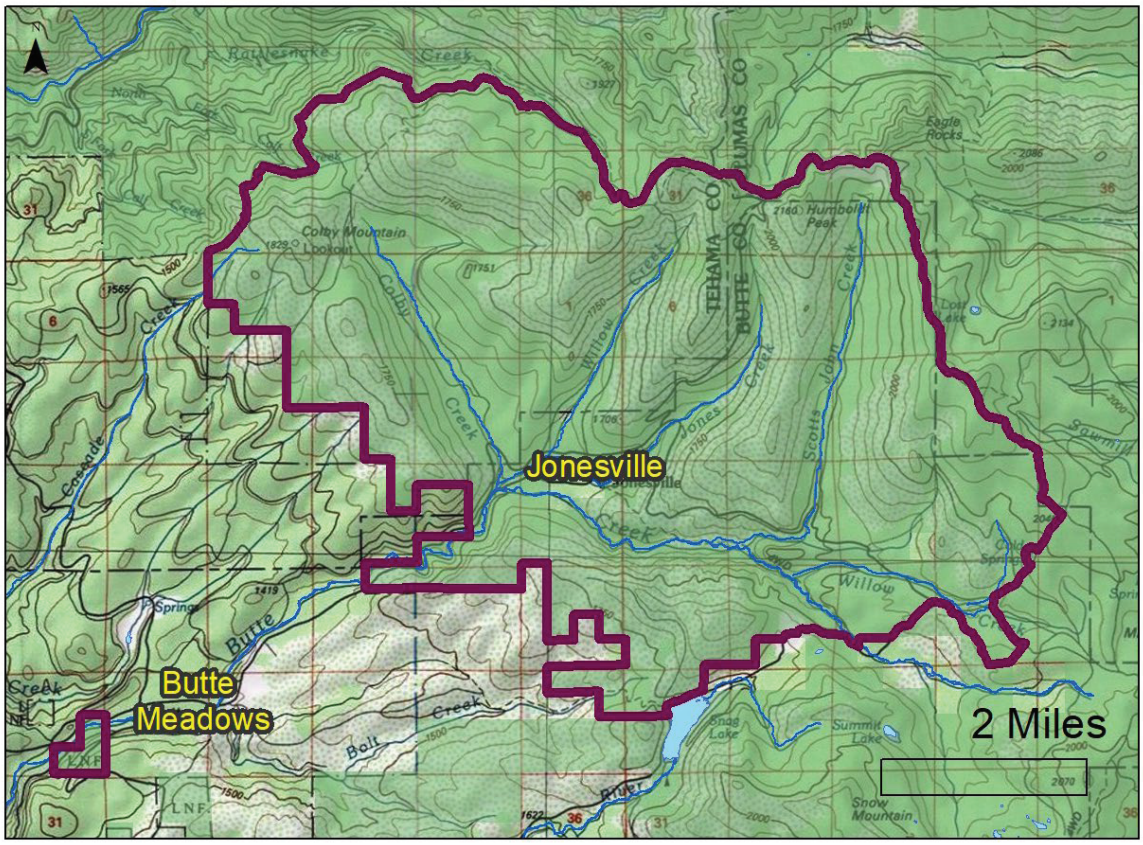
Draft
Initial Study - Negative Declaration
for the
Upper Butte Creek Forest Health Project,
Portions of Butte, Plumas, and Tehama Counties, California



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NEGATIVE DECLARATION

STAGE OF CEQA DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT

☐ **Administrative Draft.** This California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document is in preparation by Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD) staff.

☒ **Public Document.** This completed CEQA document has been filed by BCRCD at the State Clearinghouse on or before July 8, 2026, and is being circulated for a 30-day state agency and public review period. The review period ends on Friday, August 7, 2026.

☐ **Final CEQA Document.** This final CEQA document contains the changes made by the District following consideration of comments received during the public and agency review period. The CEQA administrative record supporting this document is on file, and available for review, at the Butte County Resource Conservation District office, 150 Chuck Yeager Way, Suite A, Oroville, CA 95965.

1) Background and Program Description

Environmental Setting

The proposed project area spans 19,826 acres within the following:

- Township 27N, Range 4E, Sections 25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, and 36.
- Township 27N, Range 5E, Sections 31, 32, and 33.
- Township 26N, Range 4E, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, and 25.
- Township 26N, Range 5E, Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 30.

Elevations in the project area range from 4,050 to 7,087 feet above sea level. The project area is in the Sacramento Valley Air Basin. It is rural and remote, but since part is in Butte County, part is within an MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization.) The project area is not on any of the lists enumerated under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code regarding hazardous waste facilities.

Project Description

The Upper Butte Creek Forest Health Project (UBC Project) is a forest and watershed restoration project spanning almost 20,000 acres around the Butte County communities of Jonesville and Butte Meadows, California. Butte County RCD has been involved in helping Lassen National Forest plan the project since 2019. During this time, BCRCD

staff served as partner-side planning leads and co-coordinated many of the resource studies, project-level forest plan amendments, and public comment opportunities during the NEPA process. BCRCD expects to continue to be involved in implementation of the project for years to come.

