

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative  
Declaration for the Pine Mountain  
Club Vegetation Project,  
Pine Mountain Club, Kern County,  
California

FEBRUARY 2026

PREPARED FOR

**Kern County Fire Department**

PREPARED BY

**SWCA Environmental Consultants**

**INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION  
FOR THE  
PINE MOUNTAIN CLUB VEGETATION PROJECT,  
PINE MOUNTAIN CLUB, KERN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Project Overview .....	1
1.2	Project Background .....	1
1.3	Project Location .....	1
1.4	Environmental Setting .....	1
1.5	Project Description .....	4
1.5.1	Treatment Types .....	5
1.5.2	Treatment Activities .....	6
1.5.3	Maintenance Activities .....	9
1.6	Required Discretionary Approvals .....	9
<b>2</b>	<b>Environmental Checklist and Environmental Evaluation.....</b>	<b>10</b>
I.	Aesthetics .....	12
II.	Agriculture and Forestry Resources .....	14
III.	Air Quality.....	18
IV.	Biological Resources.....	23
V.	Cultural Resources .....	43
VI.	Energy .....	46
VII.	Geology and Soils .....	48
VIII.	Greenhouse Gas Emissions .....	52
IX.	Hazards and Hazardous Materials.....	55
X.	Hydrology and Water Quality .....	59
XI.	Land Use and Planning.....	63
XII.	Mineral Resources.....	65
XIII.	Noise.....	66
XIV.	Population and Housing .....	69
XV.	Public Services .....	70
XVI.	Recreation.....	72
XVII.	Transportation .....	73
XVIII.	Tribal Cultural Resources.....	75
XIX.	Utilities and Service Systems .....	78
XX.	Wildfire .....	80
XXI.	Mandatory Findings of Significance .....	83
<b>3</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>85</b>

## Appendices

Appendix A. Biological Resources Technical Report

## **Figures**

Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map. ....	2
Figure 2. Project Location Map. ....	3
Figure 3. Proposed Treatment Map.....	7

## **Tables**

Table 1. Proposed Treatments.....	4
Table 2. SJVAPCD Thresholds .....	19

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Project Overview

The Kern County Fire Department (KCFD) Air & Wildland, Division 4, proposes to implement the Pine Mountain Club Vegetation Project (project), which consists of fuels reduction treatments to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, enhance forest health, and create a shaded fuel break to the west of the unincorporated community of Pine Mountain Club, Kern County, California.

## 1.2 Project Background

The KCFD, with the cooperation of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and key stakeholders, prepared the *Kern County Community Wildfire Protection Plan* (CWPP; Kern County 2022) to meet the goals set by the stakeholders, *California Strategic Fire Plan*, and National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy to reduce firefighting costs and property losses, increase firefighter safety, and contribute to ecosystem health. The vegetation treatment activities, including prescribed broadcast burning, pile burning, mechanical treatments, and manual treatments, have been identified to support goals and objectives identified in the Kern County CWPP for the purpose of reducing the intensity, severity, and impact of wildfire, especially during periods of severe fire weather.

## 1.3 Project Location

The project site encompasses a 212.42-acre area located west of the unincorporated community of Pine Mountain Club in Kern County, California (Figures 1 and 2). The project site is accessed via Cerro Noroeste Road.

## 1.4 Environmental Setting

The project site is approximately 2 miles west of Pine Mountain Club. The project site is centered around a north–south-oriented drainage and flanked by steep slopes, some exceeding 30 degrees (approximately 17% slope gradient), with ridgelines topped by rocky outcroppings. The project site is primarily undeveloped, and existing development within the project site is limited to the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School, Happy Gulch Campground, and Westside Mountain Park property, containing several unused structures, outbuildings, and camp sites.

The project site features three dominant vegetation communities—oak woodlands, mixed chaparral, and mixed conifer pine forests. Oak woodland communities are primarily composed of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*). Chaparral communities include species such as chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*). Mixed conifer pine forests are primarily composed of pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*), Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*), and white fir (*Abies concolor*).

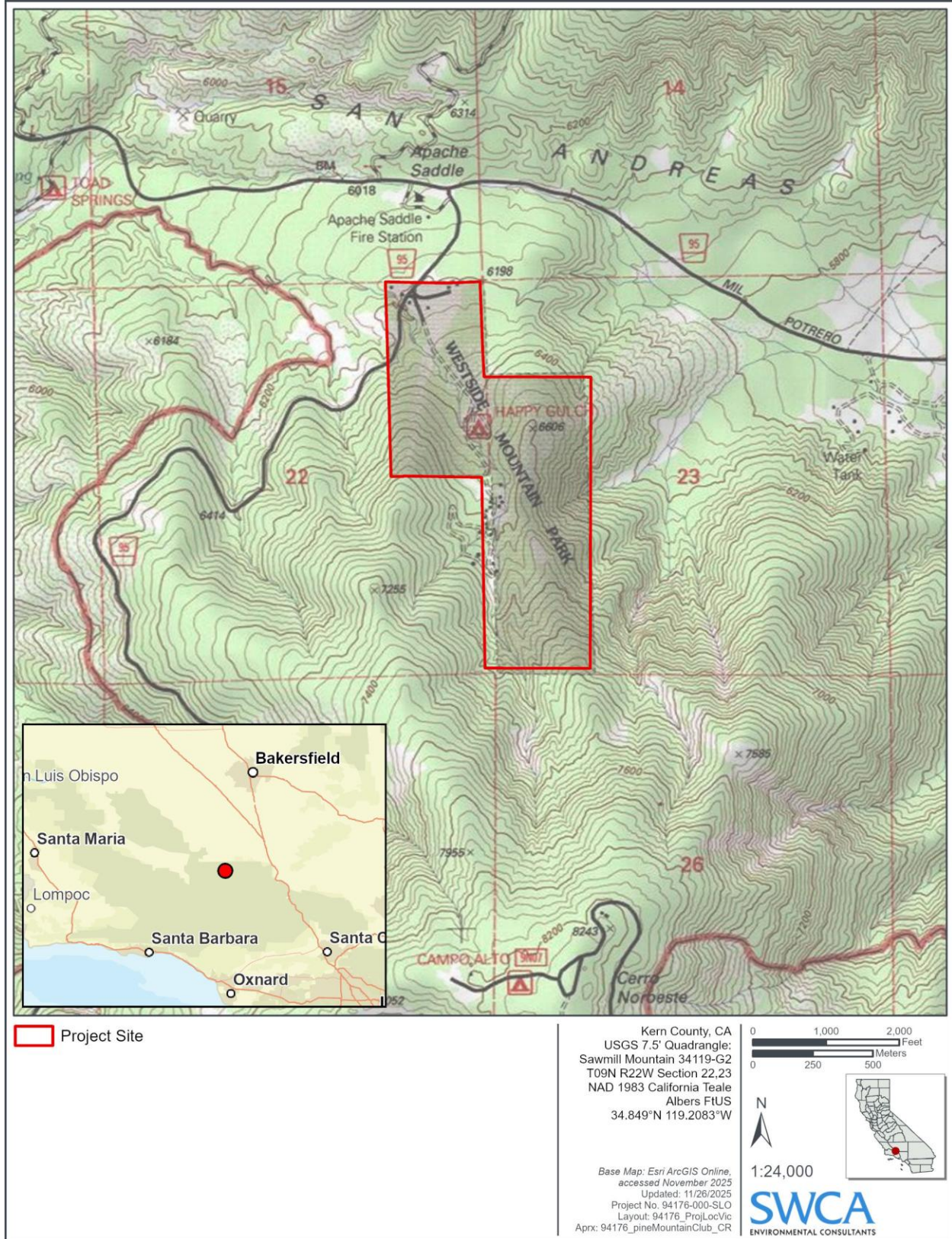


Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map.

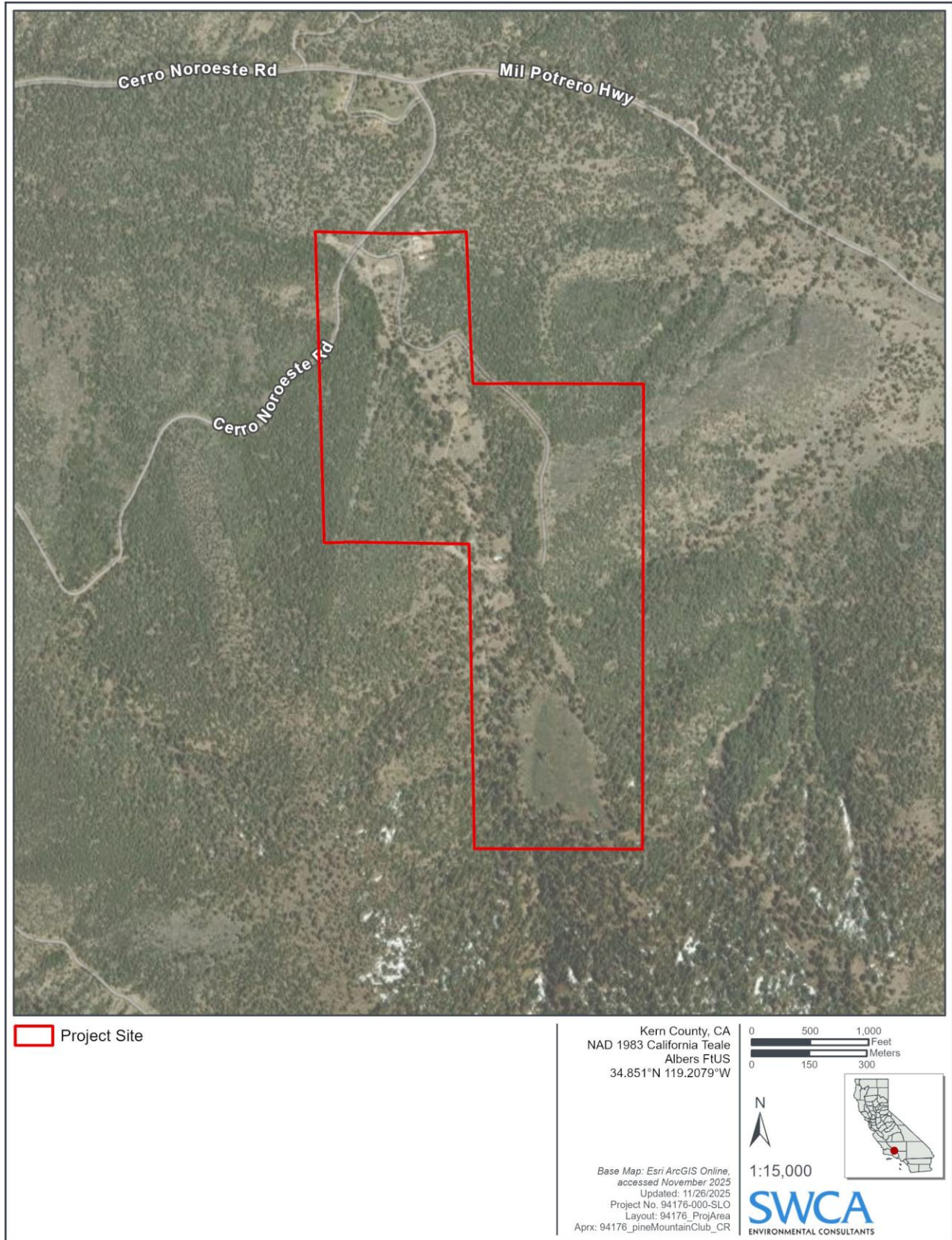


Figure 2. Project Location Map.

## 1.5 Project Description

KCFD proposes implementing vegetation treatment activities on an up to 212.42-acre area in Kern County. Proposed vegetation treatment activities include manual and mechanical treatments and prescribed burning (i.e., broadcast burns and pile burns) to reintroduce fire to the project site, provide biological benefit, reduce heavy fuel loading, mitigate the threat of a large fire, and provide training opportunities to KCFD staff.

Primary vegetation treatment activities would include both manual and mechanical treatments to reduce and/or remove fuel loads in strategic areas of the project site to provide continuity and create new and maintain existing control lines to contain prescribed burning activities. Manual treatments would include brush removal and trimming, tree felling, and/or pruning trees that are encroaching on control lines, roads, structures, historically and culturally sensitive areas, and on slopes over 30 degrees within the project site. Manual treatments would also include handline construction on slopes that are too steep and/or erosive for mechanized equipment and around sensitive sites. Mechanical treatments would include mastication using a skid steer masticator or slightly larger tracked masticator, tracked chipper, bulldozer, cable yarder, and tracked/wheeled feller buncher. The dozer would be used in fuel breaks to remove vegetation, in mastication units to evenly spread masticated and chipped material, and to create containment lines for broadcast burns. The chipper would be used to process thinned fuels and would produce chip depths not exceeding 4 inches. The tracked/wheeled feller buncher would be used to cut and thin timber stands on slopes less than 30 degrees, deck large-diameter logs for processing, and create jackpot piles. The cable yarder would be used to yard trees up steep slopes to be chipped or burned on less steep slopes and/or in advantageous locations.

Slash in all units would be treated using prescribed burning (e.g., broadcast burns, pile burns, jackpot pile burns), chipping, or cable yarding. Prescribed burns would be ignited using aerial, ground, or hand ignition. Broadcast burns would occur throughout the entire project site. All broadcast burn units would be contained with handlines, dozer lines, and/or non-burnable fuel breaks.

Table 1 outlines the proposed fuel reduction treatments.

**Table 1. Proposed Treatments**

Treatment Description	Treatment Activity	Maximum Number of Acres Treated	Available Equipment Used for Treatments	Timing of Treatments
Hazardous fuels thinning through brush and tree removal and trimming and/or pruning trees within treatment units	Manual treatment	212.42	Chainsaws and hand tools	Year-round
Hazardous fuels thinning through brush and tree removal and trimming and/or pruning trees within treatment units	Mechanical treatment	70.54	Feller bunchers Bulldozer: Cat D6, D6D, or D6R On slopes below 30 degrees Cable yarder	Year-round
Chipping thinned material	Mechanical treatment	64.64	Tracked chipper: Bandit 250XP Wheeled chipper: multiple models Cable yarder (used to yard material up steep slopes to be chipped on flatter locations)	To be completed following thinning operations

Treatment Description	Treatment Activity	Maximum Number of Acres Treated	Available Equipment Used for Treatments	Timing of Treatments
Mastication	Mechanical treatment	47.95	Skid steer masticator: Bobcat T770 Excavator masticator: Cat 325 with Fecon mulcher masticator Excavator masticator: Cat 324D FM with FAE mulcher masticator	Year-round, avoiding periods of rainfall
Hazard tree removal	Manual treatment/ mechanical treatment	N/A	Felled with a chainsaw or feller buncher	Avoiding periods of recreation or red-flag days
Prescribed burn containment line construction	Manual treatment/ mechanical treatment	According to unit burn plan; up to 212.42 acres	Hand tools Bulldozer: Cat D6, D6D, or D6R	Per the unit burn plan
Prescribed burning using aerial, ground, and hand ignition to reduce surface ladder fuels  Pile burning: Place removed fuels in piles on-site and burn fuel	Prescribed burning (pile burns)	212.42	Drip torches, aerial plastic sphere dispenser (PSD) ignition, helitorch, vary pistol, fusee	Per the unit burn plan
Prescribed hand ignition to reduce surface ladder fuels  Broadcast burning through burning understory within timber or oak woodlands, or broadcast treatment using fire with a control line along the perimeter	Prescribed burning (broadcast burning)	78.11	Wheeled skidder (skidgen) with an over 500-gallon water tank and minimum 100-foot hose with forester's nozzle  Two utility task vehicles (UTVs) with 100-gallon water tanks and a 50-foot hose	Per the unit burn plan

Source: CAL FIRE (2024); SWCA (2025a)

## 1.5.1 Treatment Types

### HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION

The proposed project aims to reduce hazardous fuel loads and fuel continuity within the project site to lower wildfire intensity and rates of spread. Treatment efforts would prioritize dead and downed fuels, followed by ladder fuels, chaparral, and smaller-diameter trees that contribute to overall fuel loading and continuity. Large trees that are clearly dead or dying due to insect or disease impacts may also be removed. However, in most cases, standing dead legacy trees would be retained, as they provide important habitat for wildlife species. Exceptions would be made for hazard trees that pose a safety risk to recreationists or threaten infrastructure, such as buildings and power lines. By reducing fire severity through hazardous fuels reduction, vegetation treatment activities would indirectly maintain and/or improve ecological health and resiliency to wildfire.

### TREATMENT UNIT MAINTENANCE

The proposed project aims to maintain shaded fuel breaks, natural fire return intervals, and safe fuel loading levels to increase forest health and resiliency to wildfire and decrease risk to nearby assets. Due to the overstocking of several stands paired with dead and dying trees and the presence of insects and disease, prescription parameters and prioritization of residual trees will be dependent on subsequent stand exams following initial treatment. Maintenance activities will coincide with the proposed treatments to achieve the desired conditions. Wherever possible, prescribed fire will be used to maintain shaded fuel breaks and natural fire regimes.

## **1.5.2 Treatment Activities**

As described above, proposed vegetation treatment activities include mechanical thinning and mastication, manual thinning, and prescribed burning on up to a combined 212.42-acre area within the project site (Figure 3). Vegetation treatment activities would be conducted by two to 30 crew members who would be transported using two to six vehicles with up to five supporting fire apparatus, including Type 3 or Type 6 engines. Each activity is described in detail below.

### **MECHANICAL THINNING AND MASTICATION TREATMENT**

Mechanical treatments include the use of motorized equipment to cut, crush, compact, chop, and/or chip existing vegetation. The proposed treatments include the use of mechanical treatments to reduce fuel loads within the wildland–urban interface (WUI) on up to 118.49 acres within the project site, including up to 70.54 acres of mechanical hazardous fuels thinning and 47.95 acres of mastication. Mechanical treatments would occur year-round.

### **MANUAL THINNING TREATMENT**

Manual treatments include the use of hand tools and hand-operated power tools to cut, clear, or prune herbaceous or woody species. Manual treatments would include limbing up and thinning trees and removal of brush along holding lines to reduce fuel loads within the WUI and to conduct ecological restoration activities on up to 212.42 acres within the project site.

### **BORATE COMPOUND**

Borate compound treatment would be conducted on live conifer trees equal to or greater than 3 inches in stump diameter (measured inside bark), as needed. Treatment would be with a borax fungicide registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) in the state of California for the prevention of Annosus root disease. Treatment would consist of the removal of sawdust and other loose debris from the cut surface of the stump and the application of a thin layer of the borate compound uniformly over the entire cut surface, including exposed wood surfaces on the stump sides, at the rate specified on the product label. Borate compound would not be applied during heavy rainfall or when such precipitation rate is predicted within 24 hours of application to cause borate compound to be flushed off the stump and become ineffective; in that case, treatment would be reapplied. Borate compound would not be applied to stumps located within 10 feet of live stream courses and meadows/wetlands and/or 5 feet of sensitive plant location boundaries. Borate compound would be applied on up to 212.42 acres within the project site.

### **HAZARD TREE REMOVAL**

Hazard trees are defined as any dead or alive tree that would likely damage structures or infrastructure or harm visitors within the project site. Hazard trees were marked in the field with pink flagging during a forestry-focused assessment and inventory field survey on April 17, 2025. Hazard trees may be removed using mechanical or manual means.

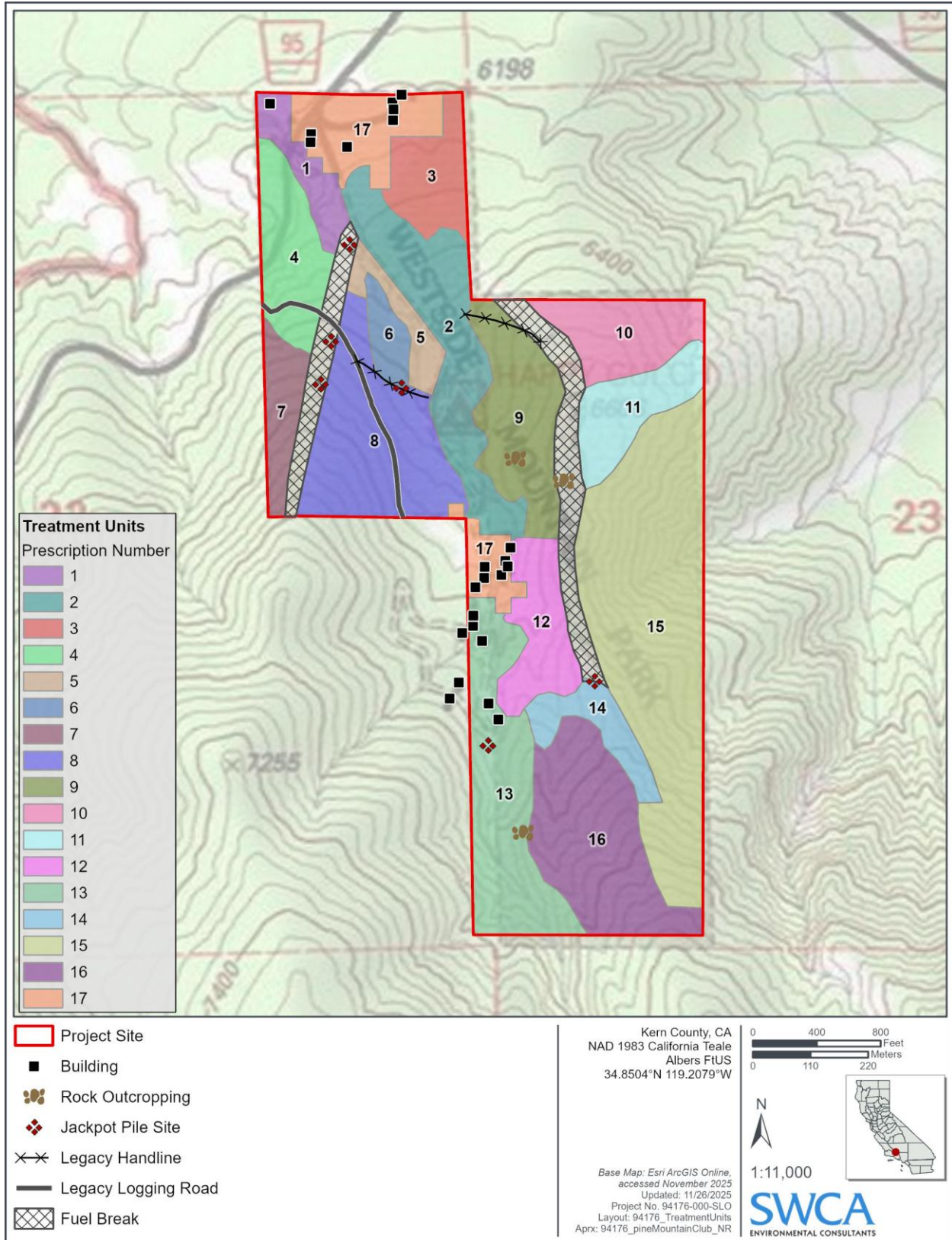


Figure 3. Proposed Treatment Map.

