of BIO-8, including preparation of a formal wetland delineation and acquisition of all applicable federal</p>	<p>Prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, the applicant shall obtain all required Caltrans Encroachment Permits for work along State Route 120 and all Tuolumne County Encroachment Permits for improvements along Deer Flat Road and at the project driveway. All transportation improvements required under Mitigation Measure TRAN-1 shall be fully constructed and inspected before occupancy and shall be verified by the Department of Public Works and Community Development Department. The improvements as discussed above shall be demonstrated on any site grading plans. A Notice of Action will be recorded to advise future owners of the required mitigation measures and the responsibility to comply with said measures.</p>	Contractor	Public Works and CDD

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<p>and state permits prior to issuance of a grading permit.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Widen Deer Flat Road along the project frontage to accommodate required truck-turn movements and safe ingress/egress. 9. Widen the project driveway to meet design requirements for 30-foot single-unit truck maneuvers in both directions. 10. Provide a minimum driveway throat depth of 50 feet to ensure adequate on-site queue storage for outbound vehicles. 11. Construct a westbound acceleration lane on State Highway 120, consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 280-foot acceleration lane, and o 245-foot taper, to address southbound right-turn truck movements and achieve minimum corner sight distance for right-turning vehicles from Deer Flat Road. 12. Cut back slopes on the north side of State Highway 120 east of Deer Flat Road to achieve minimum required CSD for left-turn movements from Deer Flat Road. 13. Cut back slopes on the south side of State Highway 120 west of Deer Flat Road to achieve minimum required CSD for eastbound left-turn movements onto Deer Flat Road. 			

Mitigation Measure	Full Mitigation Language	When Implemented	Responsible Party	Monitoring Agency
	<p>14. Widen the northwest corner of the State Highway 120/Deer Flat Road intersection to accommodate southbound right-turn truck traffic and eliminate turning conflicts.</p> <p>All temporary construction access, staging, grading, slope modification, and erosion control activities associated with these improvements shall also avoid disturbance to the sensitive habitat areas identified in BIO-8.</p>			

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Appendix A – Biological Resources Report