To restore a natural range of variation in forest composition and structure, biodiversity, and meadow health, and to improve the area's transportation network as well as its in-stream habitat, the project's activities include:

- Manual and mechanical thinning
- Prescribed fire
- Post-wildfire reforestation including the use of herbicides for site preparation
- Meadow, riparian, and stream restoration to improve hydrological and aquatic function, including through process-based restoration
- Road route realignment
- Invasive plant management
- Establishment of strategic fuel breaks and maintenance of access routes to improve emergency response ingress and public egress capability

These treatments are designed to work interactively to restore fire-adapted ecosystem processes, protect critical watersheds, reduce the likelihood of high-severity wildfire burn, and increase the capacity of the landscape to recover from disturbance. Additionally, mechanical treatments include commercial logging and watershed and fuels reduction activities that will provide economic support to local businesses and communities.

As of this writing, the UBC area includes both unburned forest and areas impacted by recent wildfires. Approximately 9,626 acres (48 percent) of National Forest System lands within the Upper Butte Creek Project were impacted by the 2021 Dixie Fire. Of that landscape, 4,592 acres, 23 percent of the Upper Butte Creek project burned at high severity (defined as greater than 75 percent basal area loss). The area was also narrowly missed by the 2024 Park Fire which burned, and was fought, to within about a thousand yards of the project area.

About 33 percent of the UBC project area lies within the wildland-urban interface (WUI), defined as areas where structures and other human development are intermingled with or adjacent to wildland fuels and therefore subject to increased wildfire risk. The project area includes the communities of Butte Meadows and Jonesville, which are vulnerable to future fire events due to a combination of steep topography and prevailing weather patterns that can contribute to rapid fire spread.

It is possible that new wildfires will burn parts of the UBC project area in coming years. If this happens, conditions-based thresholds for action built into the UBC NEPA document specify when, where and how project managers would pivot from "green forest" management activities to post-fire restoration activities.

The project area includes mixed-conifer forests, meadows, aspen and oak stands, and most of the headwaters of Butte Creek, the best remaining stronghold of the Endangered Species Act threatened Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon. Butte Creek helps sustain both irreplaceable ecological function and the water supply for millions of Californians. The landscape includes important mature forest wildlife habitat such as needed for the California spotted owl and American goshawk.

The LNF developed the UBC Project to work together with and complement previous and ongoing National Environmental Policy Act decisions in the region, including the West Lassen Headwaters Landscape Restoration Project, Dixie Postfire Restoration and Recovery project, and the Plumas North Fork Forest Recovery Project on the Plumas National Forest. UBC also aligns with related restoration efforts on non-Federal lands, such as meadow restoration on the neighboring California Department of Fish and Wildlife-owned Butte Creek House Ecological Reserve.

Project Status and Regulatory Setting

The project was authorized under NEPA on February 18, 2026 (PALS #62761). Accordingly, parts of the project are already being implemented using Federal funding. Because other parts of the project are expected to be carried out in part with State funding, the project must be considered a project subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Public Resources Code [PRC] § 21000 et seq.).

Where a prior environmental analysis has been prepared for a project, the CEQA statute directs a lead agency to analyze in detail only those parts of a project which were not adequately addressed (to fulfill the requirements of CEQA) in the previous environmental document (CEQA guidelines §15221, 4799.05(d)(1)). In this case, the previous environmental document is the Finding of No Significant Impact under NEPA signed Feb 18, 2026 (§15361). Accordingly, this draft Negative Declaration focuses its analysis on topics required to be analyzed under CEQA that were not part of the original NEPA analysis.

Adequacy of NEPA analysis for purposes of CEQA. Pursuant to CEQA guidelines Section 15063(a)(2), BCRCD has a responsibility to independently analyze for the project's potential effects (if any) on biological resources deemed special-status at the State level, if the Federal analysis did not do so. Effects on all **plant** species that are afforded special protection at the State level, and that also have the potential to occur in the project area, have already been adequately analyzed by USDA 2025e and 2025f. Effects on several **animal** species and **sensitive natural communities** that are afforded special protection at the State level, and that also have the potential to occur in the project area, are independently analyzed here.

2) CEQA GUIDANCE AND Findings

Based on reconnaissance-level and protocol-level surveys, the project design, analysis conducted for the prior NEPA document, a working local knowledge of the resources likely to be present in the project area, features incorporated into program design, and the environmental evaluation presented in the Initial Study, the project would not cause significant adverse effects related to aesthetics, agriculture and forestry resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology/soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology/water quality, land use/planning, mineral resources, noise, population/housing, public services, recreation, transportation, tribal cultural resources, utilities/service systems, and wildfire. In addition, substantial adverse effects on humans, either direct or indirect, would not occur. As designed, the program would not affect any important examples of the major periods of California prehistory or history. Nor would the project 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, or substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal. The program would not have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable.

Not all resources in the project area have been fully evaluated at the time of this writing; however, with the incorporation of certain design features that protect biological, cultural and other resources that may be found during protocol-level surveys, BCRCD finds that no environmental effects related to the project activities would exceed stated CEQA-related significance criteria. There is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the BCRCD, that the project may have a significant effect on the environment.