## DEFENSIBLE SPACE TREATMENTS

Defensible space treatments would be conducted on up to 12.12 acres within the project site. Defensible space treatments will follow CAL FIRE's defensible space guidelines (CAL FIRE 2025b) and align with the Kern County CWPP (Kern County 2022). In areas where the home ignition zone extends into nearby treatment units, defensible space guidelines would supersede treatment unit prescriptions:

- **Zone 0 (0–5 feet):**
  - Hardscaping will be used where needed such as gravel, pavers, or concrete.
  - Dead and dying plants will be removed from roofs, gutters, decks, porches, stairways, and under structures.
  - Vegetation within 10 feet of any chimney or stovepipe outlet will be removed.
- **Zone 1 (5–30 feet):**
  - Dead plants, grass, and weeds will be removed.
  - Dead or dry leaves and pine needles will be removed.
  - Trees will be trimmed regularly to maintain 10-foot crown spacing.
- **Zone 2 (30–100 feet):**
  - Annual grass will be mowed down to a maximum height of 4 inches.
  - Leaves, needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches amounting to a depth over 3 inches will be removed.
  - **Vertical Spacing:**
    - Maintain a 6-foot minimum canopy base height.
    - Keep a separation distance of the canopy base and shrubs to at least three times the height of the shrubs.
  - **Horizontal Spacing:**
    - Between Shrubs:
      - Flat or mild slope (less than 20%): Two times the height of the shrub
      - Mild to moderate slope (20–40%): Four times the height of the shrub
      - Moderate to steep slope (greater than 40%): Six times the height of the shrub
    - Between Trees:
      - Flat or mild slope (less than 20%): 10 feet
      - Mild to moderate slope (20–40%): 20 feet
      - Moderate to steep slope (greater than 40%): 30 feet

## PRESCRIBED BURNING

Prescribed burning treatments would include broadcast burning on up to 97.20 acres and pile burning and/or jackpot pile burning on up to 143.43 acres to reduce fuel loads and to remove fuels in an ecologically beneficial way. Prescribed burning would be conducted in accordance with an approved burn plan using aerial, ground, and hand ignition.

### Burn Piles

All burn piles would be constructed by hand or mechanically at a minimum of 15 feet from the edge of trails, residual trees, fences, and roads. Piles would be no greater than 8 feet in diameter and 6 feet in

height, with a maximum of 35 piles per acre. Piles would not be created within riparian zones or meadows. Burning piles would occur depending on weather conditions and the approved burn plan.

### **Jackpot Pile Burning**

Jackpot pile burning is a targeted fuel reduction technique used to treat areas with heavy concentrations of natural dead and downed fuels or activity-generated debris. Unlike broadcast burning, which aims for a uniform fire effect across an entire area, jackpot pile burning focuses on igniting isolated “jackpots” of dense fuel to reduce fire intensity and hazard in those specific spots.

### **Broadcast Burns**

Broadcast burn intensities would range from low to moderately high and would create a mosaic of burn severities to decrease surface and ladder fuels in oak woodlands and a heterogeneous structure in chaparral plant communities through varying consumption levels. Broadcast burns would occur depending on weather conditions and the approved burn plan.

## **1.5.3 Maintenance Activities**

### **HAND THINNING AND MECHANICAL THINNING**

Maintenance thinning would be conducted after 5 years following treatment and then every 10 years within treatment units 1, 6, 7, and 11, which contain oak- and chaparral-dominant overstory and understory. Maintenance thinning may be conducted by hand or using mechanical methods.

### **PRESCRIBED FIRE**

Following successful hazardous fuels treatments, broadcast and/or pile burning may be used to maintain shaded fuel breaks to establish natural fuel loading and fire return intervals. In these cases, broadcast and pile burning acreages may total up to 212.42 acres. Prescribed fire activities would be conducted following initial treatment in accordance with the natural fire return interval for the desired residual overstory species.

### **HERBICIDE**

Treatment application of herbicides with a surfactant (non-ionic) would be used in all treatment units but not within 30 feet of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) streams or rivers. Herbicide would be applied on up to 212.42 acres within the project site, but only where necessary to limit the spread of noxious and invasive weeds.

## **1.6 Required Discretionary Approvals**

The following discretionary approvals are anticipated:

- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District – Burn Permit

## 2 ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

### 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 environmental resource area evaluations in this Initial Study.

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

### Environmental Determination

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

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

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

## I. Aesthetics

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:</i>				
(a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) 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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Setting

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the State of California (State) to take all action necessary to provide people of the state “with . . . enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities” (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21001(b)). A scenic vista is generally defined as a high-quality view displaying good aesthetic and compositional values that can be seen from public viewpoints. Some scenic vistas are officially or informally designated by public agencies or other organizations. A substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista would occur if the proposed project would significantly degrade the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads or other public areas. A proposed project’s potential effect on a scenic vista is largely dependent on the degree to which it would complement or contrast with the natural setting, the degree to which it would be noticeable in the existing environment, and whether it detracts from or complements the scenic vista.

Kern County is at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley with a diverse range of geography, including mountainous areas, agricultural lands, and desert areas. Kern County is bounded by Kings, Tulare, and Inyo Counties to the north; San Bernardino County to the east; Los Angeles and Ventura Counties to the south; and Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties to the west.

The California Scenic Highway Program was created by the State Legislature in 1963 with the intention of protecting and enhancing the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors. A highway may be designated scenic depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view. According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) State Scenic Highway System Map, the nearest officially designated State Scenic Highway is a portion of State Route (SR) 33 located 14.5 miles southwest, and the nearest eligible State Scenic Highway is a portion of SR 33 located approximately 16 miles west (Caltrans 2018).

The project site encompasses an approximately 212.42-acre area located west of the unincorporated community of Pine Mountain Club in Kern County, California. The project site is centered around a

north-south-oriented drainage and is flanked by steep slopes with ridgelines topped by rocky outcroppings. The project site encompasses the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School, Happy Gulch Campground, and Westside Mountain Park property, containing several unused structures, outbuildings, and camp sites. The project site features three dominant vegetation communities, including oak woodlands, mixed chaparral, and mixed conifer pine forests. Surrounding areas consist of recreational campgrounds and forested areas.

## **Environmental Evaluation**

### **a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** A scenic vista is generally defined as an expansive view of highly valued landscape observable from a publicly accessible vantage point. In the project vicinity, publicly accessible vantage points are limited to public roads and recreation areas. The *Kern County General Plan Recirculated Program Environmental Impact Report* (General Plan PEIR) identifies Kern National Wildlife Refuge, Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, Sequoia National Forest, and Los Padres National Forest as scenic areas in Kern County (Kern County 2004). The project site is in the eastern portion of the Los Padres National Forest, which is designated as a scenic area by the General Plan PEIR (Kern County 2004). Proposed vegetation treatments would not require any clear cutting or for all vegetation to be cleared; therefore, vividness, intactness, and unity of views would remain high, and the proposed project would not permanently affect views from public vantage points. Proposed vegetation treatments would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

### **b) Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?**

**No Impact.** According to the Caltrans State Scenic Highway System Map, the nearest officially designated State Scenic Highway is a portion of SR 33, located 14.5 miles southwest, and the nearest eligible State Scenic Highway is an additional portion of SR 33, located approximately 16 miles west (Caltrans 2018). The project site is not on or near a State Scenic Highway as defined or listed by Caltrans. Additionally, the project site would not be visible from SR 33; therefore, the proposed project would not damage scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway, and *no impact* would occur.

### **c) In non-urbanized areas, would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site consists of a 212.42-acre area located within a non-urbanized area of Kern County. The project site primarily consists of a forested area with overgrown vegetation. Public areas within the project site include internal roadways, a charter school, a public park, and a campground with associated hiking trails. Implementation of vegetation management activities would have the potential to result in changes to the existing visual character of the project area due to the short-term presence of vehicles and equipment and long-term reduction of hazardous fuels within the project site. Vegetation management activities would include vegetation removal through manual and mechanical methods, as well as prescribed burning methods that would be visible from public areas within the project site. Proposed vegetation treatments would result in the short-term presence of large

trucks, mechanical equipment, flagging, and signage that could contrast with the natural environment. Further, prescribed burning activities would have the potential to result in temporary smoke emissions that could result in short-term visual impacts. The proposed project would be required to comply with San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) Rule 4106, which identifies regulations to minimize smoke impacts from prescribed burning on the public. Compliance with SJVAPCD Rule 4106 would reduce the potential for excessive smoke to alter the visual character of the project site from public areas. Further, following the implementation of vegetation management activities, vehicles, equipment, flagging, and signage would be removed from the project site and would not result in a permanent change in the visual character of the project area. Proposed vegetation treatments would not require all vegetation to be cleared; therefore, vividness, intactness, and unity of views would remain high, and the proposed project would not permanently affect views from public vantage points. Proposed vegetation treatment activities would not result in adverse short- or long-term impacts related to aesthetic resources that could substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the project site and its surroundings. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**d) Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?**

**No Impact.** All project activities would occur during daylight hours and would not require or produce any additional light sources. The proposed project would not result in the establishment of any new buildings, structures, or activities that would require the permanent installation of new lighting sources. Therefore, the proposed project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare, and *no impact* would occur.

**Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

**II. Agriculture and Forestry Resources**

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:</i>				
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Setting

The California Department of Conservation (CDOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California’s agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and current land use. For environmental review purposes under CEQA, the FMMP categories of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land are considered “agricultural land.” Other nonagricultural designations include, but are not limited to, Urban and Built-up Land, Other Land, and Water. According to the FMMP, the project site is on land that is designated as Nonagricultural or Natural Vegetation (CDOC 2022).

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey (NRCS 2025), the project site is underlain by the following soil types:

- (10) Kilburn-Wrentham-Supan families association, 10% to 30% slopes. This well-drained soil has a medium runoff class and a depth to restrictive feature of more than 80 inches. The typical soil profile consists of very cobbly sandy loam, extremely gravelly sandy loam, extremely cobbly loam, and unweathered bedrock. This soil is not considered Prime Farmland by the NRCS.
- (11) Kilburn-Wrentham-Supan families association, 30% to 60% slopes. This well-drained soil has a medium runoff class and a depth to restrictive feature of more than 80 inches. The typical soil profile consists of very cobbly sandy loam, extremely gravelly sandy loam, extremely cobbly sandy loam, and unweathered bedrock. This soil is not considered Prime Farmland by the NRCS.
- (35) Morical-Supan-Greenbluff families association, 10% to 60% slopes. This well-drained soil has a high runoff class and a depth to restrictive feature of more than 80 inches. The typical soil profile consists of loam, sandy clay loam, and gravelly sandy loam. This soil is not considered Prime Farmland by the NRCS.
- (41) Rincon-Livermore-Modesto families association, 30% to 60% slopes. This well-drained soil has a very high runoff class and a depth to restrictive feature of more than 80 inches. The typical soil profile consists of gravelly loam, gravelly clay loam, very gravelly clay loam, and unweathered bedrock. This soil is not considered Prime Farmland by the NRCS.
- (46) Trigo-Modesto families-Badland association, 45% to 90% slopes. This well-drained soil has a medium runoff class and a depth to restrictive feature of more than 80 inches. The typical soil profile consists of sandy loam, gravelly sandy loam, and unweathered bedrock. This soil is not considered Prime Farmland by the NRCS.

The Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agriculture or related open space uses. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments

that are much lower than normal because they are based on farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. The project site is not subject to a Williamson Act contract.

According to PRC Section 12220(g), forest land is defined as land that can support 10% native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits. Timberland is defined as land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. The project site is considered forest land. The project site is within the Kern County Parks and Recreation Areas land use designation and Recreation-Forestry (RF) zone district, which allows for timber production (Kern County 2025a).

## ***Environmental Evaluation***

**a) Would the project 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?**

**No Impact.** The project site is underlain by land designated as Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation land by the FMMP (CDOC 2022). The project site is not classified as Prime, Unique, or Important Farmland as designated by the FMMP; therefore, the proposed project would not result in the conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use, and *no impact* would occur.

**b) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?**

**No Impact.** Kern County is listed as a participant in the Williamson Act program; however, the project site is not subject to a Williamson Act contract (CDOC 2025b). The project site is in the Kern County Parks and Recreation Areas land use designation and RF zone district and not in the Kern County Agriculture land use designation or zone district (Kern County 2025a). Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract, and *no impact* would occur.

**c) Would the project 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))?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site consists of a 212.42-acre forested area within the Kern County Parks and Recreation Areas land use designation and RF zone district (Kern County 2025a). The Kern County RF zone district allows for timber production. Although the project site is within a designated forested area, the proposed project would be limited to vegetation treatment activities to reduce hazardous fuel loads and reduce risks associated with catastrophic wildfire. Proposed vegetation treatments would not require all vegetation to be cleared; therefore, healthy trees would remain in place to contribute to the overall forest structure, which would maintain the ability to use the project site for recreational forest uses and timber production. Further, the proposed project would ultimately enhance the existing forest habitat and reduce the risk of large-scale destruction from wildfire, which could impede allowable forest and timber uses. The proposed project would not result in new development, businesses,

or other incompatible urban uses that could conflict with the existing zoning for RF uses. The proposed project would not conflict with existing zoning or cause rezoning of forest land, timberland, or Timberland Production. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**d) Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** According to PRC Section 12220(g), forest land is defined as land that can support 10% native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits. The project site is composed of natural tree and vegetation cover that meets the definition of forest land under PRC Section 12220(g). The proposed project includes the implementation of vegetation treatment activities, which would result in the thinning of trees and the removal of hazardous trees. Proposed vegetation treatments would not require all vegetation to be cleared; therefore, healthy living trees would remain, promoting a healthy forest structure and more than 10% of the native tree cover would remain. Further, the proposed project would reduce the catastrophic threat of wildfire, which would protect the project site from the loss of forest land as a result of large, uncontrollable burns. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in the conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**e) Would the project 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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site consists of a 212.42-acre forested area and is surrounded by forest land in all directions. The nearest agricultural land consists of agricultural orchards and row crops located approximately 12 miles north of the project site. Due to distance, proposed vegetation treatment activities would not have the potential to adversely affect surrounding agricultural crops through substantial smoke or dust emissions. Further, the proposed project would not require connection to the groundwater in a manner that could reduce the availability of water for agricultural uses.

Proposed vegetation treatment activities would be limited to the project site and would not extend into surrounding federal forest lands. Further, the proposed project would be required to comply with SJVAPCD Rule 4106, which identifies regulations to reduce the risk of substantial smoke impacts associated with prescribed burning. In addition, proposed vegetation treatment activities would be required to comply with State and local requirements (e.g., preparation of a Smoke Management Plan) to reduce the risk associated with prescribed burning. Required compliance with State and local regulations would reduce the potential for prescribed burning activities to adversely affect surrounding forest lands. The proposed project would ultimately enhance the existing forest habitat and reduce the risk of large-scale destruction from wildfire, which could result in destruction of forestlands in the vicinity of the project site. Proposed vegetation treatments would not result in other changes to the environment that could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

## **Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

### III. Air Quality

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:</i>				
(a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Setting

The Federal Clean Air Act, as amended, is the primary federal law that governs air quality while the California Clean Air Act is its companion State law. These laws, and related regulations by the USEPA and California Air Resources Board (CARB), set standards for the concentration of pollutants in the air. At the federal level, these standards are called National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). NAAQS and California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) have been established for six criteria pollutants that have been linked to potential health concerns: carbon monoxide (CO); nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>); ozone (O<sub>3</sub>); particulate matter, which is broken down for regulatory purposes into particles of 10 microns in diameter or smaller (PM<sub>10</sub>) and particles of 2.5 microns in diameter or smaller (PM<sub>2.5</sub>); lead (Pb); and sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). In addition, CAAQS exist for visibility-reducing particles, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S), and vinyl chloride. The NAAQS and CAAQS are set at levels that protect public health with a margin of safety and are subject to periodic review and revision.

Kern County is within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB) and under the jurisdiction of the SJVAPCD. Under the NAAQS, the SJVAB is designated as Nonattainment-Extreme for the 8-hour O<sub>3</sub> standard, Maintenance-Serious for the PM<sub>10</sub> standard, and Nonattainment-Moderate for the PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard. Under the CAAQS, the SJVAB is designated Nonattainment for the 1-hour O<sub>3</sub>, 8-hour O<sub>3</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub> standards. To bring the SJVAB into attainment, the SJVAPCD adopted the *2022 Plan for the 2015 8-Hour Ozone Standard (2022 Ozone Plan)* in December 2022 to satisfy Clean Air Act requirements and ensure attainment of the 75 parts per billion (ppb) 8-hour O<sub>3</sub> standard (SJVAPCD 2022). To assure the SJVAB’s continued attainment of the USEPA respirable particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) standard, the SJVAPCD adopted the *2023 Maintenance Plan and Redesignation Request for the Revoked 1 Hour Ozone Standard (2023 Maintenance Plan)* (SJVAPCD 2023). The SJVAPCD has also developed the *2024 Plan for the 2012 Annual PM<sub>2.5</sub> Standards (2024 PM<sub>2.5</sub> Plan)* using best available technology and research to develop a strategy to attain the federal health-based 2012 NAAQS for PM<sub>2.5</sub> as expeditiously as practicable (SJVAPCD 2024).

The SJVAPCD has established air quality thresholds of significance for CO, nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), reactive organic gases (ROG), sulfur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>), PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub>, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. SJVAPCD Thresholds**

Pollutant	Construction Phase	Operational Phase	
	Annual Emissions (tons/year)	Permitted Equipment and Activities (tons/year)	Non-Permitted Equipment and Activities (tons/year)
Carbon monoxide (CO)	100	100	100
Nitrogen oxides (NO <sub>x</sub> )	10	10	10
Reactive organic gases (ROG)	10	10	10
Sulfur oxides (SO <sub>x</sub> )	27	27	27
Particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or smaller (PM <sub>10</sub> )	15	15	15
Particulate matter 2.5 microns in diameter of smaller (PM <sub>2.5</sub> )	15	15	15

Source: SJVAPCD (2015)

The SJVAPCD maintains a set of rules and regulations to improve and maintain healthy air quality for the entire population within its jurisdiction. When developing new regulations, the SJVAPCD must comply with complex procedures established by statutes in federal and state codes. The following are some of the rules and regulations that would apply to the proposed project:

- **Rule 2010.4 – Permit to Operate:** Before any new or modified source operation, or any existing source operation so described may be operated, a written permit would be obtained from the Air Pollution Control Officer (APCO). No Permit to Operate would be granted either by the APCO or the Hearing Board for any source operation constructed or installed without authorization as required, until the information required is presented to the APCO and such source operation is altered, if necessary, and made to conform to the standards set forth in Rule 2070 (Standards for Granting Applications) and elsewhere in these rules and regulations.
- **Rule 2070.7 – Operation According to the Permit to Operate Conditions:** A person would not operate any source operation contrary to conditions specified on the Permit to Operate issued in accordance with the provisions of this rule.
- **Regulation IV – Prohibitions:**
  - *Rule 4101 – Visible Emissions:* The purpose of this rule is to prohibit the emissions of visible air contaminants into the atmosphere.
  - *Rule 4102 – Nuisance:* A person would not discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other material that cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public, or which endanger the comfort, repose, health, or safety of any such persons or the public, or which cause, or have a natural tendency to cause, injury or damage to business or property.
  - *Rule 4601 – Architectural Coatings.* The purpose of this rule is to limit volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions from architectural coatings.
- **Regulation VIII – Fugitive PM<sub>10</sub> Prohibitions:** The purpose of Regulation VIII is to reduce ambient concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) by requiring actions to prevent, reduce, or mitigate anthropogenic fugitive dust emissions and includes Rule 8011 (General Requirements), Rule 8021 (Construction, Demolition Excavation, Extraction and other Earthmoving Activities), Rule 8031 (Bulk Materials), Rule 8041 (Carryout and Track out), Rule 8051 (Open Areas), Rule 8061 (Paved and Unpaved Roads), and 8071 (Unpaved Vehicle/ Equipment Traffic Areas).