The following section contains the Initial Study used by the Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD) to evaluate the potential for the project to have significant effects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a)(2).

3) CEQA Environmental Checklist

The following discussion addresses environmental subjects identified in the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G Environmental Checklist. All potential impacts would either not occur or be minor in nature and be considered less than significant after mitigation.

Aesthetics.

☒ This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☐ This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

Agriculture/Forestry.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to agriculture and forestry is considered significant if the project would do any of the following:

- *Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (referred to in this section as "Special Designation Farmland"), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use?*
- *Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?*
- *Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestland (as defined in PRC Section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by PRC Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104[g])?*
- *Result in the loss of forestland or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?*
- *Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Special Designation Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?*

The project area does not contain any Special Designation Farmland nor does it contain any Williamson Act contracted land (Butte County, 2015; DOC, 2016). It does not conflict with any zoning because the entire project area is already Federal forestland, and the project is consistent with the Lassen National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended. Two road realignment projects[1] would convert small amounts of forestland to road but also convert an equivalent acreage of current road back to forest

[1] These are 1) the Humbug Road Realignment, which would convert 1.2 acres of forestland to road but also convert an equivalent acreage of existing road back to meadow and riparian habitat; and the Scotts John realignment, which would convert 7.5 acres of forestland to road but also convert an equivalent acreage of existing road back to meadow and riparian habitat.

or riparian/meadow habitat, resulting in no permanent net loss or gain of forest.

☐ Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.
☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, a project's airborne emissions–related impact is considered significant if the project would do any of the following:

♦ *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan:*

See "Environmental and Regulatory Setting," and analysis, below

♦ *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:*

See "Environmental and Regulatory Setting," and analysis, below

♦ *Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations:*

This significance threshold relates to not the *absolute volume* of pollution generated, but its *relative proximity* to sensitive individuals and populations. Pollutants considered here might include criteria air pollutants, toxic air contaminants (TAC), asbestos, diesel and other particulate matter, et cetera, all as applicable. Parts of the project are near homes, but all of the project is many miles from the nearest school. The parts of the project where the most substantial toxic air contaminants (diesel emissions) would be generated are the road realignment portions. Construction-related sources of TAC emissions (i.e., diesel PM2.5) for the Humbug Road realignment project are modeled as a maximum of 0.9 lb./day. However, all construction areas are much more than 1,000 feet from homes. In general, if no sensitive receptors are within 1,000 feet of the project parcel(s), impacts under this resource question are usually considered insignificant.

The project involves no operational sources of TAC emissions.

♦ *Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people*

There is no reason to believe the project would result in harmful odors or in emissions other than those analyzed here.

♦ *Generate GHG emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment:*

See "Environmental and Regulatory Setting," and analysis, below

♦ *Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs?:*

See "Environmental and Regulatory Setting," and analysis, below

Environmental and Regulatory Setting. The goal of improving and protecting air quality in the United States is primarily pursued through the Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) and implemented at the state level principally through the California Clean Air Act (CCAA), which is implemented at the individual air basin level by local air quality districts such as (in Butte County) the Butte County Air Quality Management District.

The CAA establishes the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for criteria air pollutants. The NAAQS set forth the maximum permissible levels of certain common pollutants in the ambient air. The EPA designates areas within each State where the level of the pollutant exceeds the NAAQS as nonattainment areas. The states are then responsible for meeting the NAAQS in nonattainment areas within their borders through State Implementation Plans (SIPs).

In nonattainment or maintenance areas (maintenance areas are areas that were previously designated nonattainment but have now met the standard – with EPA approval of a suitable air quality plan), transportation projects (such as the Humbug Road and Scotts John Road realignment projects) must, in particular, conform to the applicable SIP if they will be funded by the Federal Highways Administration, Federal Transit Administration, or any agency that has been delegated project approval by these agencies.

The UBC project site spans three counties (Butte, Tehama, and Plumas Counties), thus subjecting the area to regulation by three different air quality management districts. These are the Butte County Air Quality Management District, the Tehama County Air Pollution Control District, and the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District. Therefore, analysis under CEQA requires understanding whether project implementation could interfere with one, two, or more AQ districts' attainment and/or maintenance of both federal and state ambient air quality standards. Further details on District-specific attainment can be found on individual District websites and on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website: https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/ancl.html.

The Project is in an area considered to be in non-attainment (not meeting standards) for 8-hour ozone in Tehama County and for particulate matter (PM 2.5) in Plumas County. Butte County is currently nonattainment for the Federal 8-hour ozone standard and the State 24-hour PM10 standard. Butte County is designated nonattainment-transitional for

the State 1-hour and 8-hour ozone standards and designated attainment for the Federal 24-hour PM2.5 Standard with a maintenance plan in effect.

Various sources contribute to ozone and PM (automobile emissions, woodstove smoke, wildfire smoke, and prescribed fire smoke). For all other air pollutants, all three counties are either in attainment or unclassified.

Analysis.

Project activities (timber sales, road improvement and construction, thinning, mastication, meadow restoration activities, etc.) can generate fugitive dust. Prescribed fire activities will also generate smoke. Population centers with the potential to be impacted by smoke and dust, depending on weather conditions, are the small communities of Jonesville, Butte Meadows, and Lomo. No schools, daycare centers, hospitals, or nursing facilities exist in these seasonal, recreational-based communities. However, the Almanor Basin and the Forest Ranch/Chico areas are larger population centers that could also be impacted by some smoke from project activities, depending on the atmospheric conditions at the time of burning.

Without proper control, dust and smoke generated from the project could have an adverse effect on air quality. PM10 and PM2.5 dust emissions from heavy equipment work would depend on the conditions (soil moisture, soil content, wind speed, and duration. However, with the controls that are integrated into the design of the project fugitive dust would not result in any adverse air quality impacts. Heavy equipment use also results in minimal daily emissions of ROG, CO, NOx, SO2, PM10, and PM2.5, and odor from consuming diesel fuel. Emissions would occur during implementation only and would quickly disperse. Emissions from diesel equipment would be minimized as feasible by following the mitigation measures listed below. Furthermore, construction would occur during normal working hours when dispersed recreationists are less likely to travel through the area, compared to weekends and holidays.

The project includes the use of fire as a fuels reduction and ecological management tool. Fire produces smoke. However, it is the role of local and State air quality regulations to set acceptable quotas for daily and seasonal smoke production and to allocate these production quotas across numerous beneficial land uses, including the project's. Therefore, by complying with all State and local regulations and obtaining all required permits, prescribed and cultural fire projects of this size categorically avoid imposing significant air quality effects on the environment and the public.

In addition, on projects where BCRCD is the project manager the following air quality measures (adopted from BCAQMD) would be implemented.

- All on- and off-road diesel equipment shall not idle for more than five minutes. Signs shall be posted in the designated queuing areas and/or job sites to remind drivers and operators of the five-minute idling limit.

- All construction equipment shall be maintained in proper tune according to the manufacturer's specifications. Equipment must be checked by a certified mechanic

and determined to be running in proper condition before the start of work.

- All dirt stockpile areas should be sprayed daily as needed, covered, or a District approved alternative method will be used.
- All trucks hauling dirt, sand, soil, or other loose materials are to be covered or should maintain at least two feet of freeboard (minimum vertical distance between top of load and top of trailer) in accordance with local regulations.

BCAQMD has not established a threshold of significance for GHGs. As it is unlikely that any one project would substantially contribute to global climate change, BCAQMD considers GHG impacts to be cumulative in nature. Therefore, BCRCD bases its analysis on the provisions of the Butte County Climate Action Plan (Butte County 2021 CAP).

The UBC project would emit GHGs from timber removal, fuels reduction, and road realignment activities. Emissions would be of normal magnitude for the activity type. The project's forest health activities, such as mechanical thinning that allows existing trees to put on a burst of growth, and reforestation activities that result in a greater capacity for long-term carbon storage per forested acre, would be expected to result in some modest increase in carbon sequestration. Furthermore, if the forest health treatments function as intended to reduce the number of acres that burn at very high severity in the area's next wildfire, the project will also boast avoided GHG emissions. While it is impossible to precisely predict the GHG emissions of such a project over the multiple years it will span, BCRCD finds the project's direct and indirect GHG increases are very slight and the project would not obstruct implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

Project-specific analysis for the Humbug Road Realignment Project

Other than the timber sales which would generate some diesel emissions and fugitive dust as part of the normal course of forestry operations, the Humbug Road Realignment is likely the UBC project's largest contributor of GHG emissions, dust and diesel emissions. The realignment would re-route Humbug Summit Road (BU 91513) around Willow Creek Meadow. This would be achieved through a combination of 0.39 miles of new construction, 1.33 miles of existing road improvement, and 0.40 miles of old road decommissioning. The result would be that the trip on Humbug Summit Road from Skyway to the Almanor Basin would be 1.00 miles longer in the future than it is today. However, the overall maintenance burden from the new upland alignment would be smaller. Humbug Summit Road is a remote regional haul route that is lightly used, often with hours passing between vehicles. The route is primarily used by recreationists and secondarily by Forest Service activities.

Following guidelines set by the Butte County Air Quality Management District (BCAQMD 2024), the Humbug Road Realignment's likely emissions were analyzed using CalEEMod. At the time of analysis, uncertainty remains about exactly which type of equipment contractors may use to accomplish the project, so BCRCD used the operation-hours for each broad heavy equipment category that were estimated in 2025 by the

project's planning-phase engineering firm, American Engineering. However, BCRCD used CalEEMod's default values for emissions for each broad heavy equipment category. The CalEEMod modeling also accounts for fact that the footprint of the new road segment would be permanently removed from forestland, while the (equivalent) footprint of the old road segment would be permanently restored to meadow.

BCRCD's CalEEMod analysis assumes that all rock will come from the existing Forest Service quarry that is less than 3 miles from the project site, and that all natural-surface roads used during the construction project will be regularly watered.

BCRCD compared outputs from the CalEEMod modeling to the applicable threshold values adopted by BCAQMD. Results are presented in the following table.