## Environmental Evaluation

### a) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site is within the SJVAB under the jurisdiction of the SJVAPCD. The SJVAPCD has developed the 2024 PM<sub>2.5</sub> Plan using best available technology and research to develop a strategy to attain the federal health-based 2012 NAAQS for PM<sub>2.5</sub> as expeditiously as practicable (SJVAPCD 2024). The San Joaquin Valley is one of the fastest growing regions in the state. Typically, an increase in population means there will be an increase in long-term vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which can increase PM<sub>2.5</sub> and other air emissions from vehicle exhaust (SJVAPCD 2024). The proposed project is not anticipated to conflict with the 2024 PM<sub>2.5</sub> Plan because the proposed project is limited to vegetation management and fuels reduction activities, and would not result in new buildings or structures that would facilitate population growth or increased VMT in the area.

The proposed project would generate a temporary increase in vehicle trips caused by worker vehicles, equipment, and trucks during implementation of proposed vegetation treatments. According to the *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* (California Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation [LCI]<sup>1</sup> 2018), projects that would not generate a potentially significant level of VMT, that are consistent with a sustainable communities strategy (SCS) or general plan, or that would generate or attract fewer than 110 trips per day would not result in significant transportation impacts. The proposed project would require two to 30 crew members who would be transported using two to six vehicles with up to five supporting fire apparatus, including Type 3 or Type 6 engines; therefore, the proposed project would not exceed 110 vehicle trips per day and would not result in a significant increase in VMT. Further, the increase in vehicle trips would be temporary and would not result in a new permanent source of vehicle trips in the project region.

The SJVAPCD monitors "permissive-burn" days as defined by the CARB. Prescribed burning activities associated with the proposed project would be conducted in accordance with an approved burn plan to reduce the risk of excessive smoke or other emissions associated with prescribed burning activities.

Large wildfire events have the potential to release substantial pollutant emissions as a result of smoke emissions and the mobilization of fire crews and trucks. Implementation of the proposed project would ultimately result in a reduced risk of wildfire and the associated release of substantial pollutant emissions. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

### b) Would the project 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?

**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** As previously discussed, Kern County is within the SJVAB. Under the NAAQS, the SJVAB is designated as Nonattainment-Extreme for the 8-hour O<sub>3</sub> standard, Maintenance-Serious for the PM<sub>10</sub> standard, and Nonattainment-Moderate for the PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard. Under the CAAQS, the SJVAB is designated Nonattainment for the 1-hour O<sub>3</sub>, 8-hour O<sub>3</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub> standards. Project activities have the potential to result in 1-hour and 8-hour O<sub>3</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions from the use of heavy equipment, limited soil movement, and prescribed burning. Prescribed burning would result in emissions of PM, CO, and NO<sub>x</sub>. There are a number of hazardous air pollutants released during wildland fire that have the potential to be released in limited amounts during prescribed burning, including benzene, formaldehyde, and methanol. Project emissions can vary

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly known as the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research; effective July 1, 2024.

substantially from day to day, depending on the level of activity, the specific type of operation, and, for dust, the prevailing weather conditions.

The proposed project would comply with all applicable SJVAPCD rules and regulations during the vegetation treatment activities, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Rule 2010 – Permits Required
- Rule 3160 – Prescribed Burning Fee
- Rule 4301 – Fuel Burning Equipment
- Rule 8011 – Fugitive PM<sub>10</sub> Prohibitions
- Rule 9110 – Mobile and Indirect Sources General Conformity

Additionally, Mitigation Measure (MM) AQ-1 has been included to require implementation of applicable SJVAPCD standard control measures to ensure equipment and vehicle use during project activities does not result in air pollutant emissions that could exceed SJVAPCD thresholds.

The proposed project would comply with “permissive-burn” days and CARB’s *Smoke Management Guidelines for Agricultural and Prescribed Burning* (CARB 2001) in order to minimize smoke impacts to the public. Prescribed burning activities associated with the proposed project would be conducted in accordance with an approved burn plan to reduce the risk of excessive smoke or other emissions associated with prescribed burning activities. Although project activities would result in short-term localized and mobile emissions, implementation of the proposed project would be beneficial in the long-term by reducing the risk for future catastrophic wildfire and associated pollutant emissions. Due to the proposed project design, implementation of the prescribed burning is not expected to release criteria pollutants in exceedance of federal, State, or local standards. Additionally, implementation of MM AQ-1 would ensure heavy equipment use would not result in the generation of criteria pollutants that could exceed applicable thresholds; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

**c) Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?**

**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** Air quality varies as a direct function of the amount of pollutants emitted into the atmosphere, the size and topography of the air basin, and the prevailing meteorological conditions. Air quality problems arise when the rate of pollutant emissions exceeds the rate of dispersion. Reduced visibility, eye irritation, and adverse health impacts upon those persons termed “sensitive receptors” are the most serious hazards of existing air quality conditions. Some land uses are considered more sensitive to changes in air quality than others, depending on the population groups and the activities involved. People most likely to be affected by air pollution include children, the elderly, athletes, and people with cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases. Sensitive receptors include residences, schools, playgrounds, child-care centers, athletic facilities, long-term health-care facilities, rehabilitation centers, convalescent centers, and retirement homes. Sensitive receptors in the project site include Happy Gulch Campground and Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School within the northern portion of the project site. Other sensitive receptors in the project area include campgrounds within a 2-mile radius to the north, south, and west. The nearest off-site campground is Toad Springs Campground, located approximately 4,600 feet northwest of the project site.

The greatest potential for toxic air contaminants (TACs) during construction would be diesel particulate matter (diesel PM) emissions from heavy equipment operations and/or heavy-duty trucks, prescribed burning during implementation of proposed vegetation treatment activities, and the associated health impacts to sensitive receptors. Emissions of TACs are normally localized and not region-wide. The

SJVAPCD's thresholds for TACs are 20 in one million or more for carcinogens, a hazard index that equals or exceeds one for the maximally exposed individual (acute), or a hazard index that equals or exceeds one for the maximally exposed individual (chronic) for non-carcinogens.

The proposed project has the potential to expose surrounding on-site sensitive receptors to short-term construction-related emissions. Due to distance, the proposed project is not expected to generate substantial pollutant concentrations at off-site campgrounds. As discussed in *Impact Discussion III(b)*, project activities would generate emissions of PM, CO, and NO<sub>x</sub>; however, project emissions are not anticipated to exceed SJVAPCD thresholds based on required compliance with all applicable SJVAPCD rules and regulations and implementation of MM AQ-1, which has been included to require implementation of applicable SJVAPCD standard control measures during the vegetation treatment activities. Further, vegetation treatment activities would progress across treatment sites would not take place near any single sensitive receptor for an extended period of time; therefore, proposed vegetation treatment activities would not expose on-site sensitive receptors to substantial diesel PM emissions. Vegetation treatment activities would be short-term and intermittent and would not result in a new long-term source of diesel PM emissions in the project area. The proposed project would also be required to comply with "permissive-burn" days and the Smoke Management Plan defined by the CARB to ensure public safety. Based on implementation of MM AQ-1 and required compliance with CARB and SJVAPCD regulations, the proposed project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

**d) Would the project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** It is possible that odors could be released during implementation of proposed vegetation treatment activities. Objectionable odors could be generated from vehicles and/or equipment exhaust emissions, and smoke generated by prescribed burning. Although nearby sensitive receptors, including Happy Gulch Campground and/or Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School, are present within the northern portion of the project site, the majority of vegetation treatment activities would occur at locations set back from these sensitive receptors and other occupied facilities. Further, vegetation treatment activities would progress across treatment sites would not take place near any single sensitive receptor for an extended period of time; therefore, proposed vegetation treatment activities would not expose on-site sensitive receptors to substantial adverse odors. Further, MM AQ-1 would be implemented to reduce the potential nuisance and exposure to emissions (such as those leading to odors) associated with heavy equipment use. Prescribed burning would comply with all applicable CARB and SJVAPCD regulations, and burning would only occur on permissive-burn days as defined by the relevant authorities. Therefore, the potential release of odors associated with vegetation treatment activities and equipment would be minor, temporary, and unlikely to be detectable from rural residential or public places in the vicinity of the project site due to the distance. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

## **Mitigation Measures**

**MM AQ-1 San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Standard Regulation VIII Control Measures.** During proposed vegetation treatment activities located within 1,000 feet of the Happy Gulch Campground and/or Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School, the Kern County Fire Department would ensure the following applicable San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Standard Regulation VIII control measures are implemented:

- a. If any land-clearing, grubbing, scraping, excavation, land-leveling, grading, or cut and fill activities are required during project activities, the activity would be

- effectively controlled of fugitive dust emissions using application of water or by presoaking;
- b. Use alternative-fueled or catalyst-equipped diesel construction equipment, where feasible;
  - c. Minimize idling time (e.g., 5-minute maximum);
  - d. Diesel idling within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors is not permitted;
  - e. Staging and queueing areas would not be located within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors;
  - f. Limit the hours of operation of heavy-duty equipment and/or the amount of equipment in use;
  - g. Replace fossil-fueled equipment with electrically driven equivalents (provided they are not run with a portable generator set);
  - h. Curtail construction during periods of high ambient pollutant concentrations; this may include ceasing of construction activity during the peak-hour of vehicular traffic on adjacent roadways; and
  - i. Implement activity management (e.g., rescheduling activities to reduce short-term impacts).

## IV. Biological Resources

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Setting

The project site is within the Sawmill Mountain, California U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangle. The project site is approximately 2 miles west of the community of Pine Mountain Club, California, at the base of Cerro Noroeste Mountain. Elevations within the project site range from approximately 6,200 to 7,100 feet (1,890–2,164 meters) above mean sea level (amsl). Surrounding land uses include recreational areas for outdoor activities and open space. The project site encompasses the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School, Happy Gulch Campground, and Westside Mountain Park property, containing several unused structures, outbuildings, and camp sites. The project site features three dominant vegetation communities, including oak woodlands, mixed chaparral, and mixed conifer pine forests. Freshwater habitat is limited to a seasonal drainage that flows south–north through the project site, as well as springs and seeps scattered throughout the project site.

A Biological Resources Technical Report (BRTR) (SWCA 2025b) was prepared to evaluate the potential for proposed vegetation treatment activities (i.e., manual treatments, mechanical treatments, prescribed burning, and herbicide application) to adversely affect sensitive biological resources in the project site and surrounding area, referred to as the project area. The BRTR includes the results of a desktop review and a reconnaissance-level field survey of the project area.

Prior to conducting field surveys, a desktop review was completed, which included a review of current and historical aerial imagery (Google Earth 2025), an online Soil Survey for Kern County (NRCS 2025), USGS topographic maps (USGS 2025a), regional weather data (U.S. Climate Data 2025), the USGS NHD (USGS 2025b), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) (USFWS 2025a). Queries of the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) planning tool (USFWS 2025b), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) (CDFW 2025), and California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (CNPS 2025) were also conducted as part of the desktop review to obtain information regarding federally and State-listed and other special-status species considered to have potential to occur within the project site.

Following the background review, SWCA completed a field survey of the project area on March 28, 2025. The surveys consisted of a botanical and wildlife species inventory, jurisdictional analysis, and an analysis of the potential for special-status species to occur on the project site. No sensitive biological resources were observed within the project area during the field survey.

## SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES

Based on the results of the desktop review and field survey, the following 28 special-status plants and 10 special-status wildlife species were identified as having the potential to occur within the project site (SWCA 2025b).

## Special-Status Plants

### **Abram's Oxytheca**

Abram's oxytheca (*Acanthoscyphus parishii* var. *abramsii*; California Rare Plant Rank [CRPR] 1B.2) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species is known to occur in the Transverse Ranges, typically in chaparral habitats. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 5,575 to 6,560 feet (1,700–2,000 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from June to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species include road and trail development and maintenance (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of Abram's oxytheca is approximately 10 miles southeast of the project site in Lockwood Valley (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within woodland habitat identified on-site. Although this species was not observed during the out-of-season survey, due to the presence of suitable habitat, this species may occur within the project area.

### **Mount Pinos Onion**

Mount Pinos onion (*Allium howellii* var. *clokeyi*; CRPR 1B.3) is a perennial herb that is known to occur within the Transverse Ranges, specifically concentrated around Mount Pinos. This species prefers Great Basin scrub habitat, borders of meadows and seeps, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. It has been documented at elevation ranges from 4,265 to 6,070 feet (1,300–1,850 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from April to June. Potential threats to this species include off-road-vehicle activity, brush clearing, development, and grazing (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of Mount Pinos onion is 6 miles southeast of the project site near Apache Canyon (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species was observed within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Palmer's Mariposa Lily**

Palmer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus palmeri* var. *palmeri*; CRPR 1B.2) is a perennial herb that is known to occur within the Transverse Ranges, Tehachapi Mountains, and Southern Sierra Nevada. This species typically occurs in chaparral, lower montane coniferous forests, and meadows and seeps. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 3,940 to 7,220 feet (1,200–2,200 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from April through June (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species primarily come from road and trail maintenance.

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of Palmer's mariposa lily is approximately 12 miles southeast of the project site near Frazier Mountain (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within woodland habitat identified on-site. Although this species was not observed during the survey, due to the presence of suitable habitat, this species may occur within the project area.

### **Southern Alpine Buckwheat**

Southern alpine buckwheat (*Eriogonum kennedyi* var. *alpigenum*; CRPR 1B.3) is a perennial herb that is known to occur within the Transverse Ranges. This species typically occurs on alpine boulder and rock fields in subalpine coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 8,200 to 11,485 feet (2,500–3,500 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from July through September (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species include foot traffic and outdoor recreation.

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of southern alpine buckwheat is within 4 miles southeast of the project site on Mt. Pinos (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project area, and buckwheat species were observed within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Pale-Yellow Layia**

Pale-yellow layia (*Layia heterotricha*; CRPR 1B.1) is an annual herb that is known to occur in the Transverse and Coastal Ranges. This species typically occurs in cismontane woodlands, coastal scrub, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and valley and foothill grasslands. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 655 to 5,900 feet (200–1,800 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from March through June (Jepson Flora Project 2025). This species is considered seriously threatened in California.

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of pale-yellow layia is approximately 0.75 mile north of the project site near the intersection of Mil Potrero Highway and Cerro Noroestre Road (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within woodland habitat identified on-site; however, it was not observed during appropriately timed surveys. Due to the presence of suitable habitat, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Southwestern Mountain Monardella**

Southwestern mountain monardella (*Monardella australis* ssp. *occidentalis*; CRPR 1B.1) is a perennial herb that occurs in the Transverse Ranges. This species typically occurs in montane chaparral and upper montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 6,200 to 7,990 feet (1,890–2,435 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from June to July (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Documented threats to this species are wood cutting and brush clearing (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of southwestern mountain monardella is approximately 15 miles south of the project site on Pine Mountain (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present in the scrub patches within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Tehachapi Monardella**

Tehachapi monardella (*Monardella linoides* ssp. *oblonga*; CRPR 1B.3) is a perennial rhizomatous herb that is known to occur in the Southern Sierra Nevada, Tehachapi Mountains, and Transverse Ranges. This species typically occurs within montane coniferous forests and pinyon-juniper woodlands. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 4,920 to 8,530 feet (1,500–2,600 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from June to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species include road and trail maintenance, development, and off-road vehicle activity (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, there are multiple documented occurrences of Tehachapi monardella within the project site (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the evergreen forests in the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Baja Navarretia**

Baja navarretia (*Navarretia peninsularis*; CRPR 1B.2) is an annual herb species that is known to occur within the Transverse Ranges and Tehachapi Mountains. This species typically occurs within chaparral openings, lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, and pinyon-juniper woodland. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 4,590 to 7,545 feet (1,400–2,300 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from June to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species include recreational activities, road and trail maintenance, and mining (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of Baja navarretia is approximately 5 miles southeast of the project site on Mount Pinos (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Piute Mountains Navarretia**

Piute Mountains navarretia (*Navarretia setiloba*; CRPR 1B.1) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. It is known to occur in the Southern Sierra Nevada, Tehachapi Mountains, and Transverse Ranges. This species occurs in cismontane woodland, pinyon-juniper woodland, and valley and foothill grasslands. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 1,640 to 6,890 feet (500–2,100 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from April through June (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Documented threats to this species include development, foot traffic, and grazing (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of Piute Mountains navarretia is approximately 5 miles northeast of the project site in the San Emigdio Mountains (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **San Bernardino Aster**

San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*; CRPR 1B.2) is a perennial rhizomatous herb that is native to California. This species typically occurs in cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, marshes and swamps, and vernal pools in valley and foothill grassland. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 5,249 to 6,725 feet (1,600–2,050 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from July through November (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species include development and competition from nonnative plants (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of San Bernardino aster is approximately 12 miles east of the project site near Cuddy Valley (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Grey-Leaved Violet**

Grey-leaved violet (*Viola pinetorum* ssp. *grisea*; CRPR 1B.2) is a perennial herb that is native to California. This species typically occurs in meadows and seeps, subalpine coniferous forest, and upper montane coniferous forest. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 6,495 to 12,140 feet (1,980–3,700 meters), and the typical blooming period is from April to July (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species include foot traffic and grazing (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, there are documented occurrences of grey-leaved violet within the project site (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Short-Bracted Bird's-Beak**

Short-bracted bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *brevibracteatus*; CRPR 4.3) is a hemiparasitic annual herb that is known to occur in the Southern Sierra Nevada, Tehachapi Mountains, and Transverse Ranges. This species typically occurs within chaparral, montane coniferous forests, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 2,790 to 8,400 feet (850–2,560 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from July to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are unknown (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of short-bracted bird's-beak is within 5 miles northwest of the project site near Bitter Creek Wildlife Refuge (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Unexpected Larkspur**

Unexpected larkspur (*Delphinium inopinum*; CRPR 4.3) is a perennial herb that is endemic to California. This species occurs within upper montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 7,215 to 9,185 feet (2,200–2,800 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to July (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species include logging and foot traffic (CNPS 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of unexpected larkspur is approximately 60 miles northeast of the project site in the Tehachapi Mountains (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Mount Pinos Larkspur**

Mount Pinos larkspur (*Delphinium parryi* ssp. *purpureum*; CRPR 4.3) is a perennial herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs in chaparral, Mojavean desert scrub, and pinyon-juniper woodland. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 3,280 to 8,530 feet (1,000–2,600 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to June (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are unknown (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of Mount Pinos larkspur is within 5 miles northwest of the project site near Bitter Creek Wildlife Refuge (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Johnston's Monkeyflower**

Johnston's monkeyflower (*Diplacus johnstonii*; CRPR 4.3) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs in lower montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 3,200 to 7,545 feet (975–2,920 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are unknown (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of Johnston's monkeyflower is within 5 miles west of the project site (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Pine Green-Gentian**

Pine green-gentian (*Frasera neglecta*; CRPR 4.3) is a perennial herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs within chaparral, montane coniferous forests, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 4,590 to 8,200 feet (1,400–2,500 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to July (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are unknown (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of pine green-gentian is within 5 miles northwest of the project site (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Pine Fritillary**

Pine fritillary (*Fritillaria pinetorum*; CRPR 4.3) is a perennial herb that is native to California. This species typically occurs in chaparral, lower and upper montane and subalpine coniferous forest, and pinyon-juniper woodland. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 5,900 to 10,500 feet (1,800–3,200 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to July (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are unknown (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, there are multiple documented occurrences of pine fritillary within the project site (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Inland Gilia**

Inland gilia (*Gilia interior*; CRPR 4.3) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species occurs in cismontane woodland, Joshua tree woodland, and lower montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 2,295 to 5,575 feet (700–1,700 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from March to May (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are undocumented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of inland gilia is 10 miles east of the project site near Pine Mountain Club (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Cuyama Gilia**

Cuyama gilia (*Gilia latiflora* ssp. *cuyamensis*; CRPR 4.3) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species occurs on sandy soils in pinyon-juniper woodland. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 1,965 to 6,890 feet (600–2,100 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from April to June (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are undocumented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, multiple occurrences of Cuyama gilia are documented within 10 miles of the project site (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Pine Gilia**

Pine gilia (*Gilia leptantha* ssp. *pinetorum*; CRPR 4.3) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs on rocky and sandy substrates in lower montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 2,950 to 9,515 feet (900–2,900 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to July (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are undocumented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of pine gilia is 10 miles to the east of the project site near Pine Mountain Club (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Urn-Flowered Alumroot**

Urn-flowered alumroot (*Heuchera caespitosa*; CRPR 4.3) is a perennial herb endemic to California. This species typically occurs in cismontane woodland, lower and upper coniferous forests, and montane riparian forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 6,230 to 7,545 feet (1,900–2,300

meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Potential threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of urn-flowered alumroot is approximately 5 miles east of the project site near Pine Mountain Club (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Spring Lessingia**

Spring lessingia (*Lessingia tenuis*; CRPR 4.3) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and lower montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 165 to 7,220 feet (50–2,200 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to July (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, multiple occurrences of spring lessingia are documented within 10 miles of the project site (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Ocellated Humboldt Lily**

Ocellated Humboldt lily (*Lilium humboldtii* ssp. *ocellatum*; CRPR 4.2) is a perennial herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs in chaparral, cismontane woodlands, coastal scrub, lower montane coniferous forests, and riparian woodlands. It has been documented at elevations less than 5,905 feet (1,800 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is March through July (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Primary threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of ocellated Humboldt lily is approximately 15 miles south of the project site near the community of Wheeler Springs (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Silky Lupine**

Silky lupine (*Lupinus elatus*; CRPR 4.3) is a perennial herb that is endemic to California. This species is typically found in lower and upper montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 4,920 to 9,840 feet (1,500–3,000 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from June to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of silky lupine is approximately 10 miles northwest of the project site near Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Adobe Yampah**

Adobe yampah (*Perideridia pringlei*; CRPR 4.3) is a perennial herb endemic to California. This species typically occurs in chaparral, cismontane woodlands, coastal scrub, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 985 to 5,905 feet (300–1,800 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from April to June (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Primary threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of adobe yampah is approximately 5 miles east of the project site near Pine Mountain Club (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Transverse Range Phacelia**

Transverse Range phacelia (*Phacelia exilis*; CRPR 4.3) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs in lower montane coniferous forests, meadows and seeps, pebble plains, and upper montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 3,600 to 8,855 feet (1,100–2,700 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from May to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Primary threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of Transverse Range phacelia is approximately 10 miles east of the project site in the village of Frazier Park (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Mojave Phacelia**

Mojave phacelia (*Phacelia mohavensis*; CRPR 4.3) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs in cismontane woodlands, lower montane coniferous forests, meadows and seeps, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 2,950 to 8,430 feet (900–2,570 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from April to August (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Primary threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of Mojave phacelia is within 5 miles east of the project site in Pine Mountain Club (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Chickweed Oxytheca**

Chickweed oxytheca (*Sidotheca caryophylloides*; CRPR 4.3) is an annual herb that is endemic to California. This species typically occurs on sandy soils in lower montane coniferous forests. It has been documented at elevations ranging from 4,265 to 8,530 feet (1,300–2,600 meters) amsl, and the typical blooming period is from July to September (Jepson Flora Project 2025). Primary threats to this species are not well documented (CNPS 2025).