Pollutant	Threshold: Construction-Related	Project: Construction-Related	Threshold: Operation-Related	Project: Operation-Related
ROG	137 lb./day, not to exceed 4.5 tons/year	3 lb./day	25 lbs./day	
Nox	137 lb./day, not to exceed 4.5 tons/year	23 lbs./day	25 lbs./day	
PM < 10 microns	80 lbs./day	63 lb./day	80 lbs./day	
Non-stationary source GHGs	No adopted threshold	55 metric ton CO_2e over life of construction project	No adopted threshold	
Stationary source GHGs	No adopted threshold	N/a	No adopted threshold	
New Source TAC (Toxic Air Contaminant)	Same as operational threshold	N/a	Ambient Diesel $PM_{2.5}$ increase >0.3 $\mu g/m^3$ annual average	
New Source TAC (Toxic Air Contaminant) Risks and Hazards – Cumulative Impacts	Same as operational threshold	N/a	Ambient Diesel $PM_{2.5}$ increase >0.8 $\mu g/m^3$ annual average	

As the table shows, the Humbug Road Realignment would not exceed the significance thresholds established by BCAQMD for criteria pollutants. Pursuant to BCAQMD guidance (BCAQMD 2024), the project therefore may be assumed to have a less than

significant impact in regards to a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the region is non-attainment.

Multiple air quality management districts throughout California have adopted a GHG threshold of 10,000 MT-CO_2e per year for project construction phases and 1,100 MT-CO_2e per year (de minimis level) for land use operational phases.

This project would not contain any stationary sources that are subject to state or federal GHG permitting or reporting regulations.

Vehicle miles traveled. Finally, it should be noted that CEQA guidelines state a project may conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable attainment plan if it would result in or induce growth in population, employment, land use, *or regional vehicle miles traveled (VMT)* that is inconsistent with the growth (and therefore the emission projection) assumptions in the applicable attainment plan. The Humbug Road Realignment would not induce growth in population, employment, or land use, but it would permanently lengthen the east-west trip between Inskip and the Almanor Basin by one mile.

As discussed in much greater depth below in the **Transportation** resource element, the currently applicable air quality plan for the District is the latest edition of the Northern Sacramento Valley Planning Area Air Quality Attainment Plan (available at www.bcaqmd.org/planning). This attainment plan includes population growth information sourced from the California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit and VMT growth information sourced from CARB. The attainment plan calls for Butte County residents' VMT to increase by 888 miles traveled per year per capita between 2025 and 2050. By permanently lengthening Humbug Rd, the project would increase this total by 0.04 miles per capita, an amount that would not significantly challenge implementation of the plan.

☐ Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Biological resources.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to biological resources is considered significant if the project would do any of the following:

♦ *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 CDFW or USFWS?

- *Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS?*
- *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?*
- *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?*
- *Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?*
- *Conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan (HCP), natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or state HCP?*

Project activities are expected to result in a reduction of fuel-loading and ladder fuels across the treatment area. This will help to restore the resiliency of habitats across Upper Butte Creek and reduce the intensity of future fires. Some habitats may be altered during treatment but are expected to experience long term benefits through habitat enhancement and preservation as mentioned above. The project would not conflict with any adopted tree protection or habitat conservation ordinance. The riparian areas could be treated for invasive species and improved wildfire resilience in accordance with the project design which prohibits removal of most bank-stabilizing material. Wetlands would not be adversely impacted by the project, and some would be treated to enhance hydrological and geomorphological functions. Wetland restoration includes the use of fill to address chronic erosion and incision in its channels. All project activities are carefully planned to allow for the continued movement of wildlife throughout the area, especially California spotted owl, American goshawk, and forest carnivores.

The project area has not been thoroughly surveyed and is likely to contain species that are considered special-status by the State of California. However, prior to all activities, project units would be surveyed for Forest Service-sensitive species. The Upper Butte Creek EA describes how unit boundaries and/or activities would be adjusted in order to avoid adverse impacts to species.

Adequacy of NEPA analysis for purposes of CEQA. Pursuant to CEQA guidelines Section 15063(a)(2), BCRCD has a responsibility to independently analyze for the project's potential effects (if any) on biological resources deemed special-status at the State level, if the Federal analysis did not do so. Certain wildlife species that are afforded special protection at the State level, and that may have potential to occur in the project area, were not analyzed in the wildlife BA/BE/MIS/MB. In its role as CEQA lead agency, BCRCD analyzes the project's potential effects on these species below. Appendix A contains a list of sensitive plant and wildlife species that have the potential to occur in and

around the project area. Species are only included if they have a Federal, State or CDFW listed status (such as Endangered, Species of Special Concern, Watch List, etc.). The search included 16 quads in or directly adjacent to the project area and was performed on June 4, 2026.

Animal species with a CA state special status that were not analyzed in the Upper Butte Creek NEPA:

Southern long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum sigillatum*)

The Southern long-toed salamander (SLTS) utilizes a variety of montane habitat including mixed conifer, riparian, meadow, and wetland habitat, which are known to exist within the project area. Adults spend the majority of their adult life under wood, logs, rocks, bark, or animal burrows and breed in the spring and early summer in ponds. There are no known ponds within the project area.