According to CNPS records, the nearest occurrence of chickweed oxytheca is within 10 miles southwest of the project site near the town of Scherdeck (CNPS 2025). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

## **Special-Status Wildlife**

### **Yellow-Blotched Salamander**

Yellow-blotched salamander (*Ensatina eschscholtzii croceater*; State Watch List) occurs in evergreen and deciduous forests at elevations up to 11,000 feet (3,350 meters) under surface debris such as logs, rocks, and peeled bark. This species prefers north-facing slopes, especially near creeks or streams, and is most common where woody debris is abundant. This species occurs in the lower Kern River Canyon, the Paiute Mountains, Breckenridge Mountain, the Tehachapi Mountains, Mount Abel, and Mount Pinos and near Fort Tejon and Frazier-Alamo Mountain. This species mates during the autumn and spring with females laying eggs and guarding them until they hatch. The young emerge from nest sites after snow sufficiently melts (Nafis 2025).

According to CNDDDB records, multiple occurrences of yellow-blotched salamander have been documented within the project site (CDFW 2025). There is suitable habitat for this species within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Crotch's Bumble Bee**

Crotch's bumblebee (*Bombus crotchii*; Candidate State Endangered) is native to California and Baja California, Mexico, and has been reported in Nevada. This species occurs primarily in grassland and scrub habitats, and is associated with milkweeds, dusty maidens, lupines, medics, phacelias, and sages. This species nests underground from February to October and has better tolerance for hotter drier habitats than most bee species (Xerces Society 2018).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of Crotch's bumblebee is within 0.5 mile east of the project site (CDFW 2025). There is suitable habitat present for this species within the project site, and associated plant species are also present; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Monarch Butterfly**

Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus plexippus*; Proposed Threatened) occurs throughout the western United States and southern Canada. Monarchs migrate south in large aggregations in the autumn and return to the north in the following spring. Populations reproduce in their overwintering territories, as well as in the north regions. Larvae rely solely on milkweed plants as a food source. Overwintering adults congregate in dense stands of tall trees such as eucalyptus and cypress with sufficient protection from the elements (Borror 1970; Shapiro 2007).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of this species is in Santa Barbara, approximately 30 miles southwest of the project site (CDFW 2025). Dense, sheltered stands of pine and cypress may provide suitable habitat for this species within the project site. Furthermore, the project site has the potential to support milkweed species and breeding populations of monarch butterflies; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **California Legless Lizard**

California legless lizard (*Anniella* spp.; California Species of Special Concern [SSC]) ranges from the northern San Joaquin Valley south through the inner and outer South Coast Ranges, with populations in the southern Sierra Nevada and Tehachapi Mountains, at elevations up to 5,900 feet (1,800 meters) (Nafis 2025). This species requires moist, sandy, or loose loamy soils within coastal dune scrub, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, woodland, riparian, or forest habitats. It shelters in leaf litter and under bushes, rocks, or detritus like logs and driftwood. Relatively little is known about the specific behavior and ecology of this species, but it is thought to be a diurnal species that breeds between the months of March and July and gives birth to live young in the early fall. Population declines have been attributed to agricultural development, sand mining, use of off-road recreational vehicles, and habitat loss through spread of invasive, nonnative vegetation such as iceplant (Zeiner et al. 1988–1990).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of California legless lizard is approximately 2 miles northeast of the project site (CDFW 2025). There is suitable habitat present for this species within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Southern Rubber Boa**

Southern rubber boa (*Charina umbratical*; State Threatened) occurs in oak-conifer forests at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 8,200 feet (1,524–2,500 meters) (Nafis 2025). While the range of this species is uncertain, it is known to occur in the mountains of Southern California and is protected in the Southern Sierra Nevada, in the Tehachapi Mountains, and on Mount Pinos, Mount Alamo, Mount Abel, and Frazier Mountain. This species is typically nocturnal and can maintain activity in temperatures that are too cold for most reptiles. It is an adept burrower and may also use logs and debris for refuge. This species mates

from April to June and gives birth in late summer to early autumn. Population declines have been attributed to anthropogenic habitat loss and degradation.

According to CNDDDB records, there are multiple documented occurrences of southern rubber boa within the project site (CDFW 2025). There is suitable habitat present for this species within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Coast Horned Lizard**

Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*; SSC) occurs in semi-arid mountains of western and Southern California at elevations up to 8,000 feet (2,400 meters). This species inhabits grasslands, coniferous forests, woodlands, and chaparral, with open areas and patches of loose, sandy soil. It is frequently found near native ant hills, which are its preferred food source. The species also forages on beetles, wasps, grasshoppers, flies, and caterpillars. The breeding season is from May to September, and nests are constructed in loose soil (Zeiner et al. 1988–1990). Habitat conversion to housing and agriculture and the spread of nonnative ants (e.g., Argentine ants) have caused this species to decline. Historically, this lizard was extensively exploited by the pet and curio trade (Nafis 2025).

According to CNDDDB records (CDFW 2025), the nearest documented occurrence of coast horned lizard is approximately 1.5 miles northwest of the project site. There is suitable habitat present for this species within grasslands at the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Pallid Bat**

Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*; SSC) is most common in xeric ecosystems such as rocky and arid deserts, but also occurs in grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and forests most commonly below 6,000 feet (1,829 meters) (Zeiner et al. 1988–1990). This species appears to prefer edges and open areas without trees. Roosting sites include rock crevices, mines, caves, tree hollows, buildings, bridges, and culverts (Hermanson and O’Shea 1983). The diet of this species primarily consists of large arthropods, which are gleaned from the ground or on the surfaces of vegetation. The maternity season is generally from later April to late August, depending on the location’s latitude and climate (Zeiner et al. 1988–1990).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest occurrence of pallid bat is on Wheeler Ridge, approximately 15 miles northeast of the project site (CDFW 2025). Suitable roosting and foraging habitat for this species occurs within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Tehachapi Pocket Mouse**

Tehachapi pocket mouse (*Perognathus alticola inexpectatus*; SSC) occurs in annual grasslands, pinyon-juniper woodland, Joshua tree woodland, Jeffrey pine forest, and sagebrush and rabbitbrush scrub, at elevations ranging from 3,500 to 6,000 feet (1,067–1,829 meters) (Zeiner et al. 1988–1990). This species is presumed to forage on seeds of grasses and forbs on open ground and beneath shrubs during the nighttime. It is likely a food source for small predators such as owls, hawks, foxes, skunks, and snakes. This species is known to occur around Mount Pinos, as well as the Tehachapi Mountains. The breeding season generally occurs from April through July (Zeiner et al. 1988–1990).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest occurrence of Tehachapi pocket mouse is near Pinon Pines Estates, approximately 7 miles east of the project site (CDFW 2025). Suitable vegetation communities to support this species occur throughout the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Mountain Lion**

Mountain lion (*Puma concolor*; Candidate State Endangered) occurs throughout North America in virtually all habitat types except xeric regions where mule deer do not occur. This species is most common in riparian areas and brush or scrub habitat. It prefer caves, cavities, and thickets for cover, as well as for natal dens. Male mountain lions typically occupy large home ranges of at least 15 square miles and are highly territorial, defending their ranges from intraspecific competitors (Zeiner et al. 1988–1990).

The project site occurs within the proposed California mountain lion evolutionarily significant unit (ESU), which incorporates the Central Coast and Southern California. Within this ESU, mountain lions are a candidate species for protection under the California Endangered Species Act (CDFW 2025). Suitable habitat for this species occurs throughout the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **American Badger**

The range of American badger (*Taxidea taxus*; SSC) covers most of North America and throughout California, except the North Coast region (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Sonoma, and Marin Counties). The species prefers open and arid habitats such as grasslands, meadows, savannahs, open-canopy desert scrub, and open chaparral. This species is a predator of fossorial rodents and adept at excavating deep burrows to access prey. As such, where badgers are present, the landscape is dotted with large soil tailings, which are normally half-moon shaped. This species shelters in burrows it has excavated and, while known to traverse a relatively small home range (up to 2.5 acres), moves among burrows frequently. It can be active at all times of day but is primarily nocturnal. This species occurs at elevations up to 12,000 feet (3,650 meters). Mating typically occurs from May through September, but because of delayed implantation, cubs are not born until early spring. Habitat conversion is a threat to this species (Zeiner et al. 1988–1990).

According to CNDDDB records, the nearest documented occurrence of this species is 4.5 miles southeast of the project site on Mount Pinos (CDFW 2025). There is suitable habitat present for this species within the annual grasslands present within the project site; therefore, there is potential for this species to occur on-site.

### **Migratory Nesting Birds**

In addition to bird species protected by the federal and state governments, all native avian species are protected by federal and state legislation, most notably the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code. Collectively, these and other international regulations make it unlawful to collect, sell, pursue, hunt, or kill native migratory birds, their eggs, their nests, or any parts thereof.

Avian species can be expected to occur within the project site during all seasons and throughout construction of the proposed project. The potential to encounter and disrupt avian species is highest during their nesting season (generally February 1–August 31), when nests are likely to be active and eggs and young are present. The birds may nest within the mature trees, grassland habitat, or equipment. Raptors are particularly drawn to large trees and structures, and they are less tolerant of disturbances than other species.

## **Environmental Evaluation**

- a) **Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?**

**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** As evaluated above, there is suitable habitat within the project site for 28 special-status plant species, 10 special-status wildlife species, and migratory birds within the project site. As a result, the proposed project has the potential to directly and indirectly impact special-status plants, special-status wildlife, and migratory nesting birds. Direct impacts to special-status plants may include direct removal or destruction of habitat. Direct impacts to wildlife may include construction-related disturbances such as vehicle strikes or crushing of underground refugia from equipment or other project activities such as vegetation trimming or removal and prescribed burns. Indirect impacts to wildlife could result from construction noise, harassment, dust emissions, temporary habitat disturbance, smoke, or other disruptions during vegetation treatment activities. MM BIO-1 and MM BIO-2 have been included to reduce impacts to special-status plant and wildlife species by required worker awareness training and identified general site maintenance measures to be implemented during vegetation treatments. The proposed project's potential to adversely affect special-status plants and wildlife is described in detail, below.

### **Special-Status Plants**

No special-status plant species were observed during the reconnaissance-level field survey conducted on March 28, 2025; however, the survey was not appropriately timed to detect in the field all special-status botanical species with the potential to occur within the project site. The proposed project includes ground-disturbing activities for proposed fuels reduction and vegetation management, which would have the potential to adversely affect special-status plant species through direct removal of special-status plant species if present within the proposed area of disturbance during construction. MM BIO-3 and MM BIO-4 have been identified to ensure that project activities avoid significant impacts to special-status plant species through surveys, avoidance, and monitoring and by reducing the spread of plant pathogens. With implementation of MM BIO-3 and MM BIO-4, the proposed project would not substantially impact special-status plant species. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

### **Special-Status Animals**

Proposed construction activities have the potential to result in direct (i.e., take) or indirect (i.e., noise, dust, smoke) disturbance to special-status animal species if present within the project area during project activities. As described above, the project area may provide suitable habitat for 10 special-status animal species, as well as nesting birds. Potential impacts to special-status animal species are evaluated in detail, below.

### **Special-Status Amphibians**

Due to the propensity for yellow-blotched salamander to use fallen wood and debris as refuge, and the documented occurrences of this species within the project site, there is a high likelihood for vegetation treatment activities to impact this species. If yellow-blotched salamander individuals are on-site during project implementation, they could be crushed or trampled by vehicles and equipment, and refuges could be destroyed. Indirect impacts to aquatic and semiaquatic species could also result from erosion,

sedimentation, and/or discharges of hazardous materials from equipment (e.g., fuel). MM BIO-5 has been provided to ensure that project activities avoid impacts to special-status amphibians through survey, avoidance, and monitoring requirements. With implementation of MM BIO-5, the proposed project would not substantially impact special-status amphibian species. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

### **Special-Status Invertebrates**

There is suitable foraging, nesting, and overwintering habitat for Crotch's bumble bee within the project site. Direct impacts to nesting Crotch's bumble bee are most likely to occur during the flight season (generally March 1–September 30) and to overwintering queens (October 1–February 28). Direct and indirect impacts to nests may occur if vegetation removal occurs during the flight season and to overwintering queens in the fall and winter. These actions can destroy nests or overwintering queens and remove foraging habitat that may lead to nest destruction or failure. In addition, there is suitable habitat for monarchs within the project site. Direct impacts to monarchs are most likely to occur during the breeding season (generally March 15–October 31), when milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) plants are present for monarchs to lay their eggs on (Xerces Society 2025). Vegetation treatment activities pose a direct risk, such as crushing and trampling of eggs, caterpillars, or chrysalises present within the work area, as well as destruction of host milkweed plants. MM BIO-5 has been provided to ensure that project activities avoid impacts to special-status invertebrates through survey, avoidance, and monitoring requirements. With implementation of MM BIO-5, the proposed project would not substantially impact special-status invertebrate species. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

### **Special-Status Reptiles**

There is suitable habitat for Northern California legless lizard, southern rubber boa, and coast horned lizard within the project site, and vegetation treatment activities could pose risks for direct and indirect impacts to special-status reptiles. Reptiles can be slow-moving, both because of behavioral adaptations to be camouflaged from predators and because of their ectothermic nature, which leads to the potential for crushing hazards from equipment use and foot traffic. Removal of vegetation during project activities may indirectly impact special-status reptiles because reptiles rely on vegetative cover for temperature regulation. MM BIO-5 has been provided to ensure that project activities avoid impacts to Northern California legless lizard, southern rubber boa, and coast horned lizard within the project site through survey, avoidance, and monitoring requirements. With implementation of MM BIO-5, the proposed project would not substantially impact special-status reptile species. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

### **Special-Status and Nesting Migratory Birds**

Direct impacts to avian species, including special-status species, are most likely to occur if construction activities take place during the typical avian nesting season (generally February 1–August 31). Construction-related activities can destroy nests, remove nesting habitat, or cause disturbance that may lead to nest failure or otherwise harass nesting, resident, or transient birds. Indirect impacts may occur due to habitat loss, such as removal of suitable nesting habitat. MM BIO-5 has been provided to ensure that project activities avoid impacts to special-status and nesting migratory bird species through survey, avoidance, and monitoring requirements. With implementation of MM BIO-5, the proposed project would not substantially impact avian species. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

### **Special-Status Mammals**

One special-status bat species, pallid bat, has the potential to occur within the project area. Vegetation treatment activities can directly or indirectly impact bats by destroying their vegetative roosts. Bats often use dead snags, old shaggy trees, and dense canopies, typical targets for vegetation treatment programs, for roosting. MM BIO-5 has been provided to ensure that project activities avoid impacts to pallid bat through survey, avoidance, and monitoring requirements.

Tehachapi pocket mouse, mountain lion, and American badger may be impacted directly or indirectly during project activities. Vegetation treatment activities pose several direct risks, such as vehicle strikes and destruction of resources, like burrows or dens. Further, project implementation may impact or deter use of valuable habitat, yielding it unsuitable for these species. Indirect impacts may occur by deterring movement patterns of wildlife caused by vegetation treatment disturbances. MM BIO-5 has been provided to ensure that project activities avoid impacts to Tehachapi pocket mouse, mountain lion, and American badger within the project site through survey, avoidance, and monitoring requirements. With implementation of MM BIO-5, the proposed project would not substantially impact special-status mammal species. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

### **Conclusion**

With implementation of MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-5, the proposed project would not adversely affect any special-status wildlife species; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

**b) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?**

**No Impact.** The project site supports pinyon, ponderosa, and Jeffrey pine forest; mountain whitethorn chaparral; and developed and ruderal land covers. No riparian habitat or sensitive natural communities occur within the project site. Additionally, no designated critical habitat occurs within the project site (SWCA 2025b). Due to the absence of riparian habitat and other sensitive natural communities, the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community; therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**c) Would the project 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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** The *State Wetland Definition and Procedures for the Discharge of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State* (Wetland Procedures) is upheld by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board 2021). Those activities that will result in the discharge of dredged or fill material are required to comply with the Wetland Procedures unless an exclusion applies, or the discharge qualifies for coverage under a General Order.

According to the NWI, there is an intermittent seasonal tributary feature lacking riparian vegetation that bisects the project site and flows in a south–north direction (USFWS 2025a). The drainage serves as a tributary to the Cuyama River and may be considered waters of the state. Waters of the state are defined by the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne Act) as “any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state.” All project activities would

occur outside of the identified surface water feature; therefore, direct impacts to wetland features would not occur. Proposed vegetation treatment activities have the potential to result in indirect impacts due to increased erosion and pollutant generation at the project site, which could run off into the seasonal tributary. MM BIO-2 and MM BIO-6 have been identified to avoid or minimize indirect impacts to wetland features through implementation of avoidance buffers and other measures to reduce the potential for polluted runoff. Based on avoidance of surface water features and implementation of MM BIO-2 and MM BIO-6, the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on federally or state-protected wetlands; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

**d) Would the project 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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The intermittent seasonal tributary to the Cuyama River flows south–north through the project site. Water from the tributary provides a valuable resource to wildlife within the project site, however, given the intermittent and seasonal nature of the feature, it is unlikely that any resident or migratory fish are present in the tributary. Thus, the proposed project would not substantially interfere with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish species. The proposed project includes hazardous tree removal and vegetation thinning; however, healthy trees would remain in place to maintain long-term nesting habitat for migratory birds. Smoke from prescribed burns may temporarily interfere with migratory birds if burning is implemented during migration routes, however, burning would not occur in long enough durations for this effect to be significant. Implementation of temporary vegetation treatment activities would temporarily discourage wildlife from traveling through the project site; however, islands and strips of ground-level vegetation would be maintained to provide terrestrial wildlife long-term thermal protection and escape cover. Ultimately, vegetation treatment activities would improve habitat within the project site to promote long-term refuge for migratory wildlife. The proposed project would not substantially increase the current level of habitat fragmentation in the region nor would it be expected to create a significant barrier to wildlife movement. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Oak woodlands and oak trees are protected under *Kern County General Plan* Chapter 1.10.10, *Oak Tree Conservation*, which requires protection and preservation of oak trees and oak woodlands during discretionary development projects. Since the proposed project is not a discretionary development project, a removal permit for oak trees from Kern County would not be required. The proposed project would ultimately reduce the potential for large-scale wildfires to occur and spread throughout the project site and surrounding forested area, ultimately reducing the potential for substantial loss of native trees that are protected under the *Kern County General Plan*. The proposed project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**f) Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?**

**No Impact.** The project area does not overlap with any adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other conservation plans. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with any approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plans, and *no impact* would occur.

## Mitigation Measures

**MM BIO-1 Environmental Awareness Training.** An environmental awareness training will be presented to all construction personnel by a qualified biologist, Registered Professional Forester (RPF), or other equivalent professional prior to the start of any project activities. The training will include color photographs and a description of the ecology of all special-status species known or with potential to occur, as well as other sensitive resources requiring avoidance during construction. The training will also include a description of protection measures required by discretionary permits, an overview of the Federal and California Endangered Species Acts, and implications of noncompliance with these regulations. This will include an overview of the required avoidance and minimization measures. A sign-in sheet with the name and signature of the qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional who presented the training and the names and signatures of the environmental awareness trainees will be kept. A fact sheet conveying the information provided in the environmental awareness training will be provided to all project personnel and anyone else who may enter the project site.

If new construction personnel join the project after the initial training period, they will receive the environmental awareness training from a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional before beginning work.

**MM BIO-2 Site Maintenance and General Operations Training.** The following general measures are recommended to minimize impacts during project implementation:

- a. The use of heavy equipment and vehicles will stay within the project limits and defined staging areas/access points. The boundaries of each work area will be clearly defined and marked with high visibility fencing or flagging. No work will occur outside of these limits.
- b. Project plans, drawings, and specifications will show the boundaries of all sensitive resource areas and the location of erosion and sediment controls, delineation of construction limits, and other pertinent measures to ensure the protection of sensitive habitats and resources.
- c. Staging of equipment and materials will occur in designated areas with appropriate demarcation and perimeter controls. No staging areas will be located within 100 feet of sensitive habitat.
- d. Secondary containment, such as drip pans, will be used to prevent leaks and spills of potential contaminants.
- e. Washing of concrete, paint, or equipment and refueling and maintenance of equipment will occur only in designated staging areas. These activities will occur at a minimum of 100 feet from sensitive habitat. Sandbags and/or absorbent pads and spill control kits will always be available on-site to clean up and contain fuel spills and other contaminants.
- f. Construction equipment will be inspected by the operator daily to ensure that equipment is in good working order and no fuel or lubricant leaks are present.
- g. Plastic monofilament netting (erosion control matting) or similar material will not be used on-site due to the potential to entangle special-status wildlife. Acceptable substitutes are coconut coir matting, biodegradable fiber rolls, or tackified hydroseeding compounds.

- h. The use of pesticides (including rodenticides) and herbicides on the property will comply with all federal, state, and local regulations to avoid primary and secondary poisoning of sensitive species that may be using the project site.

**MM BIO-3 Surveys, Avoidance, and Monitoring for Special-Status Plants.** A qualified biologist, Registered Professional Forester (RPF), or other equivalent professional will conduct surveys during the blooming period for all special-status plants with potential to occur in the project area prior to the start of initial project activities to ensure special-status plant species are not present within proposed work areas. If any rare plant populations are found, the species' location, quantity, and description will be reported to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). Any in-field methods of identification that will require handling will follow proper permitting and protocols. Rare plants will be demarcated with flagging and avoided to the extent feasible during work. Surveys will be timed to avoid the blooming period for sensitive plant species.

**MM BIO-4 Prevent Spread of Plant Pathogens.** Whenever possible, crews and equipment will remain on paved, rocked, and well-traveled trails and avoid cross-country travel. Mud, soil, and organic debris must be removed from equipment, treads, and boots before moving between work sites, with removed soil being left at its original location. Crews can remove soil and vegetative debris by brushing and blowing, followed by water or sanitizing solution, if necessary. If water is used, crews will ensure that no erosion occurs and no waterways are contaminated. Additionally, new equipment mobilizing to the project site will be cleaned of all mud, debris, and plant matter prior to entering project areas.

**MM BIO-5 Surveys, Avoidance, and Monitoring for Special-status Wildlife.** A qualified biologist, Registered Professional Forester (RPF), or other equivalent professional will conduct surveys prior to the start of initial project activities to ensure special-status wildlife species are not present within proposed work areas. If special-status wildlife species are found, they will be allowed to leave the area on their own volition or be relocated (as permitted) to suitable habitat areas outside the work area(s). If necessary, resource agencies will be contacted for further guidance. Pre-activity surveys and monitoring will be conducted as follows:

- a. **Pre-activity Surveys and Avoidance for Yellow-Blotched Salamander.** A qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will conduct a pre-activity survey immediately prior to the start of work to ensure yellow-blotched salamanders are not present within proposed work areas. If this species is found during preconstruction surveys or monitoring, an avoidance buffer of 10 feet will be established around their refuge and no work will occur within the buffer. If yellow-blotched salamanders are observed within a work area during vegetation treatment activities, they will be allowed to leave the work area on their own volition or be hand captured and relocated to suitable habitat outside of the area of impact, with appropriate resource agency approval. To minimize the potential for impacts to dispersing amphibians, work within 100 feet of aquatic habitat will occur during dry conditions, as feasible. Work will be avoided to the extent feasible immediately after winter snow melts during the late winter and early spring, when yellow-blotched salamanders are most likely to be dispersing. Downed woody debris will be inspected prior to disturbance to ensure that it is not being used as refuge by yellow-blotched salamanders.
- b. **Pre-Activity Surveys and Avoidance Measures for Crotch's Bumble Bee.** If work is planned to occur during the flight period (March 1–September 1), a

qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will survey for Crotch's bumble bees within the work area 2 weeks prior to the start of initial ground disturbance. If a Crotch's bumble bee nest is observed, no work will occur within 25 feet of the nest until it is no longer active. If Crotch's bumble bee is found during the active spring and summer period, or presence is unknown (e.g., if a survey during the active period was not completed) and work is planned between October and February, potential overwintering habitat will be avoided by a minimum of 50 feet.

- c. **Pre-Activity Surveys and Avoidance Measures for Monarch Butterfly.** If work is planned to occur during the breeding season (March 16–October 30), a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will survey for monarch eggs, caterpillars, and chrysalises within the work area 2 weeks prior to the start of initial ground disturbance. If monarch eggs, caterpillars, or chrysalises are observed, no work will occur within 25 feet until the monarch egg, caterpillar, or chrysalises are no longer present. For prescribed burns, this buffer shall be increased to 50 feet.

A qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will survey for milkweed prior to the start of initial ground disturbance. If milkweed is identified in project areas, an avoidance buffer of 25 feet will be established to protect milkweed plants. All team members working in the field will be trained in the identification of milkweed.

- d. **Pre-Activity Surveys and Monitoring for California Legless Lizard, Rubber Boa, and Coast Horned Lizard.** A qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will conduct a pre-activity survey immediately prior to the start of initial ground disturbance within 50 feet of suitable habitat for California legless lizard, rubber boa, and coast horned lizard. Construction monitoring will also be conducted by a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional during all initial ground-disturbing and vegetation removal activities (e.g., grading, grubbing, vegetation trimming, vegetation removal, including tree removal) within suitable habitat. If California legless lizard, rubber boa, or coast horned lizard are discovered during surveys or monitoring, they will be allowed to leave the project area on their own volition, or be hand captured and relocated to suitable habitat outside of the area of impact.
- e. **Pre-Activity Surveys and Avoidance Measures for Special-Status and Nesting Birds/Raptors.** If work is planned to occur between February 1 and August 31, a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will survey the area for nesting birds within 1 week prior to activity beginning on-site. If nesting birds are observed on or near the project site, they will be avoided until they have successfully fledged, or the nest is no longer deemed active. A non-disturbance buffer of 50 feet will be placed around non-listed, passerine species and a 250-foot buffer will be implemented for all non-listed raptor species. All activity will remain outside the buffer until a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional has determined that the nest is no longer active (e.g., young have fledged, the nest has failed) or that proposed project activities will not cause adverse impacts to the nest, adults, eggs, or young. If special-status avian species are identified and nesting within the work area, no work will begin until an appropriate buffer is determined in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and/or Kern County.

- f. **Pre-Activity Surveys and Avoidance Measures for Bats.** If vegetation management activities are to occur within maternity roosting and pupping season (February 1–August 31), a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will conduct a preconstruction survey for roosting bats within 14 days prior to commencement of proposed site disturbance activities. If special-status bats are detected during surveys, a 50-foot buffer will be placed around potential roosting sites. All activity will remain outside of the buffer until a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional has determined that the roost is no longer being used.
- g. **Pre-Activity Survey and Avoidance Measures for American Badger.** A qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will conduct a preconstruction survey within 30 days prior to the start of initial project activities to ensure American badger are not present within proposed work areas or within 200 feet of work areas. If potential dens are discovered, they will be monitored with a remote camera or tracking medium for at least 3 days to determine if they are occupied. If the qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional determines that a den may be active during the non-reproductive season (July 1–January 31), a no-entry exclusion buffer will be established within 50 feet of the den. If active dens are found during the reproductive season (February 1–June 30), no activity will occur within 200 feet of the den. Exclusion buffers will be prominently flagged and encircle the den. Exclusion zones will be maintained until all project-related disturbances have been terminated or it has been determined by a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional that the den is no longer in use.
- h. **Pre-Activity Survey and Avoidance Measures for Tehachapi Pocket Mouse.** Prior to the start of work within suitable Tehachapi pocket mouse habitat, a qualified biologist, RPF, or other equivalent professional will conduct a survey to identify and flag potential foraging areas for this species. Vegetation management activities in and adjacent to these sensitive areas will be avoided to the extent feasible, and will minimize impacts to grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Vegetation will not be removed to soil level, and motorized equipment such as track chippers will not be used in these areas. In the event that Tehachapi pocket mouse is observed in work areas during work activities, all work within the area will be stopped. Work may resume after it has been confirmed that the species is no longer present in the area.
- i. **Minimization Measures for Mountain Lion.** The following measures will be implemented to avoid impacts to mountain lion.
  - 1. A maximum 25-mile-per-hour speed limit will be required at the project site during construction activities.
  - 2. All vegetation management activities will cease at dusk and not start before dawn.

**MM BIO-6 Avoidance of Federal and State Waters and Wetlands.** In addition to MM BIO-2, the following recommendations have been provided to protect drainages and aquatic resources on-site:

- a. Vegetation treatment activities that occur within 100 feet of waters and drainages will be limited to hand tools only. Equipment such as heavy-tracked chippers will not be used within this 100-foot buffer, and the riparian canopy and understory will be maintained to the extent feasible to obtain project goals.

- b. No living tree or shrub removal will occur on or within the banks of waterbodies and drainages within the project area.
- c. There will be a designated staging area for vehicle fueling and storage at least 100 feet away from any waterbody or drainage, in a location where fluids or accidental discharges cannot flow into waterways. A spill plan and appropriate spill control and clean-up materials (e.g., oil absorbent pads) will be on-site in case spills occur.
- d. No chips or mulch will be broadcast or distributed within the ordinary high water mark of waters or drainages within the project area. All woody and vegetative debris will be regularly removed from water courses.

## V. Cultural Resources

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Setting

As defined by CEQA, a historical resource includes:

- A resource listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR).
- Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant. The architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural records of California may be considered to be a historical resource, provided the lead agency’s determination is supported by substantial evidence.

The following guides and requirements are of particular relevance to the analysis of the proposed project’s direct and indirect impacts to historic resources. Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, study of a project under CEQA requires consideration of “the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.” State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(d) further defines direct and indirect impacts:

- A direct physical change in the environment is a physical change in the environment that is caused by and immediately related to the project.
- An indirect physical change in the environment is a physical change in the environment that is not immediately related to the project, but which is caused indirectly by the project. If a direct

physical change in the environment in turn causes another change in the environment, then the other change is an indirect physical change in the environment.

- An indirect physical change is to be considered only if that change is a reasonably foreseeable impact, which may be caused by the project.

The project area was historically occupied by the Interior Chumash, specifically the Emigdiano, and is adjacent to the boundary of the Tataviam. Information about the Emigdiano is sparse, however, as the territorial boundaries and population are difficult to define and ethnographic and archaeological records are non-existent.

A Cultural Resources Survey Report (CRSR) was prepared for the proposed project to determine the presence and the likelihood of presence of cultural resources within the project site (SWCA 2025c). The findings of the CRSR are based on a records search and a pedestrian field survey. On April 1, 2025, staff at the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC) located at California State University, Bakersfield, conducted a California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) records search (SSJVIC File No. 25-126) of the project site and a 0.25-mile radius. The purpose of the records search was to identify previously recorded prehistoric or historic archaeological resources, including isolated artifacts, archaeological sites, historical buildings, and structures, that are in the project site. The SSJVIC consulted the following sources of information, along with official maps and records:

- National Register of Historic Places
- California Register of Historical Resources
- California State Historic Property Data Files
- California State Historical Landmarks
- California Points of Historical Interest
- California Office of Historic Preservation Archaeological Determinations of Eligibility
- California Department of Transportation State and Local Bridge Surveys

SWCA contacted the California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) by email on March 17, 2025, requesting a review of the Sacred Lands File (SLF). The NAHC responded on March 17, 2025, indicating that the search of the SLF was negative for the presence of Native American cultural resources within the immediate project site and surrounding area.

The records search revealed that the entirety of the project area has been previously subject to cultural resources study. The records search also revealed that a previously recorded historic cultural resource (P-15-013307) overlaps with the project site—Westside Mountain Park, also known as Camp Condor, which consists of multiple standing structures and associated development (roads, wells, an amphitheater, trails, etc.). The resource was revisited during the current survey effort and found to be in a similar condition as the most recent recording in 2009. All buildings associated with the campground were upgraded in the 1990s and have since been subject to extensive vandalism. None of the original, historic buildings associated with Camp Condor remain. No newly recorded cultural resources were identified as a result of the survey effort.

## **Environmental Evaluation**

### **a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?**

**Less than Significant Impact.** Based on the results of the records search conducted for the proposed project, one historic resource (P-15-013307) located within the project site—Westside Mountain Park, which consists of multiple standing structures and associated development (roads, wells, an amphitheater, trails, etc.). P-15-013307 was revisited during the pedestrian field survey and found to be in a similar condition to its most recent recording in 2009. All buildings associated with the campground were upgraded in the 1990s and have since been subject to extensive vandalism. None of the original historic buildings associated with Camp Condor remain; therefore, the proposed project would not have the potential to alter or otherwise disturb P-15-013307 (SWCA 2025c). Further, no newly recorded cultural resources were identified as a result of the survey effort. Project activities do not include demolition or removal of any existing structures or buildings. A burn plan would be prepared for the proposed project to identify specific methods to ensure prescribed burning activities would be contained within the project site, which would avoid the potential for existing buildings or structures in the project site to be adversely affected by project activities. The proposed project would not result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

### **b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?**

**Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** The proposed project includes the implementation of vegetation treatment activities, including manual treatments, mechanical treatments, and prescribed burning over the 212.42-acre project site. The proposed project would result in limited ground-disturbing activities associated with mechanical equipment use and prescribed burning, which would primarily disturb the topsoil. Based on the results of the records search conducted at the SSJVIC, one historic resource was identified within the project site (P-15-013307). As previously identified, no original buildings associated with P-15-013307 remain on the project site. The records search did not identify any other buried historic or archaeological resources within the project site. Further, no newly recorded cultural resources were identified as a result of the survey effort (SWCA 2025c). Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the disturbance of any known cultural archaeological resources. The proposed project would be limited to only minor soil disturbances, which would reduce the potential for inadvertent discovery of unknown cultural archaeological resources. Further, MM CR-1 has been included to identify the proper protocol in the unlikely event that previously unidentified cultural resources are uncovered during proposed ground-disturbing activities. Based on the low potential to uncover archaeological resources within the project site and implementation of MM CR-1, the proposed project would not result in adverse impacts to known or unknown cultural resources, and impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

### **c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** There are no known human remains or cemeteries located within or in the immediate vicinity of the project site, and the project site is considered to have low sensitivity for the presence of unidentified human resources (SWCA 2025c). The proposed project would be required to comply with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, which outlines the protocol for unanticipated discovery of human remains. Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance would occur until the Kern County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to

PRC Section 5097.98. The Kern County Coroner must be notified of the find immediately. If the human remains are determined to be prehistoric, the coroner would notify the NAHC, which would determine and notify a Most Likely Descendant (MLD). The MLD would complete the inspection of the project site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials. Based on required compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, impacts related to disturbance of human remains would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

## Mitigation Measures

**MM CR-1 Inadvertent Discovery.** In the event that cultural resources are encountered during project activities, all ground-disturbing activities within a 25-foot radius of the find would cease and Kern County would be notified immediately. Work would not continue until a qualified archaeologist or other equivalent professional assesses the find and determines the need for further study. If the find includes Native American-affiliated materials, a local Native American Tribal representative would be contacted to work in conjunction with the approved archaeologist to determine the need for further study. A standard inadvertent discovery clause would be included in every grading and construction contract to inform contractors of this requirement.

## VI. Energy

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Result in a 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Setting

All self-propelled off-road diesel vehicles 25 horsepower or greater used in California and most two-engine vehicles (except on-road two-engine sweepers) are subject to the CARB *Regulation for In-Use Off-Road Diesel Fueled Fleets* (Off-Road Regulation). This includes vehicles that are rented or leased (rental or leased fleets). The overall purpose of the Off-Road Regulation is to reduce emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate matter from off-road diesel vehicles operating within California through the implementation of standards, including, but not limited to, limits on idling, reporting, and labeling of off-road vehicles, limitations on use of old engines, and performance requirements (CARB 2025).

The *Kern County General Plan Energy Element* is a comprehensive document that defines critical energy-related issues facing Kern County and sets forth goals, policies, and implementation measures to protect Kern County's energy resources and encourage orderly energy development while affording the maximum protection for the public's health, safety, and the environment (Kern County 2009). The three primary objectives of the *Kern County General Plan Energy Element* are: 1) resource management and protection; 2) establishing development standards to provide for the protection of the environment, public health, and safety; and 3) promoting and facilitating energy development.

## **Environmental Evaluation**

**a) Would the project result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The amount of electricity used during proposed vegetation treatments would be minimal and related to potential use of some electric hand tools and devices (e.g., phones, laptops, tablets, GPS devices, etc.). Natural gas and fuels used for construction would primarily consist of diesel and gasoline for vehicle and equipment use for vegetation management activities, including worker vehicles, chainsaws, masticators, bulldozers, chippers, and feller bunchers. The proposed project would use two to 30 crew members who would be transported using two to six vehicles with up to five supporting fire apparatus, including Type 3 or Type 6 engines, and would result in a temporary increase in vehicle trips and associated natural gas usage. The increase in vehicle trips would be temporary in nature and would not exceed the State threshold of 110 vehicle trips per day. Further, federal and State regulations in place require the use of fuel-efficient equipment and vehicles and require wasteful activities, such as diesel idling, to be limited. Work crews, in an effort to ensure cost efficiency, would not be expected to engage in wasteful or unnecessary energy and fuel practices. In addition, any equipment used by the proposed project would be operated in accordance with all existing, applicable regulations such as the CARB Off-Road Regulation at the time of the vegetation treatment activities. Although it is not required to reduce already less-than-significant impacts, MM AQ-1 would further restrict energy consumption by restricting diesel idling and requiring the use of clean equipment. Therefore, energy consumption during vegetation treatment activities would not be wasteful, unnecessary, or inefficient.

Operational components of the proposed project would be limited to future maintenance activities on smaller portions of the project site approximately every 5 years. Long-term maintenance activities would be conducted to a lesser degree and would not result in a substantial consumption of energy resources. Future maintenance activities would be subject to State and local diesel-idling and other energy regulations applicable at that time to ensure energy consumption during vegetation treatment activities would not be wasteful, unnecessary, or inefficient. Further, implementation of the proposed project would ultimately reduce the risk of large-scale destruction from wildfire, which could reduce the potential for the inefficient use of energy resources during catastrophic wildfire events. Based on required compliance with State and local regulations, the proposed project would not result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**b) Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The *Kern County General Plan Energy Element* identifies goals, policies, and implementation measures related to energy resource management and protection; development standards to provide for the protection of the environment, public health, and safety; and promotion of energy development (Kern County 2009). The proposed project does not include the construction of new energy facilities that would be subject to a majority of the policies identified in the *Kern County General Plan Energy Element* or new residential, office, industrial, or other developments that would require long-term operational energy use or be subject to applicable California Building Code or California Energy Code requirements. As discussed in *Impact Discussion VI(a)*, the proposed project would be limited to the temporary and minimal use of electricity and natural gas, which would be required to comply with State and local diesel-idling regulations to reduce inefficient energy use during

the implementation of vegetation treatment activities. In addition, any equipment used for the proposed project would be operated in accordance with all existing applicable regulations such as the CARB Off-Road Regulation at the time of the vegetation treatment activities. Based on the nature of the proposed project and required compliance with existing State and local regulations, the proposed project would not result in substantial energy use, which would be consistent with the *Kern County General Plan Energy Element* objectives toward energy resource management and protection and other applicable State and local regulations related to energy consumption. The proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

## Mitigation Measures

Mitigation is not required.

## VII. Geology and Soils

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
(i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(iv) Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Setting

Ground shaking refers to the motion that occurs in response to regional and local earthquakes. Seismic ground shaking is influenced by the proximity of the project site to an earthquake fault, the intensity of the seismic event, and the underlying soil composition. Ground shaking can endanger life and safety due to damage or collapse of structures or lifeline facilities. Liquefaction is the sudden loss of soil strength due to a rapid increase in soil pore water pressure resulting from ground shaking during an earthquake. Landslides and slope instability can occur as a result of wet weather, weak soils, improper grading, improper drainage, steep slopes, adverse geologic structure, earthquakes, or a combination of these factors.