Existing design features outlined in the UBC NEPA EA restrict equipment access in aquatic features (see Table B-1 in the Final EA, “RHCA widths and mechanical restriction zones”). Existing design features require surveys before impacting potential suitable habitat for other amphibians. If the species is encountered during pre-construction surveys or during implementation, it will be avoided and allowed to leave on its own volition. Furthermore, meadow restoration activities are to occur during daylight hours, and not at night when the fall migration could be occurring. It is possible that some subterranean adults may still be impacted by the excavation of borrow pits used for filling incised channels. This is unlikely to be significant to the overall population, and the long-term benefits of meadow restoration will increase habitat for the species by rewetting meadow habitat and by adding woody debris into channels to create more pools. Breeding habitat is not present and therefore will not be impacted.

Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*)

Similar to the Willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), the yellow-breasted chat prefer low, dense riparian forest habitat, particularly shrubby, stream side areas. Their nests are typically 1-8' above the ground. This species migrates during the summer and breeds from late April to early August.

Project activities related to meadow restoration that have the potential to impact riparian habitat would occur in the fall, outside of the species summer residency in the project area. Therefore, project activities would have impacts that are less than significant and are expected to enhance shrubby, riparian habitat in the long term by increasing stream and meadow wetness.

Cooper’s hawk (*Astur cooperii*)

Cooper’s hawk utilize both forest and woodland habitat. Platform nests can be found in both hardwoods and conifers, typically 25-50 feet above the ground in mature trees. Nest

placement is often in riparian areas near streams.

Overall, the project aims to retain most large, mature trees and promote a mosaic of vegetation types and structures that provide foraging and breeding habitat, movement, and connectivity for a variety of old-forest-associated species. Large trees (>30" DBH) will not be removed within the project area except in the following limited circumstances:

- When required for equipment operability, individual trees less than 35" DBH may be removed on an incidental basis.
- Outside of California spotted owl territories and where necessary to move towards vegetation desired conditions, live trees greater than 30 inches but less than 40 inches DBH, other than sugar pine, ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, or Western white pine, may be felled to create coarse woody debris (where it's lacking), or removed, under the following limited circumstances:
    - When removing trees is needed for aspen, oak, or meadow restoration treatments or for cultural or Tribal importance.
    - In overly-dense stands to favor retention or promote the growth of even larger or older shade-intolerant trees.
    - To improve the growth and vigor of rust-resistant sugar pine trees greater than 16 inches DBH by reducing competition from Surrounding trees; or
    - Within homogeneous plantations, to reduce loss or large trees due to competition in overly dense stands.

Source: Upper Butte Creek EA, Appendix A, project-level plan amendment STD-PROJ-1B.

Any known nest, roost, rest, or den trees used by at-risk species, including surrounding trees that provide beneficial thermal or predatory protection, must not be purposefully removed, except for the reasonably unavoidable removal of hazard trees and as required to meet other State or Federal regulatory requirements.

Project activities would not significantly impact nesting or roosting habitat for Cooper's hawk and would provide long term benefits by promoting a mosaic of nesting and foraging habitat for the species. Project impacts would be less than significant.

Northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*)

Suitable habitat for the northern harrier includes low, thick vegetation found in wetlands, marshes, or grasslands. Nests are built on the ground, typically within a clump of willows, grasses, sedges, reeds, bulrushes, or cattails. The thick vegetation helps to protect eggs and nestlings but can be impacted by trampling livestock (such as free roaming cattle) and deer. Their breeding period is between March and August.

Project activities related to meadow restoration that have the potential to impact nesting habitat would occur in the fall, outside of breeding season, unless cleared by ground nesting bird surveys. Temporary fencing around recently restored meadow acres would help protect the species' eggs and/or nestlings from trampling livestock and deer in the short term as well. Outside of the breeding season, individuals would be expected to flush

from the project area during active implementation. Therefore, project activities would have impacts that are less than significant and are expected to enhance riparian habitat in the long term by increasing stream and meadow wetness.

Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*)

Short eared owls utilize large, open land such as grasslands and meadows. Nesting occurs in dry areas on the ground within grasses and low plants. It is thought that migrants typically move to California in September or October and depart in April. However, there are still gaps in knowledge for this species migration dates and routes. Short-eared owls are considered to be weakly migratory for that reason.

Meadow restoration activities could affect Short-eared owls if nesting individuals are in the area. Non-breeding individuals are expected to flush from the project area during active implementation. Suitable nesting and foraging habitat may be temporarily disturbed or reduced by project activities like utilizing access roads and borrow pits. However, restoring meadow habitat and reducing conifer encroachment are expected to benefit the species in the long term. Consequently, while individuals may experience temporary disturbance, impacts to the overall population would be considered less than significant.

Riffle sculpin (*Cottus gulosus*)

Riffle sculpin are found in permanent cold-water streams where riffles and rocky substrates predominate. Although they occupy stretches with fast-flowing water, they live in sheltered areas such as under rocks, logs, or undercut banks. Spawning occurs in February, March, and April under rocks in swift riffles or inside cavities in submerged logs.