According to the CDOC Fault Activity Map of California, the San Andreas Fault, an active fault, runs under the project site (CDOC 2015). Other faults within the vicinity of the project site include, but are not limited to, the Pleito Fault, a quaternary fault, located approximately 7 miles north of the project site; the Wheeler Ridge Fault, a late quaternary fault, located approximately 11 miles north of the project site; and the Lockwood Valley Fault, a late quaternary fault, located approximately 1 mile south of the project site (CDOC 2015).

The susceptibility to liquefaction is a function of depth, density, groundwater level, and magnitude of an earthquake. Liquefaction-related phenomena can include lateral spreading, ground oscillation, flow failure, loss of bearing strength, subsidence, and buoyancy effects. For liquefaction to occur, the soil must be saturated (i.e., shallow groundwater) and relatively loose. Liquefaction more often occurs in areas underlain by young alluvium, where the groundwater table is higher than 50 feet below ground surface. According to Figure 14 in the *Kern County General Plan Safety Element* and the Land Use Map in the *Kern County General Plan Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element*, the project site is not within a designated zone of shallow groundwater (Kern County 2009). According to the *Kern County General Plan*, the areas of Kern County with slopes subject to failure are predominantly found along the river terraces, bluffs, and foothills (Kern County 2009). The project site is on gently to steeply sloping topography and has some potential for landslide occurrence.

Highly erodible soils are those that are easily carried by water and, to a lesser extent, by wind. Surface erosion is more commonly visible, but subsurface erosion can lead to damage to pipes, roads, foundations, and other structural elements. Expansive soils are largely composed of clays, which expand in volume when water is absorbed and shrink as the soil dries. Expansion is measured by shrink-swell potential, which is the volume change in soil with a gain in moisture. If the shrink-swell potential is rated moderate to high, then damage to buildings, roads, structural foundations, and pipes can occur. Expansive clay problems can be surmounted by appropriate engineering design and construction techniques. Typically, soils with high shrink-swell potential are composed of clay and clay materials.

According to the NRCS Web Soil Survey, the project site is underlain by several soil types: Kilburn-Wrentham-Supan families association, 10% to 30% slopes; Kilburn-Wrentham-Supan families association, 30% to 60% slopes; Morical-Supan-Greenbluff families association, 10% to 60% slopes; Rincon-Livermore-Modesto families association, 30% to 60% slopes; and Trigo-Modesto families-Badland association, 45% to 90% slopes. These soil types primarily contain loam, clay loam with minor components of clay, and sand (NRCS 2025). Due to the minimal amount of clay within the on-site soil types, the project site has a low potential for shrink-swell potential.

According to the USGS, the project site is underlain by alluvial fan gravel or older high terraces of granitic and gneissic detritus from the Pleistocene era (Qog) (USGS 2006). Qog is typically too young to contain paleontological resources of significance.

## **Environmental Evaluation**

a) **Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:**

a-i) ***Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.***

**No Impact.** The project site is underlain by the San Andreas Fault Zone, which is classified as an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Zone (CDOC 2015). Although the project site is underlain by an Alquist-Priolo fault zone, project activities would be limited to vegetation treatment activities and would not include the construction of new or renovation of existing occupiable structures or permanent facilities that would result in new on-site residents or be subject to the California Building Code. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the risk of loss, injury, or death involving the rupture of an Alquist-Priolo fault zone, and *no impact* would occur.

a-ii) ***Strong seismic ground shaking?***

**No Impact.** According to the CDOC Fault Activity Map of California, the San Andreas Fault runs under the project site and three other faults occur within a 15-mile radius of the project site (CDOC 2015). Kern County is in a seismically active region of California and has the potential to experience strong ground shaking during a major seismic event along the San Andreas Fault or other nearby fault systems. Although the project site would be subject to seismic-related ground shaking, project activities would be limited to vegetation treatment activities and would not include the construction of new or renovation of existing occupiable structures or permanent facilities that would result in new on-site residents or be subject to the California Building Code. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the risk of loss, injury, or death involving seismic-related ground shaking, and *no impact* would occur.

a-iii) ***Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?***

**No Impact.** For liquefaction to occur, the soil must be saturated (i.e., shallow groundwater) and relatively loose. Liquefaction more often occurs in areas underlain by young alluvium, where the groundwater table is higher than 50 feet below ground surface. According to Figure 14 in the *Kern County General Plan Safety Element* and the Land Use Map in the *Kern County General Plan Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element*, the project site is not within a designated zone of shallow groundwater; therefore, the project site is in an area with low potential for liquefaction (Kern County 2009). Project activities would be limited to vegetation treatment activities and would not include the construction of new or renovation of existing occupiable structures or permanent facilities that would result in new on-site residents or be subject to the California Building Code. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the risk of loss, injury, or death involving liquefaction, and *no impact* would occur.

a-iv) ***Landslides?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site is on gently to steeply sloping topography and has some potential for landslide occurrence. Project activities would be limited to vegetation treatment activities and would not include the construction of new or renovation of existing occupiable structures or permanent facilities that would result in new on-site residents or be subject to the California Building Code. Implementation of vegetation management activities could directly increase the potential for landslides by removing woody vegetation and root systems that help stabilize slopes. Indirect impacts

could occur through soil disturbance from equipment use or altered drainage patterns that concentrate surface runoff. These conditions could increase the likelihood of shallow slope failures, particularly following heavy rainfall. Sediment controls would be designed to promote infiltration into the surrounding landscape and include fiber rolls, jute, or similar biodegradable erosion control fabric. Fire-induced water repellency of soils would be avoided by limiting prescribed burn temperatures or employing similar restrictions. Pile burn locations would be rotated to maintain soil productivity, and adjacent duff and soils would be raked into pile burn locations if regrowth is not apparent, which would reduce long-term erosion conditions. The proposed project would limit ground disturbance and retain root structures where feasible to reduce short- and long-term potential for landslide to occur in steeply sloping portions of the project site. Based on the nature of the proposed project, the proposed project would not result in the risk of loss, injury, or death involving landslides. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Proposed vegetation treatment activities, particularly on sloped areas, could increase the potential for localized erosion or loss of topsoil. Project implementation would not involve extensive grading, trenching, or construction activities that typically generate significant erosion risks; therefore, the proposed project would be limited to minor soil disturbances, which would reduce the potential for substantial erosion or loss of topsoil. Manual treatments would include handline construction on slopes that are too steep and/or erosive for mechanized equipment. Sediment controls would be designed to promote infiltration into the surrounding landscape and include fiber rolls, jute, or similar biodegradable erosion control fabric. Fire-induced water repellency of soils would be avoided by limiting prescribed burn temperatures or employing similar restrictions. Pile burn locations would be rotated to maintain soil productivity, and adjacent duff and soils would be raked into pile burn locations if regrowth is not apparent, which would reduce long-term erosion conditions. The proposed project would limit ground disturbance and retain root structures where feasible to reduce short- and long-term potential for erosion. The proposed project would not result in substantial erosion or loss of topsoil. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**c) Would the project 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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site is in an area with low potential for liquefaction, lateral spreading, and subsidence; therefore, the project site would not be subject to associated ground-failure events. The project site is on gently to steeply sloping topography and has some potential for landslide occurrence. As previously identified, the proposed project would include BMPs to reduce the potential for landslide to occur in steeply sloping areas of the project site. The proposed project would not increase the potential for landslide to occur at the project site. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**d) Would the project 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?**

**No Impact.** Expansive soils are clay-rich soils that shrink and swell with changes in moisture content, which can damage building foundations, roads, and other structures. According to the NRCS Web Soil Survey, the project site is underlain by several soil types: Kilburn-Wrentham-Supan families association, 10% to 30% slopes; Kilburn-Wrentham-Supan families association, 30% to 60% slopes; Morical-Supan-

Greenbluff families association, 10% to 60% slopes; Rincon-Livermore-Modesto families association, 30% to 60% slopes; and Trigo-Modesto families-Badland association, 45% to 90% slopes. These soil types primarily contain loam, clay loam with minor components of clay, and sand (NRCS 2025). Due to the minimal amount of clay within the on-site soil types, the project site has a low potential for shrink-swell potential. Further, project activities would be limited to vegetation treatment activities and would not include the construction of new or renovation of existing occupiable structures or permanent facilities that would result in new on-site residents or be subject to the California Building Code. Therefore, the proposed project would not create substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property, and *no impact* would occur.

**e) Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?**

**No Impact.** The proposed project does not involve the construction or implementation of any wastewater disposal system; therefore, soil compatibility for septic systems are not applicable for the proposed project. Additionally, all project activities would be temporary and would not require wastewater management beyond portable facilities for worker use. Therefore, the proposed project would have *no impact* on septic or wastewater disposal systems.

**f) Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** According to the USGS, the project site is underlain by alluvial fan gravel or older high terraces of granitic and gneissic detritus from the Pleistocene era (Qog) (USGS 2006). Qog is typically too young to contain paleontological resources of significance. Soils underlying the project site have a maximum depth to restrictive feature of more than 80 inches (6.67 feet). The proposed project would be limited to minor soil disturbances and would not result in disturbances to the underlying bedrock or deep cuts into hillsides, which would avoid the potential for inadvertent discovery of paleontological resources. Based on the low sensitivity for paleontological resources and minor soil disturbances, the proposed project would not directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

**VIII. Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) 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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Setting

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are any gases that absorb infrared radiation in the atmosphere and are different from the criteria pollutants discussed in Section III, *Air Quality*. The primary GHGs that are emitted into the atmosphere as a result of human activities are carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), and fluorinated gases.

### CALIFORNIA GLOBAL WARMING SOLUTIONS ACT

Under the California Global Warming Solutions Act, also known as Assembly Bill (AB) 32, the CARB established a statewide GHG emissions cap for 2020, adopted mandatory reporting cards for significant sources of GHG, and adopted a comprehensive plan, known as the Climate Change Scoping Plan, identifying how emission reductions would be achieved from significant GHG sources.

In 2016 Senate Bill (SB) 32 was signed into law, amending the California Global Warming Solutions Act. SB 32, and accompanying Executive Order B-30-15, requires the CARB to ensure that statewide GHG emissions are reduced to 40% below the 1990 level by 2030. The CARB updated its Climate Change Scoping Plan in December 2017 to express the 2030 statewide target in terms of million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e). Based on the emissions reductions directed by SB 32, the annual 2030 statewide target emissions level for California is 260 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e. The CARB updated its Scoping Plan again in 2022 to update the statewide goals of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045 or earlier.

### KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 2022 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) *2022 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy* (Kern County RTP/SCS) is a 24-year blueprint that establishes a set of regional transportation goals, policies, and actions intended to guide development of the planned multimodal transportation systems in Kern County (Kern COG 2022). The California’s Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, or SB 375, calls for the Kern County RTP to include an SCS that reduces GHG emissions from passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks.

## Environmental Evaluation

### a) Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

**Less Than Significant Impact.** GHG emissions associated with vegetation treatment activities would primarily include energy use for worker vehicles and equipment and emissions associated with an increase in vehicle trips. The amount of electricity used during proposed vegetation treatments would be minimal and related to potential use of some electric hand tools and devices (e.g., phones, laptops, tablets, GPS devices, etc.). Natural gas and fuels used for construction would primarily consist of diesel and gasoline for vehicle and equipment use for vegetation management activities, including worker vehicles, chainsaws, masticators, bulldozers, chippers, and feller bunchers. The proposed project would use two to

30 crew members who would be transported using two to six vehicles with up to five supporting fire apparatus, including Type 3 or Type 6 engines, and would result in a temporary increase in vehicle trips and associated GHG emissions. The increase in vehicle trips would be temporary in nature and would not exceed the State threshold of 110 vehicle trips per day. Further, federal and State regulations in place require the use of fuel-efficient equipment and vehicles and require wasteful activities, such as diesel idling, to be limited. Work crews, in an effort to ensure cost efficiency, would not be expected to engage in wasteful or unnecessary energy and fuel practices. Although it is not required to reduce already less-than-significant impacts, MM AQ-1 would further reduce temporary GHG emissions by restricting diesel idling and requiring the use of clean equipment. Therefore, energy consumption and vehicle and equipment use during vegetation treatment activities would not generate substantial GHG emissions.

In addition, smoke from prescribed burning would release incremental amounts of GHG emissions in the form of CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, and CO. The SJVAPCD monitors “permissive-burn” days as defined by CARB. Prescribed burning activities associated with the proposed project would be conducted in accordance with an approved burn plan to reduce the risk of excessive smoke and associated GHG emissions associated with prescribed burning activities.

Operational components of the proposed project would be limited to future maintenance activities on smaller portions of the project site approximately every 5 years. Long-term maintenance activities would be conducted to a lesser degree and would not result in substantial GHG emissions. Future maintenance activities would be subject to State and local diesel-idling and other applicable regulations at that time to ensure project activities would not result in substantial GHG emissions. Further, the implementation of the proposed project would ultimately reduce the risk of large-scale destruction from wildfire, which could reduce the potential for substantial GHG emissions from catastrophic wildfire events. Based on required compliance with State and local regulations, the proposed project would not result in a potentially significant environmental impact substantial GHG emissions. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**b) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed project is consistent with the California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) and SB 32, which set statewide GHG reduction targets and promote comprehensive strategies to limit emissions. Through activities such as removing dead and dying trees, thinning vegetation, and conducting prescribed burns, the proposed project supports emission reduction and climate adaptation goals identified in the Climate Change Scoping Plan by helping to minimize the risk of high-intensity wildfires, which are significant sources of GHG emissions.

Additionally, the proposed project aligns with the Kern COG 2022 RTP/SCS, which emphasizes coordinated regional planning and GHG reductions from transportation sources. The proposed project does not include new development, increased population, or additional long-term vehicle trips, nor does it include new buildings that would be subject to energy efficiency or other design standards. All project activities are limited to vegetation management and fuels reduction, which are consistent with State and regional climate policies. Further, as discussed in *Impact Discussion VIII(a)*, the proposed project would not generate substantial short- or long-term GHG emissions, which would be consistent with State and local efforts to reduce GHG emissions.

Based on the nature of the proposed project, the proposed project would be consistent with State and local GHG-reduction plans. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

## Mitigation Measures

Mitigation is not required.

## IX. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) 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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Setting

The Hazardous Waste and Substances Site (Cortese) List is a planning tool used by the State, local agencies, and developers to comply with CEQA requirements related to the disclosure of information about the location of hazardous materials release sites. California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to develop at least annually an updated Cortese List. Various State and local government agencies are required to track and document hazardous material release information for the Cortese List. The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) EnviroStor database tracks DTSC cleanup, permitting, enforcement, and investigation efforts at hazardous waste facilities and sites with known contamination, such as federal Superfund sites, State response sites, voluntary cleanup sites, school cleanup sites, school investigation sites, and military evaluation sites (DTSC 2025). The State Water Board GeoTracker database contains records for sites that impact, or have the potential to impact, water in California, such as Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites, Department of Defense sites, and Cleanup Program sites

(State Water Board 2025). The remaining data regarding facilities or sites identified as meeting the “Cortese List” requirements can be located on the CalEPA website (CalEPA 2025).

Based on a query of the DTSC EnviroStor and State Water Board GeoTracker databases, there are no active hazardous materials sites located within or adjacent to the project site (DTSC 2025; State Water Board 2025). The nearest recorded hazardous materials site is a closed LUST site associated with Camp Ronald McDonald located in the northern portion of the project site (State Water Board 2025).

## ***Environmental Evaluation***

### **a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would include the removal of dead and dying trees and vegetation thinning through manual and mechanical treatments, herbicide application, and prescribed burning.

The proposed project would require the limited use of gasoline and diesel fuel for worker vehicles and construction vehicles and equipment during fuel-reduction activities. These materials are commonly used in vegetation treatment activities and would be handled, stored, and disposed of in accordance with applicable federal, State, and local regulations, including DTSC requirements and the California Health and Safety Code to avoid accidental fuel or gasoline leaks and spills. Any other hazardous materials would be used in accordance with State and local laws and regulations to ensure public safety. During project activities, the operator would be required to have an approved spill plan or other applicable contingency plan. In the event of any release of oil or hazardous substance into the soil, water, or air, the operator would immediately implement the project site’s plan. As part of the plan, the operator would be required to have spill containment kits present on-site during project activities. The following would be required:

- Equipment refueling would be conducted within a confined area outside riparian areas.
- All hazardous materials and petroleum products would be stored in durable containers outside of riparian areas.
- Equipment containing toxic fluids would not be stored within riparian areas.

Implementation of the proposed spill plan and compliance with existing State and local regulations for equipment use and handling of hazardous materials would ensure the proposed project does not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. In addition, although it is not required to reduce already less-than-significant impacts, MM BIO-2 and MM BIO-6 would further reduce the potential for hazardous spills to occur and run off from the project site through implementation of avoidance buffers and other site maintenance measures. Further, the proposed project includes herbicide application where necessary to limit the spread of noxious and invasive weeds. Herbicides would not be applied within 30 feet of any surface water features and would be transported, handled, and disposed of according to applicable DTSC and California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) requirements to avoid any accidental spills or associated effects. Based on required compliance with existing regulations, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**b) Would the project 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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** As identified in *Impact Discussion IX(a)*, proposed vegetation treatment activities would not involve the routine transport, storage, or use of hazardous materials in amounts that would pose a substantial risk to the public or the environment. Project activities would be limited to the use of fuels, lubricants, and other standard maintenance materials for equipment operation that would be handled, stored, and disposed of in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations, including DTSC requirements and the California Health and Safety Code to avoid accidental fuel or gasoline leaks and spills. Herbicides would not be applied within 30 feet of any surface water features and would be transported, handled, and disposed of according to applicable DTSC and CDFA requirements to avoid any accidental spills or associated effects. Although it is not required to reduce already less-than-significant impacts, MM BIO-2 and MM BIO-6 would further reduce the potential for hazardous spills to occur and run off from the project site through implementation of avoidance buffers and other site maintenance measures. The project site is not in an area with potential for naturally occurring asbestos to occur and the proposed project does not include the removal or demolition of any existing structures that could release asbestos-containing material or lead-based paint (California Geological Survey 2011). Smoke is not considered a hazardous material by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or DTSC. Based on required compliance with existing regulations, the proposed project would not 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. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**c) Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site contains the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School at the northernmost end of the project site boundary. The proposed project would not involve the routine use, storage, or disposal of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials in quantities that could pose risks to nearby sensitive receptors, such as schools. The proposed project consists of fuel-reduction activities (manual treatments, mechanical treatments, herbicide application, and prescribed burning). The proposed project would be required to comply with CARB, SJVAPCD, DTSC, California Health and Safety Code, and CDFA requirements to reduce risks associated with the use of fuels and other substances for temporary vehicle and equipment use, herbicide application, and smoke associated with prescribed burns. Based on required compliance with existing regulations, the proposed project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**d) Would the project be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?**

**No Impact.** Based on a query of the DTSC EnviroStor and State Water Board GeoTracker databases, there are no active hazardous materials sites located within or adjacent to the project site (DTSC 2025; State Water Board 2025). The nearest recorded hazardous materials site is a closed LUST site associated with Camp Ronald McDonald located in the northern portion of the project site (State Water Board 2025).

Because there are no active hazardous materials sites located on the project site, proposed vegetation management activities would not result in the disturbance of any known contaminated soils or hazardous waste sites; therefore, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment related to a listed hazardous materials site, and *no impact* would occur.

**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?**

**No Impact.** The *Kern County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan* was adopted by Kern County and the Cities of Bakersfield, California City, Delano, Shafter, Taft, Tehachapi, and Wasco as a guidance document for the regulation of land uses around the various public use airports found within Kern County (Kern County 2012). The nearest municipal airport is the Taft-Kern County Airport, located approximately 24 miles northwest of the project site, and the nearest airstrip is Stauffer Airfield, located approximately 10.4 miles southeast of the project site. The project site is not within 2 miles of an airport or airstrip or within a safety hazard zone. Further, the proposed project does not include the construction of new occupiable structures. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area, and *no impact* would occur.

**f) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Evacuation planning is incorporated into the *County of Kern Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan* (Kern County MJHMP) (Kern County 2021) and *Kern County General Plan Safety Element*, per Section 65302 of the California Government Code, which requires Kern County to identify evacuation routes and their capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency situations. Provisions for safe evacuation are included in the *Kern County General Plan Safety Element* (Kern County 2009). The proposed project includes the implementation of vegetation treatment activities over a 212.42-acre area in a rural area in the southern portion of Kern County. The project site is accessed via Cerro Noroeste Road from Mil Portero Highway, which would be used as evacuation routes for residents and visitors in the area. Vegetation management activities would be short-term and may involve the temporary presence of equipment traveling along existing roads or project access points. While this could result in minor, localized traffic delays, work would be coordinated to avoid blocking emergency vehicle access or interfering with community evacuation routes. The proposed project would improve long-term community safety by reducing the potential for large-scale wildfire events that would require visitors and residents to evacuate from the community. The implementation of wildfire prevention measures would be consistent with the Kern County MJHMP and *Kern County General Plan Safety Element*. The proposed project would not impair or interfere with an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**g) Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Kern County is in a region of California that is highly susceptible to wildland fire due to its climate, vegetation, and topography. The project site is within an area designated by CAL FIRE as having high to very high fire hazard severity (CAL FIRE 2025). The proposed project is specifically designed to reduce wildfire fuel loads through vegetation management, thereby reducing fire intensity, rate of spread, and potential threats to nearby communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. Mechanical methods and prescribed burning could create a temporary ignition risk; however, fire suppression equipment would be available on-site during vegetation treatment activities and work

restrictions would be followed during red-flag conditions in accordance with the California Fire Code, the Smoke Management Plan, and KCFD requirements. The proposed project would ultimately reduce the long-term potential for wildfire spread and intensity, thereby lowering the risk of loss, injury, or death to people and structures. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

## Mitigation Measures

Mitigation is not required.

## X. Hydrology and Water Quality

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Setting

The Clean Water Act (CWA), the principal federal law governing water quality, establishes the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), which regulates point-source discharges to waters of the United States. Construction or ground-disturbing activities that disturb 1 acre or more are required to obtain permit coverage and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) with best management practices (BMPs). CWA Section 404 regulates placement of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands, and may apply to vegetation management activities that involve ground disturbance within jurisdictional areas.

The San Joaquin Valley is surrounded on the west by the Coast Ranges, on the south by the San Emigdio and Tehachapi Mountains, on the east by the Sierra Nevada, and on the north by the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Sacramento Valley. The northern portion of the San Joaquin Valley drains toward the Delta by the San Joaquin River and its tributaries, the Fresno, Merced, Tuolumne, and Stanislaus Rivers. The southern portion of the valley is internally drained by the Kings, Kaweah, Tule, and Kern Rivers that flow into the Tulare drainage basin, including the beds of the former Tulare, Buena Vista, and Kern Lakes. Principal rivers and streams include Kern River and Poso Creek (California Department of Water Resources [DWR] 2006). The project site is within the Mil Potrero Area Groundwater Basin (DWR 2025).

The project site is under the jurisdiction of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and is included in the Grapevine Hydrologic Unit of the Tulare Lake Hydrologic Basin Plan (RWQCB 2018). The Tulare Lake Hydrologic Basin Plan establishes beneficial uses, water quality objectives, and implementation measures for both surface waters and groundwater in the Tulare Basin, including for agricultural, domestic, and ecological uses, and addresses issues like runoff, salt/nitrate pollution, drainage from the historical lakebed, and protection of drinking water supplies (RWQCB 2018).

There are two intermittent drainages that converge within the project site to form a seasonal tributary to the Cuyama River, flowing south–north through the project site (SWCA 2025b).

## ***Environmental Evaluation***

### **a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** There are two intermittent drainages that converge within the project site to form a seasonal tributary to the Cuyama River, flowing south–north through the project site (SWCA 2025b). Proposed vegetation management activities would result in minor ground disturbances that would result in a limited increase in erosion and other pollutants that could run off into nearby watercourses if not properly managed.

Project activities would be limited to the use of fuels, lubricants, and other standard maintenance materials for equipment operation that would be handled, stored, and disposed of in accordance with applicable federal, State, and local regulations, including DTSC requirements and the California Health and Safety Code to avoid accidental fuel or gasoline leaks and spills. Herbicides would not be applied within 30 feet of any surface water features and would be transported, handled, and disposed of according to applicable DTSC and CDFA requirements to avoid any accidental spills or associated effects. Manual treatments would include handline construction on slopes that are too steep and/or erosive for mechanized equipment. Sediment controls would be designed to promote infiltration into the surrounding landscape and include fiber rolls, jute, or similar biodegradable erosion control fabric. Fire-induced water repellency of soils would be avoided by limiting prescribed burn temperatures or employing similar restrictions. Pile burn locations would be rotated to maintain soil productivity, and adjacent duff and soils would be raked into pile burn locations if regrowth is not apparent, which would reduce long-term erosion conditions. The proposed project would limit ground disturbance and retain root structures where feasible to reduce short- and long-term potential for erosion. The Central Valley RWQCB has adopted a General Order of Waste Discharge Requirements (Order No. R5-2017-0061) for timberland management, including vegetation management activities, on non-federal and some federal lands. The proposed project would be required to implement BMPs and adhere to reporting obligations in accordance with Central Valley RWQCB Order No. R5-2017-0061 to address runoff from fuel-reduction activities. Further, although it is

not required to reduce already less-than-significant impacts, MM BIO-2 and MM BIO-6 would further reduce the potential for hazardous spills and other pollution to occur and run off from the project site through implementation of avoidance buffers and other site maintenance measures.

Following implementation of vegetation management activities, the project site would continue to support intact root structures and healthy vegetation cover that would reduce the long-term potential for erosion at the project site. Further, the proposed project would reduce the potential for large-scale catastrophic wildfire to occur that could lead to uncontrolled loss of vegetation in a manner that could result in a substantial increase in unstable soil conditions and erosion at the project site. Based on required compliance with existing State and local requirements, the proposed project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**b) Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?**

**No Impact.** The project site is within the Mil Potrero Area Groundwater Basin (DWR 2025). Vegetation management activities would not create impervious surfaces or otherwise interfere with groundwater recharge capabilities within the project site. The proposed project does not involve groundwater extraction, pumping, or installation of new water supply infrastructure. Therefore, the proposed project would have *no impact* on groundwater supplies or recharge.

**c) Would the project 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:**

**c-i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed project includes the implementation of vegetation treatment activities, including mechanical treatments, manual treatments, prescribed burning, and herbicide use. The proposed project would not require any work within any surface water features. The use of mechanical equipment throughout the project site would have the potential to disturb topsoil and lead to an increase in erosion that could run off into surrounding areas. Further, prescribed burning would also have the potential to disturb the topsoil that could increase erosion. Manual treatments would include handline construction on slopes that are too steep and/or erosive for mechanized equipment. Sediment controls would be designed to promote infiltration into the surrounding landscape and include fiber rolls, jute, or similar biodegradable erosion control fabric. Fire-induced water repellency of soils would be avoided by limiting prescribed burn temperatures or employing similar restrictions. Pile burn locations would be rotated to maintain soil productivity, and adjacent duff and soils would be raked into pile burn locations if regrowth is not apparent, which would reduce long-term erosion conditions. The proposed project would limit ground disturbance and retain root structures where feasible to reduce short- and long-term potential for erosion. The proposed project would be required to implement BMPs and adhere to reporting obligations in accordance with Central Valley RWQCB Order No. R5-2017-0061 to address runoff from fuel-reduction activities. Following implementation of vegetation management activities, the project site would continue to support intact root structures and healthy vegetation cover that would reduce the long-term potential for erosion at the project site. Further, the proposed project would reduce the potential for large-scale catastrophic wildfire that could lead to uncontrolled vegetation loss and associated soil instability, which could otherwise result in increased erosion at the project site. Based on required compliance with the Kern County Municipal Code and implementation of standard BMPs, the

proposed project would not result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**c-ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site consists of a 212.42-acre forested area, and existing development is limited to the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School in the central portion of the project site and outbuildings scattered through the project site that contribute to a negligible amount of impervious surface area. The proposed project would be limited to vegetation treatment activities and would not result in the creation of impervious surface area; therefore, the proposed project would not inhibit the ability of rainwater and snowmelt to absorb into the ground. Fire-induced water repellency of soils would be avoided by limiting prescribed burn temperatures or employing similar restrictions. Further, the proposed project would retain existing drainage patterns in the project area to reduce the potential to substantially increase surface runoff. Based on the nature of the proposed project, the rate or amount of surface runoff would not increase in a manner that would result in flooding on- or off-site. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**c-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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** As evaluated above, proposed vegetation treatment activities would not create impervious surfaces or alter drainage patterns in a manner that could substantially increase surface runoff. The proposed project would have the potential to increase pollutants during vegetation treatment activities that could run off from the project site. The proposed project would be required to implement BMPs and adhere to reporting obligations in accordance with Central Valley RWQCB Order No. R5-2017-0061 to address runoff from fuel-reduction activities. The proposed project would also be required to adhere to DTSC and CDFA requirements during vehicle, equipment, and herbicide use to avoid the potential for polluted runoff to occur. Based on required compliance with existing regulations, the proposed project would not create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

**c-iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** According to Federal Emergency Management Area (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) panel 06029C3825E (effective date 9/26/2008), the project site is in Zone D, which denotes areas with a potentially moderate to high risk of flooding, but the probability of flooding has not been determined. Zone D is not a designated as a Special Flood Hazard Area by FEMA (FEMA 2025). Proposed vegetation treatment activities would not create impervious surfaces or alter drainage patterns in a manner that could impede or redirect flood flows. Further, the proposed project does not include the construction of new structures or other features that could impede or redirect flood flows. Based on the nature of the proposed project, flood flows would not be impeded or redirected. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the project risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site is not in an area at risk of tsunami or seiche. As previously identified, the project site is in an area with a potentially moderate to high risk of flooding, but the probability of flooding has not been determined (FEMA 2025). The proposed project would be

required to adhere to DTSC and CDFA requirements during vehicle, equipment, and herbicide use reduce the potential to risk release of pollutants due to project inundation. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**e) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site is within the Mil Potrero Area Groundwater Basin (DWR 2025). Additionally, the project site is under the jurisdiction of the Central Valley RWQCB and is included in the Grapevine Hydrologic Unit of the Tulare Lake Hydrologic Basin Plan (RWQCB 2018). Vegetation management activities would not create impervious surfaces or otherwise interfere with groundwater recharge capabilities within the project site. Further, the proposed project does not involve groundwater extraction, pumping, or installation of new water supply infrastructure. Therefore, the proposed project would not interfere with sustainable management of the underlying groundwater basin. The proposed project would have the potential to increase pollutants during vegetation treatment activities that could run off from the project site. The proposed project would be required to adhere to DTSC and CDFA requirements during vehicle, equipment, and herbicide use to avoid the potential for polluted runoff to occur. Although it is not required to reduce already less than significant impacts, MM BIO-2 and MM BIO-6 would further reduce the potential for hazardous spills and other pollution to occur and run off from the project site through implementation of avoidance buffers and other site maintenance measures. Additionally, the proposed project would ultimately support long-term watershed health by reducing the potential for catastrophic wildfire, which can degrade water quality through ash and sediment runoff. The proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

**XI. Land Use and Planning**

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Setting**

A General Plan provides a basis for private development proposals and public projects to remain consistent with existing city, regional, and state policies. The *Kern County General Plan* is designed to help Kern County and participating jurisdictions address issues related to land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, noise, and safety. Specifically, the *Kern County General Plan Land Use, Open*

*Space, and Conservation Element* guides Kern County and participating jurisdictions in determining the location of future development, to include possible future annexations for municipal jurisdictions.

The *Kern County General Plan Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element* reflects a multi-faceted approach—preserving and optimizing its agricultural and energy assets, safeguarding natural resources, planning for housing and infrastructure needs, and integrating equity and environmental resilience into long-term development strategies.

The project site is within the State and Federal Land and Parks and Recreation Areas land use designations (Kern County 2009).

## ***Environmental Evaluation***

### **a) Would the project physically divide an established community?**

**No Impact.** The physical division of an established community typically refers to the construction of a physical feature (such as an interstate highway or railroad tracks) or removal of a means of access (such as a local road or bridge) that would impair mobility within an existing community, or between a community and outlying areas. For instance, the construction of an interstate highway through an existing community may constrain travel from one side of the community to another; similarly, such construction may also impair travel to areas outside of the community. The proposed project would be limited to fuel management treatment activities and does not include components that could impair mobility within an existing community, or between a community and outlying areas. As a result, the proposed project would not affect connectivity and would not divide an established community, and *no impact* would occur.

### **b) Would the project 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?**

**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** The project site is within the State and Federal Land and Parks and Recreation Areas land use designations under the *Kern County General Plan*. These land use designations do not prohibit or restrict vegetation management or fuel-reduction activities. As evaluated throughout this Initial Study, the proposed project would be consistent with standards and policies set forth in the *Kern County General Plan*, Kern County Municipal Code, and SJVAPCD plans. The proposed project would be required to implement MM AQ-1, MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6, MM CR-1, and MM N-1 to mitigate potential impacts associated with air quality, biological resources, cultural and tribal cultural resources, and noise, respectively, which is consistent with the identified plans and policies intended to avoid or mitigate adverse environmental effects. Upon implementation of identified mitigation, the proposed project would not conflict with other local policies or regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

## ***Mitigation Measures***

Implement MM AQ-1, MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6, MM CR-1, and MM N-1.

## XII. Mineral Resources

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Setting

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA; PRC Division 2, Chapter 9, Section 2710 et seq.) contains provisions for the inventory of mineral lands in the state. The State Geologist, in accordance with the State Mining and Geology Board *Guidelines for Classification and Designation of Mineral Lands* (CDOC n.d.), must classify Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs).

The Mineral Resources section in the *Kern County General Plan Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element* identifies and seeks to protect areas with significant mineral potential. The *Kern County Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element* references MRZs as designated by the California Geological Survey, which categorize lands based on the likelihood of containing extractable mineral resources.

Kern County is an important resource area for a variety of mineral commodities, including petroleum, natural gas, sand, gravel, and other construction materials. The CDOC Division of Mines and Geology (now the California State Mining and Geology Board) has classified areas within Kern County under the SMARA for their mineral resource significance.

### Environmental Evaluation

**a) Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?**

**No Impact.** The project site is not within a known MRZ or mineral recovery site (CDOC 2000). Further, the proposed project would be limited to minor ground disturbances from the use of construction vehicles and equipment and vegetation treatments. The proposed project would not result in excavation or large-scale ground-disturbing activities, and the project site is not in a known mineral resource zone. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**b) Would the project 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?**

**No Impact.** The project site is not within a mapped MRZ or mineral resource recovery site as identified in the *Kern County General Plan*. Because the proposed project does not overlap with a designated mineral recovery site and does not involve excavation, grading, or activities that would restrict future

mining operations, it would not result in the loss of availability of locally important mineral resources. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

## Mitigation Measures

Mitigation is not required.

## XIII. Noise

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project result in:</i>				
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Setting

The federal standards for industrial safety regulate the amount of time workers may be exposed to sound levels above 90 A-weighted decibels (dBA). Ambient noise is the all-encompassing noise associated with a given environment; it usually is a composite of sounds from many sources. The USEPA and the California Department of Health have suggested standards for ambient noise. These suggestions have been used in developing noise standards in Kern County.

The *Kern County General Plan Noise Element* is a mandatory element as required by California Government Code Section 65302(f). The State requires that local jurisdictions prepare statements of policy indicating their intentions regarding noise and noise sources, establish desired maximum noise levels according to land use categories, set standards for noise emission from transportation and fixed-point sources, and prepare implementation measures to control noise. Noise Elements are prepared in accordance with *Guidelines for the Preparation and Content of Noise Elements of the General Plan*, published by the California Office of Noise Control in 1976.

The major purpose of the *Kern County General Plan Noise Element* is to establish reasonable standards for maximum desired noise levels in Kern County, and to develop an implementation program that could effectively mitigate potential noise problems. The implementation measures have been designed so that they would not subject residential or other sensitive noise land uses to exterior noise levels in excess of 65 dBA day-night average sound level ( $L_{dn}$ ) and interior noise levels in excess of 45 dBA  $L_{dn}$ .

Noise issues are also addressed in Chapter 8.36 of the Kern County Code of Ordinances. These include acceptable hours of construction and limitations on construction-related noise impacts on adjacent

sensitive receptors. Noise-producing construction activities that are audible to a person with average hearing ability at a distance of 150 feet from the construction site, or if the construction site is within 1,000 feet of an occupied residential dwelling, are prohibited from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. on weekdays, and 9:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. on weekends. However, the following exceptions are permitted:

- The resource management director or a designated representative may for good cause exempt some construction work for a limited time.
- Emergency work is exempt from this section.

Land uses deemed sensitive by the State include schools, hospitals, rest homes, and long-term care and mental care facilities, which are considered to be more sensitive to ambient noise levels than others. The project site is in a rural area with few noise-sensitive land uses. The Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School, located in the northern portion of the project site, is considered a noise-sensitive land use.

## **Environmental Evaluation**

- a) **Would the project result in 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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** The proposed project includes the implementation of vegetation treatment activities over a 212.42-acre area within a rural portion of Kern County. The proposed project would use two to 30 crew members who would be transported using two to six vehicles with up to five supporting fire apparatus, including Type 3 or Type 6 engines. Construction equipment for the proposed project would include chainsaws, wheeled and tracked chippers, skid steer-mounted masticators, and excavator-mounted masticators for small tree thinning; standard logging equipment, including dozers, rubber tire skidders, tracked feller bunchers, dozers, and excavators; and trucks, including worker trucks, and service trucks for fuel-reduction activities. Due to the rural nature of the project area, the use of vehicles and equipment for crew transportation and vegetation treatment activities would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise within the project area. Noise generated by the proposed project would only occur during daytime hours, consistent with Kern County Code of Ordinances Chapter 8.36, *Prohibited Sounds*.

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), noise from standard construction equipment generally ranges from 80 to 85 dBA at 50 feet from the source (FHWA 2018). Assuming that equipment use would generate 85 dBA at 50 feet from the source, equipment use within 800 feet of Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School would have the potential to increase short-term ambient noise levels above County thresholds. MM N-1 has been identified to reduce short-term noise levels near the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School. The proposed project would not result in new, permanent land uses or other noise-generating features that would increase long-term ambient noise within the project area. With implementation of MM N-1, the proposed project would not increase short- or long-term noise levels in exceedance of the *Kern County General Plan* or Kern County Code of Ordinances; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

- b) **Would the project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Substantial groundborne vibration is not expected to occur as a result of the proposed project since no demolition or construction activities known to generate excessive groundborne vibration, such as pile driving, are proposed to occur. Caltrans has developed guidance for

evaluating groundborne noise and vibration impacts as it relates to transportation planning projects; however, this guidance can be used to determine project-specific impacts associated with groundborne noise and vibration from the use of construction equipment (Federal Transit Administration [FTA] 2018). Equipment for proposed vegetation treatment activities would be most similar to a large bulldozer, which would generate a vibration level of approximately 0.089 inches per second at 25 feet from the source. These vibration levels would fall below the 0.3 inch per second building damage criterion established by Caltrans, and, therefore, would not be detectable at the nearest noise-sensitive land use (FTA 2018). Operation of the proposed project does not include new features that could generate substantial long-term groundborne noise above existing conditions. Therefore, impacts related to exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**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?**

**No Impact.** The nearest municipal airport is the Taft-Kern County Airport, located approximately 24 miles northwest of the project site, and the nearest airstrip is Stauffer Airfield, located approximately 10.4 miles southeast of the project site. The project site is not within 2 miles of an airport or airstrip or within a safety hazard zone. Further, the proposed project does not include the construction of new occupiable structures. Therefore, the proposed project would expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels, and *no impact* would occur.

## **Mitigation Measures**

**MM N-1** For vegetation treatment activities that occur within 800 feet of the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School, the following noise-reduction measures would be implemented to ensure that noise levels are maintained within levels allowed by the *Kern County General Plan Noise Element* and Kern County Code of Ordinances Chapter 8.36, *Prohibited Sounds*:

- a. Stationary construction equipment that generates noise that exceeds 65 A-weighted decibels (dBA) within 800 feet of the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School would be shielded with the most modern noise control devices (i.e., mufflers, lagging, and/or motor enclosures).
- b. All construction equipment would have the manufacturers' recommended noise abatement methods installed, such as mufflers, engine enclosures, and engine vibration insulators, intact and operational.
- c. All construction equipment would undergo inspection at periodic intervals to ensure proper maintenance and presence of noise control devices (e.g., mufflers, shrouding, etc.).

## XIV. Population and Housing

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Setting

Kern County is California’s third-largest county in land area, encompassing approximately 8,172 square miles. Located at the southern end of the Central Valley, Kern County serves as the gateway to Southern California, the San Joaquin Valley, and California’s High Desert. Countywide population growth has been significant over the past several decades, fueled in large part by development in the Bakersfield area. According to the *Kern County General Plan*, the total county population between 2000 and 2013 increased just under 30%, while in the unincorporated areas the population increased by approximately 15% (Kern County 2009). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2025, the population of Kern County is approximately 908,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2025).

The project site consists largely of unincorporated rural area characterized by rugged terrain and natural landscapes. Few buildings stand in the project boundary or in the project vicinity, and the land use designations consist of State and Federal Land and Parks and Recreation Areas (Kern County 2009).