Project activities that include in stream work would occur during low flow (i.e. June 15th to October 31). If dewatering is required, a biologist would be on site to relocate fish downstream of work. Forest thinning, fuels reduction, and reforestation treatments disturb soil and remove vegetation and soil cover, which can increase sedimentation into aquatic habitats. However, adverse effects to the riffle sculpin are not likely to occur from the project activities due to multiple integrated design features (IDFs) outlined in the Upper Butte Creek Forest Health Initiative NEPA EA. IDFs include but are not limited to: equipment exclusion in riparian areas and steep slopes, ground cover requirements for skid trails and mechanical treatment areas, restrictions on prescribed fire application in riparian areas, maintenance of favorable soil quality standards, limits on the areal extent of detrimental soil disturbance, and the retention of large woody material with contour felling in areas where post-fire soil stability is lacking.

Central California roach (*Hesperoleucus symmetricus symmetricus*)

Central California roach typically live in small streams and are frequently observed in isolated pools. They are well adapted to intermittent watercourses and can survive in a wide variety of stream temperatures. Major threats to the Central California roach population include pressures from wildfire, development, and grazing. Project activities seek to benefit fish species such as the roach by increasing wildfire resiliency and

enhancing riparian ecological health.

Project activities that include in stream work would occur during low flow (i.e. June 15th to October 31). If dewatering is required, a biologist will be on site to relocate fish downstream of work. Forest thinning, fuels reduction, and reforestation treatments disturb soil and remove vegetation and soil cover, which can increase sedimentation into aquatic habitats. However, the potential effects are not likely to occur from the project activities due to multiple IDFs outlined in the Upper Butte Creek Forest Health Initiative NEPA EA. IDFs include but are not limited to equipment exclusion in riparian areas and steep slopes, ground cover requirements for skid trails and mechanical treatment areas, restrictions on prescribed fire application in riparian areas, maintenance of favorable soi quality standards, limits on the areal extent of detrimental soil disturbance, and the retention of large woody material with contour felling in areas where post-fire soil stability is lacking. As such, any potential effects would be discountable (Final Fisheries Biological Assessment, Upper Butte Creek Forest Health Initiative).

Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus tahoensis*)

Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare are often found near montane riparian vegetation, in young or dense stands of conifers, and in chaparral. Breeding occurs in mid-February to July with nests typically placed under a shrub, log, or in slash. They tend to prefer riparian habitats with dense understory.

Project activities including forest thinning and fuel reduction treatments would have short time impacts on the understory habitat utilized by the snowshoe hare. Although the NEPA analysis does not directly address the Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare, it includes measures to protect similar habitat needs for other small mammals like the Pacific marten. These measures include retaining some coarse woody debris (CWD) within the identified carnivore network and retaining piles during prescribed fire treatments. The inclusion of these design features and riparian habitat conservation areas mean that the project's impacts would be less than significant on the Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare.

Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*)

Although primarily found in the Southern portion of California, suitable mixed-conifer forest habitat for the spotted bat exists within the Upper Butte Creek project area. Spotted bats roost in rock cervices/cliff sides. Moths are their primary food which they forage for over water sources, near the ground. Mating occurs in August, with most births before mid-June.

Project activities would not directly impact roosting habitat or foraging habitat. However, commuting corridors to and from location could face disturbance from forest and fuel reduction activities. Noise from heavy equipment and/or ground vibrations could lead to roost/nest abandonment lowering reproductive success. The limited operation periods for the California spotted owl and American goshawk (February 15th – September 15th) help to reduce disturbance during their breeding period. There would be no modification to any rock outcrops, caves, or human made structure that could provide habitat for the bats. All

potential impacts would be indirect and lessened by the protection measures for the California spotted owl and American goshawk. Short term impacts are expected to be outweighed by the improvements to riparian habitat improvements and improved forest and wildfire resiliency, therefore impacts to the species from the project would be less than significant.

Western red bat (*Lasiurus frantzii*)

Unlike the spotted bat, Western red bats often roost in riparian trees such as willows, cottonwoods, and oaks. These bats prefer edge habitat or habitat mosaics that have trees for roosting and open space for foraging (typically near water). Breeding occurs in August and September and young are born in May through early July.

Project activities within the Dixie Fire footprint would include the removal of large numbers of snags, with snags being left on the landscape in leave islands and areas too steep or inaccessible for logging equipment to enter. Within the unburned portion of the project, snags could also be removed where they occur, but about 40 larger snags per 10 acres would be left. Overall, the scale of snag removal in the project could result in a reduction of the habitat suitable for the Western red bat.

The implementation of previously mentioned limited operating periods for California Spotted Owl and American Goshawk, riparian habitat conservation areas, and snag and large woody debris retention, would support Western red bat habitat. Achieving the project goals to improve wetland and stream health and create a mosaic of habitat would benefit the species long term by promoting greater moth abundance. With protective measures in place and long-term benefits to the species, project impacts on the species as a whole would be less than significant.

Northern California ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus raptor*)

Suitable habitat for ringtails includes forest and shrubland in close association with rocky areas or riparian habitats. They tend to nest in rock recesses, hollow trees, logs, snags, abandoned burrows, and woodrat nests. Woodrats, mice, and rabbits make up a majority of their diet and foraging occurs on the ground (usually) near water. The typical breeding season is February to May.