### Environmental Evaluation

- a) **Would the project 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)?**

**No Impact.** The proposed project does not include the development of new residential units, businesses, or other occupiable structures that could directly induce population growth. Additionally, the proposed project does not include the development of new permanent roads or infrastructure that could indirectly induce population growth. Vegetation treatment activities and any future maintenance would be conducted by existing KCFD crews; therefore, the proposed project would not increase short- or long-term employment opportunities that could increase population. The proposed project is limited to vegetation treatment activities and does not include components that could induce unplanned population growth directly or indirectly. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?**

**No Impact.** The proposed project does not include the removal of existing housing or relocation of housing that could displace a substantial number of people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

**XV. Public Services**

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Setting**

CAL FIRE has a legal responsibility to provide fire protection on all State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands, which are defined based on land ownership, population density, and land use. For example, CAL FIRE does not have responsibility for densely populated areas, incorporated cities, agricultural lands, or lands administered by the federal government. The SRA dataset provides areas of legal responsibility for fire protection, including SRAs, Federal Responsibility Areas (FRAs), and Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs). An SRA is where the State has determined they have financial responsibility for wildland fire protection and prevention, and where CAL FIRE is responsible for responding to and preventing fires. In most cases, an SRA is protected directly by CAL FIRE; however, in Kern County, SRA fire protection is provided by the counties under contract with CAL FIRE and are referred to as “Contract Counties.” Under this agreement, Contract Counties are responsible for providing initial attack response to fires on SRA within their counties. CAL FIRE provides funding to six counties for prevention and suppression of wildland fire on the SRA. The project site is within an SRA, and Kern County has a countywide fire department that is tasked with SRA fire protection as a CAL FIRE Contract County.

The Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) is the primary law enforcement agency, providing services across Kern County's unincorporated areas and certain cities. KCSO's jurisdiction encompasses rural, urban, and wilderness areas. The nearest KCSO location is in the community of Taft, approximately 20 miles northwest of the project site.

The project site supports an existing charter school and public outdoor recreational facilities, including Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School and Happy Gulch Campground within the northern portion of the project site. In addition, there are several unused structures, outbuildings, and camp sites in the northern portion of the project site.

## ***Environmental Evaluation***

- a) **Would the project 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?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed project includes vegetation management and fuel-reduction activities and would not result in the development of new buildings, businesses, or structures that would increase long-term demand on fire protection services. The proposed vegetation management project is specifically designed to reduce hazardous fuels and improve wildfire resilience, which would directly support local fire protection services, including the KCFD, by reducing the intensity and spread of potential wildfires. While prescribed burning and equipment use may temporarily require fire agency oversight or coordination, these activities would be short-term, planned, and managed to minimize strain on fire protection services. Overall, the proposed project would reduce long-term risk of wildfire and the associated demand on fire protection services. The proposed project would not require new or physically altered fire protection facilities. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

### ***Police protection?***

**No Impact.** The proposed project would not induce growth of population in the area or produce an increase in needed police protection. The proposed project does not involve new housing, commercial development, or other population growth that would generate demand for law enforcement services. The proposed project would not require the construction of new or expanded police facilities. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

### ***Schools?***

**No Impact.** The proposed project would not result in new population or housing, nor would it increase student enrollment in local school districts. The proposed project would not require new or physically altered public school facilities. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

### ***Parks?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would not increase local population that could increase demand for recreational facilities. Implementation of vegetation treatment activities may

temporarily impede access to Happy Gulch Campground; however, project activities would be short-term and localized, with no permanent impacts on Happy Gulch Campground or other nearby recreational resources. The proposed project would not require new or physically altered park facilities. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**Other public facilities?**

**No Impact.** The proposed project does not include any development or other features that would increase population growth or result in an increased demand on public services or facilities. The proposed project would not require new or physically altered governmental facilities. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

**XVI. Recreation**

Environmental Issues	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 or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Setting**

Westside Mountain Park, also known as Camp Condor, and Happy Gulch Campground provide organized recreational opportunities within the northern portion of the project site and surrounding area. Westside Mountain Park and Happy Gulch Campground, located in the Los Padres National Forest, offer a variety of recreational activities, including camping, hiking, picnicking, and wildlife. There are other public campgrounds within a 2-mile radius of the project site to the north, south, and west. The nearest off-site campground is Toad Springs Campground, located approximately 4,600 feet northwest of the project site.

**Environmental Evaluation**

**a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?**

**No Impact.** Project activities such as thinning, chipping, and prescribed burning are short-term and focused on wildfire fuel reduction; therefore, the proposed project would not increase the local population, introduce new housing, or generate additional demand for existing recreational facilities. Implementation of vegetation treatment activities may temporarily impede access to Happy Gulch Campground; however, project activities would be short-term and localized, with no permanent impacts on Happy Gulch Campground or other nearby recreational resources. Based on the nature of the proposed

vegetation treatment activities, the proposed project would not increase the use of existing parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**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?**

**No Impact.** The proposed project would not require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. The proposed project would not result in the construction of new or expansion of existing recreational facilities. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

**XVII. Transportation**

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Setting**

Major employers in Kern County are oil and mineral extractors, agriculture, local government, and the military. Notable “reverse commute” patterns exist because many residents travel into unincorporated rural areas to work. In addition, rail traffic and pipelines have major routes through Kern County. Interstate 5 (I-5) is the major north–south freeway through California, Oregon, and Washington. I-5 and SR 99 connect Kern County to Northern and Southern California. Kern County also serves east–west through traffic, on SR 58 and SR 46 (Kern County 2009).

The project site is accessed by Cerro Noroeste Road off Mil Potrero Highway. The project boundary is bisected by Camp Condor Road, an unpaved road that provides the main method of ingress and egress for the project area and terminates to a dead end after approximately 1 mile.

## **Environmental Evaluation**

**a) Would the project conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The *Kern County General Plan Circulation Element* qualitatively defines the condition of highways and intersections using Level of Service (LOS). LOS categories A through F are used to categorize traffic flow and assign quality levels based on performance measures, including vehicle speed, density, and congestion. The *Kern County General Plan Circulation Element* identifies that an acceptable LOS is maintained at LOS D, which describes conditions where vehicle density quickly increases and speed begins to decline. At LOS D, there is limited ability for drivers to maneuver, drivers experience reduced comfort, traffic is unable to absorb disruptions, and minor incidents cause queueing. LOS D is an accepted standard for planning of intensive urban facilities. The *Kern County General Plan* policies consider LOS D acceptable within the General Plan area for County-maintained roads. The Caltrans standard for State highways is LOS C–D (Kern County 2009).

The project site is in a rural area with very few roadways or opportunities for pedestrian or bicycle use. The proposed project does not include new development or other features that could increase long-term vehicle, bicycle, or pedestrian trips within the project area. A temporary increase in vehicle trips caused by worker vehicles, equipment, and trucks during implementation of proposed vegetation treatments would be generated by the proposed project. The proposed project would use two to 30 crew members who would be transported using two to six vehicles with up to five supporting fire apparatus, including Type 3 or Type 6 engines. The increase in vehicle trips would be temporary in nature and would not permanently increase the number of trips along proximate roadways in a manner that could reduce LOS beyond existing conditions. The proposed project would not conflict with the goals and policies of the *Kern County General Plan Circulation Element*. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** According to the *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* (LCI 2018), projects that would not generate a potentially significant level of VMT, that are consistent with an SCS or general plan, or that would generate or attract fewer than 110 trips per day would not result in significant transportation impacts. Vegetation treatment activities would be conducted by two to 30 crew members who would be transported using two to six vehicles with up to five supporting fire apparatus, including Type 3 or Type 6 engines. Following project activities, maintenance activities would occur in different portions of the project site approximately every 5 years. Long-term maintenance activities would be smaller in scale than the initial treatments and would not generate a substantial increase in VMT. The proposed project would not generate new vehicle trips that could meet or exceed 110 trips per day or generate a significant increase in VMT. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**c) Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would use existing access routes and roads during project activities and does not include the development of new temporary or permanent access routes or roadways that could introduce new roadway hazards due to geometric design features. The use of large

vehicles and equipment during vegetation treatment activities may temporarily increase roadway hazards by slowing traffic flow on proximate roadways; however, large vehicle and equipment use would be temporary and primarily limited to on-site private roadways. The proposed project would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site would be accessed via Cerro Noroeste Road, an existing access route. Large trucks and equipment transportation along Cerro Noroeste Road may temporarily increase congestion; however, large vehicle and equipment use would be temporary and would not result in complete roadway blockages. Further, the proposed project would not require traffic controls or road closures that could impede emergency access to the project area. The proposed project would not result in inadequate emergency access. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

**XVIII. Tribal Cultural Resources**

Environmental Issues	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), or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency would consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Setting**

Approved in 2014, AB 52 added tribal cultural resources to the categories of resources that must be evaluated under CEQA. Tribal cultural resources are defined as either of the following:

- 1) Sites, features, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American Tribe that are either of the following:

- a. Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the CRHR; or
  - b. Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in PRC Section 5020.1(k).
- 2) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in PRC Section 5024.1(c). In applying these criteria for the purposes of this paragraph, the lead agency would consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American Tribe.

Recognizing that tribes have expertise with regard to their Tribal history and practices, AB 52 requires lead agencies to provide notice to tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of a proposed project if they have requested notice of projects proposed within that area. If a Tribe requests consultation within 30 days upon receipt of the notice, the lead agency must consult with the Tribe regarding the potential for adverse impacts on tribal cultural resources as a result of a project. Consultation may include discussing the type of environmental review necessary, the presence and/or significance of tribal cultural resources, the level of significance of a project's impacts on the tribal cultural resources, and available project alternatives and mitigation measures recommended by the Tribe to avoid or lessen potential impacts on tribal cultural resources.

Kern County is home to several Indigenous peoples with rich cultural histories and deep connections to the land. The Tübatulabal, Yokuts, and Kawaiisu Tribes are among the primary Native groups historically inhabiting the region. The Tübatulabal's traditional homelands extended over 1,300 square miles, including the Kern and South Fork Kern River drainages extending from high mountainous terrain in the north to below the junction of the two rivers in the south. Yokuts Tribes populated the San Joaquin Valley from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta south to Bakersfield and the adjacent foothills of the Sierra Nevada, which lies to the east. The Kawaiisu resided in the Tehachapi Mountains and surrounding areas. They were semi-nomadic, engaging in seasonal migrations to explore various ecological zones for resources (SWCA 2025c).

Native American Tribes were notified about the proposed project on October 15, 2025, consistent with State regulations under AB 52. One response was received from the Tribal Elders' Council for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, requesting to be sent a copy of the CRSR and, pending results, may request to have a Santa Ynez tribal monitor on-site during ground-disturbing activities. The CRSR was sent to the Tribe on December 12, 2025, and no further responses have been received to date.

## ***Environmental Evaluation***

- 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:**
  - a-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)?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Based on the results of the records search conducted at the SSJVIC, one historic resource was identified within the project site (P-15-013307). As previously identified, no original buildings associated with P-15-013307 remain on the project site. The records search did not identify any other buried historic resources within the project site. Further, no newly recorded historic

resources were identified as a result of the survey effort (SWCA 2025c). Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the disturbance of any known historic resources. A burn plan would be prepared for the proposed project to identify specific methods to ensure prescribed burning activities would be contained within the project site, which would avoid the potential for existing buildings or structures in the project site to be adversely affected by project activities. The proposed project would not result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**a-ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency would consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.**

**Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.** Pursuant to AB 52, KCFD provided notice to local California Native American Tribes with geographic and/or cultural ties to the project region. Referral letters were sent to Tribal representatives on October 15, 2025. One response was received from the Tribal Elders' Council for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, requesting to be sent a copy of the CRSR and, pending results, may request to have a Santa Ynez Tribal monitor on-site during ground-disturbing activities. The CRSR was sent to the Tribe on December 12, 2025, and no further responses have been received to date.

No newly recorded cultural resources were identified as a result of the survey effort (SWCA 2025c). Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the disturbance of any known cultural archaeological resources. The proposed project would be limited to minor soil disturbances, which would reduce the potential for inadvertent discovery of unknown cultural archaeological resources. Further, MM CR-1 has been included to identify the proper protocol in the unlikely event that previously unidentified cultural resources are uncovered during proposed ground-disturbing activities. In the unlikely event that human remains are encountered during proposed ground-disturbing activities, the proposed project would be required to comply with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, which outlines the protocol for unanticipated discovery of human remains. Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance would occur until the Kern County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98. The Kern County Coroner must be notified of the find immediately. If the human remains are determined to be prehistoric, the coroner would notify the NAHC, which would determine and notify an MLD. The MLD would complete the inspection of the project site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials. Based on the low potential to uncover tribal cultural resources within the project area, implementation of MM CR-1, and required compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, the proposed project would not result in adverse impacts to known or unknown tribal cultural resources; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

## **Mitigation Measures**

Implement MM CR-1.

## XIX. Utilities and Service Systems

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(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"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Setting

The project site is within a rural portion of Kern County, west of the Pine Mountain Club community. Telephone services are provided to the community by AT&T and Verizon, and electricity is provided by Southern California Edison (SCE). Trash disposal service is provided to Pine Mountain Club by Pine Mountain Club Transfer Station and Kern County Transfer Station (Pine Mountain Club 2025).

### Environmental Evaluation

- a) Would the project 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?**

**No Impact.** The proposed project involves surface-level vegetation management activities such as thinning, chipping, and prescribed burning. It does not involve new development of permanent structures or the installation of utility connections. No new or expanded utility facilities would be required to support the proposed project. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**b) Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed project does not involve groundwater extraction, pumping, or installation of new water supply infrastructure. Water use would be limited to use for dust suppression and prescribed burn control and would not require a substantial increase in water use in a manner that could impede existing water supply. The proposed project would have sufficient water supplies available to serve the proposed project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

**c) Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?**

**No Impact.** The proposed project would not generate wastewater or require connection to a wastewater treatment facility. Temporary worker crews would use portable restrooms, which would be serviced and disposed of off-site by licensed providers. The proposed project does not require new or expanded connections to a wastewater treatment provider. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**d) Would the project 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?**

**No Impact.** Implementation of the proposed project would result in organic waste in the form of dead and dying trees and other vegetation and woody debris. Vegetation would be disposed of by piling and burning, chipping, masticating, or under burning and would not require the use of a local waste facility. Due to the nature of disposal, the proposed project would not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

**e) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?**

**No Impact.** As described above, organic waste produced by project activities would be disposed of on-site and would not require the use of a waste facility for disposal. Due to the nature of solid waste disposal, the proposed project would be compliant with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

### **Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

## XX. Wildfire

Environmental Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:</i>				
(a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Setting

Kern County is in Southern California, at the southern end of California’s San Joaquin Valley. Kern County is California’s third-largest county in land area, at approximately 8,172 square miles, and the terrain varies dramatically, from the fertile lowlands of the San Joaquin Valley, rugged mountain peaks of the southern Sierra Nevada and Tehachapi Mountains, to the sweeping panoramas of the Mojave Desert. Kern County’s main water sources are snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada that feed into the Kern River from other tributaries and groundwater resources of the San Joaquin Valley and Mojave Desert. Generally, Kern County is classified as desert or semi-arid, with hot, dry summers and mild, humid winters. In most areas, 90% of the precipitation occurs between November and April. The Valley averages 3 to 7 inches of precipitation annually. The western side of the Sierra Nevada and Tehachapi Mountains receive as much as 40 inches of precipitation a year. The desert averages 3 to 6 inches of precipitation a year but is extremely variable. Snowfall is rare in the desert and valley regions but may range from 1 to 4 inches (Kern County 2009).

SRAs are lands in California where CAL FIRE has legal and financial responsibility for wildfire protection. CAL FIRE administers fire hazard classifications and building standard regulations in these areas. SRAs are defined as lands that: are in the unincorporated county areas, are not federally-owned, have wildland vegetation cover rather than agricultural or ornamental plants, have row crops or seasonal crops, or have watershed, range, or forage values. According to the CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) viewer, the project site is within High and Very High FHSZ within an SRA (CAL FIRE 2025).

## **Environmental Evaluation**

- a) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site is within High and Very High FHSZs within an SRA (CAL FIRE 2025). The *Kern County General Plan Safety Element* and Kern County MJHMP provide provisions for safe evacuation throughout Kern County (Kern County 2009). The proposed project includes the implementation of vegetation treatment activities to reduce the risk for catastrophic wildfire in the area within the SRA. The proposed project would be consistent with goals and policies of the *Kern County General Plan Safety Element* and Kern County MJHMP because it would result in the prevention and mitigation of wildfire events. Vegetation management activities would be short-term and may involve the temporary presence of equipment along existing roads or project access points. While this could result in minor, localized traffic delays, work would be coordinated to avoid blocking emergency vehicle access or interfering with community evacuation routes. In addition, the purpose of the proposed project is to improve long-term community safety and facilitate implementation of emergency response and evacuation plans in the area. The proposed project would not impair an emergency response or evacuation plan, including the *Kern County General Plan Safety Element* or Kern County MJHMP. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

- b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, if located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site is in a forested area with varying topography and climate conditions that facilitate wildfire risk. The project site consists of nearly flat to steeply sloping topography and is within High and Very High FHSZ within a SRA (CAL FIRE 2025). The proposed project includes vegetation management through manual and mechanical methods, as well as prescribed burning and herbicide use. Fuel-reduction activities would result in an overall reduction of wildfire risk in the area; however, due to existing drought conditions, mastication and prescribed burning has the potential to ignite a wildfire if conducted in hot, dry conditions. Fire suppression equipment would be available on-site during vegetation treatment activities and work restrictions would be followed during red-flag conditions to avoid the potential for accidental wildfire ignition during vegetation treatment activities in accordance with the California Fire Code, the Smoke Management Plan, and KCFD requirements. Proposed prescribed burning activities would be implemented only under carefully controlled conditions to mitigate the potential for uncontrolled spread of wildfire and associated smoke emissions, including scheduling on “permissive-burn” days and adhering to specific requirements as designated by CARB and the SJVAPCD (SJVAPCD 2002). In addition, the proposed project does not include new development of residences or other occupiable structures that would be at risk due to its location in a Very High FHSZ. Adherence to existing regulations and requirements would reduce the potential for wildfire ignition at the project site; therefore, the proposed project would not exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project site occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

- c) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project 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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed project does not include the development or expansion of any roads, utilities, or other infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk within a High or Very High FHSZ. Project activities would use existing access routes and landings within the project area. The proposed project includes the establishment of a fuel break, which would be created through manual and mechanical vegetation treatment activities. Fire suppression equipment would be available on-site during manual and mechanical vegetation treatment activities and work restrictions would be followed during red-flag conditions to avoid the potential for accidental wildfire ignition during equipment use in accordance with the California Fire Code and KCFD requirements. Based on required compliance with the California Fire Code and KCFD requirements, implementation of the fuel break would not exacerbate fire risk that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and no mitigation is required.

- d) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project 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?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** According to FEMA FIRM panel 06029C3825E (effective date 9/26/2008), the project site is in Zone D, which denotes areas with a potentially moderate to high risk of flooding, but the probability has not been determined. Zone D is not designated as a Special Flood Hazard Area by FEMA (FEMA 2025). Proposed vegetation treatment activities would not alter drainage patterns in a manner that could increase the rate of potential flood flows.

Fire-induced water repellency of soils would be avoided by limiting prescribed burn temperatures or employing similar restrictions. Pile burn locations would be rotated to maintain soil productivity, and adjacent duff and soils would be raked into pile burn locations if regrowth is not apparent, which would reduce long-term erosion conditions and risk of soil instability. The proposed project would limit ground disturbance and retain root structures where feasible to reduce short- and long-term potential for erosion and associated soil instability. Following implementation of vegetation management activities, the project site would continue to support intact root structures and healthy vegetation cover that would reduce the long-term potential for soil instability at the project site. Further, the proposed project would ultimately reduce the potential for large-scale catastrophic wildfire to occur that could lead to uncontrolled loss of vegetation in a manner that could result in a substantial increase in unstable soil conditions at the project site. Further, the proposed project does not include the construction of new structures or other features that would be at risk for post-fire events. The proposed project would not 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. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation is not required.

## **Mitigation Measures**

Mitigation is not required.

## XXI. Mandatory Findings of Significance

Environmental Issues	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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Does the project have environmental effects which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Environmental Evaluation

- 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?**

**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** Based on the analysis provided in the resource sections above, the proposed project has the potential to disturb sensitive biological resources and unknown cultural and/or tribal cultural resources. MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6 have been identified and would reduce potential impacts related to disturbance of special-status plants, special-status wildlife, and surface water features. Additionally, MM CR-1 has been identified to reduce impacts to unknown cultural and/or tribal cultural resources if present within the project area. Therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

- 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)?**

**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** Based on the nature of the proposed project and the analysis provided in the resource sections above, the proposed project would have the potential to result in temporary environmental impacts associated with air quality, biological resources, cultural and

tribal cultural resources, and noise that could have a cumulative effect with other development projects in the project region. MM AQ-1, MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6, MM CR-1, and MM N-1 have been identified to reduce potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project to a less-than-significant level. Other past and future projects requiring a discretionary permit in the project region would also be subject to applicable mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts associated with these impact issue areas. Therefore, based on implementation of project-level mitigation measures, discretionary review, and CEQA review of other projects within the project area, potential impacts would be *less than cumulatively considerable with mitigation*.

**c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?**

**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** Based on the nature and scale of the proposed project and the analysis provided in the resource sections above, the proposed project has the potential to cause environmental effects that could result in substantial adverse effects on human beings. Potential impacts associated with air quality and noise would be reduced to less-than-significant levels with implementation of MM AQ-1 and MM N-1. Therefore, potential impacts associated with environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

**Conclusion**

Based on implementation of MM AQ-1, MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6, MM CR-1, and MM N-1, all potential impacts associated with the proposed project would be mitigated to less-than-significant levels.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Biological Resources Technical Report**