There would be no impacts to rocky nesting habitat, but forest thinning and fuel reduction activities could impact ringtail habitat by removing snags and logs.

Among specific snag retention guidelines by forest type, additional design features that would help maintain ringtail habitat include the following:

- To provide habitat for nesting, roosting, and denning wildlife, the project will maintain a generally continuous supply of snags and live decadent trees suitable for cavity dwelling wildlife across a landscape.
- Retain some mid- and large diameter live trees that are currently in decline, have substantial wood defect, or that have desirable characteristics to serve as future replacement snags. Consider vegetation type and landscape position, potential

prescribed burning and fire suppression line locations, and site conditions (such as riparian areas and ridge tops), avoiding uniformity across large areas.

Maintaining coarse woody debris (CWD), limiting work in the riparian habitat conservation area, and leaving piles within prescribed fire units would also contribute to ringtail habitat. For these reasons, project impacts on the species as a whole are expected to be less than significant.

☐ Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

An impact related to cultural resources is considered significant if the project would do any of the following:

♦ *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?*

♦ *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?*

On the Lassen National Forest (where this project takes place), Cultural Resources are managed and protected through the Programmatic Agreement (PA) among the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), California State Historic Preservation Officer, Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the Processes for Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for Management of Historic Properties by the National Forests of the Pacific Southwest Region (PA; USDA 2018). The process of complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act outlined in the PA was adhered to for this project. During implementation of project activities, cultural resources that have been identified in the Area of Potential Effect (APE) will be protected from potential adverse effects through the application of specific Approved Standard Protection Measures outlined in the Region 5 PA, Appendix E.

A record search, intensive resource inventory, and cultural resource report that complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act was completed for the Upper Butte Creek Forest Health Project in 2022-2023 by Solano Archeological Services (SAS 2023). In addition, the entire project area has been surveyed at various times by FS heritage personnel (and/or qualified contracting archaeologists working alongside them). The Decision Notice for the project concludes that adverse impacts to cultural resources would be avoided through project design and site avoidance.

Should any previously unrecorded cultural resources be encountered during implementation of the Project, all work shall immediately cease in that area and the LNF heritage staff shall be notified immediately. Should any cultural resources become damaged in unanticipated ways by activities proposed in this Project, the steps described in the PA for inadvertent effects will be followed.

The District Archaeologist will be kept informed of the status of various stages of the Project to ensure Standard Resource Protection Measures are in place during implementation.

Monitoring of cultural resources may occur during or after the Project has been completed to ensure the effectiveness of protection measures. (USDA 2025a)

♦ *Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?*

There is no reason to suspect a higher likelihood of disturbing human remains during this project, compared to average projects of its type. If human remains are inadvertently discovered, the discoverer would follow the procedures as outlined in California Health and Safety Code section 7050.5. All project activities at the find site must come to a complete stop, and no further excavation or disturbance of the area or vicinity would occur. The county coroner would be contacted immediately, and if the coroner determines or has reason to believe that the remains are Native American, the coroner will contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours of making this determination. Whenever the NAHC receives notification of a discovery of Native American human remains from a county coroner, the NAHC follows the procedures as outlined in PRC section 5097.98.

♦ *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in PRC 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? A tribal cultural resource shall be:*

•Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in PRC Section 5020.1(k); or

•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 PRC Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of PRC Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American Tribe.

To BCRCD's current knowledge, no Tribal cultural resources would be adversely impacted by the project. However, parts of the project involve considerable ground disturbance, and BCRCD welcomes information and/or commitments to cultural resource monitoring from any concerned Tribe. A record of BCRCD's Tribal consultation to date follows.

AB 52 requires a lead agency, prior to the release of a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or environmental impact report for a project, to offer opportunities for consultation to California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project. This is in addition to the opportunities for consultation afforded to Tribes during the NEPA process[2]. A Sacred Lands File Search for the area was returned as **negative** on June 5, 2026. On June 8, 2026, in accordance with AB 52, the BCRCD sent notification letters to the following tribes who had previously requested to be notified of projects in the area:

Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians;
Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria; and
Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians.

BCRCD requested Tribes respond within 30 days. If any response is received, it will be noted in the final ND.

Project-specific analysis for the Humbug Road Realignment Project

Additionally, on January 13, 2026, BCRCD sent Tribal notification letters specifically about the Humbug Road Realignment and Willow Creek Meadow Restoration component of the project to the following Tribes: Berry Creek Rancheria of Maidu Indians; Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of the Enterprise Rancheria; Greenville Rancheria of Maidu Indians; Honey Lake Maidu; Mechoopda Indian Tribe; Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians; Mooretown Rancheria of Maidu Indians; Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe;

[2]Tribes consulted during the NEPA process were Greenville Rancheria, Susanville Indian Rancheria, Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria, Enterprise Rancheria, Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians, Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, Redding Rancheria, Mooretown Rancheria, Maidu Summit Consortium, Tyme Maidu Tribe of Berry Creek Rancheria, and the Pit River Tribe, in alignment with federal trust responsibilities and agency policy. (USDA 2025a, 2026)

In addition to consultation, project partners engaged with Tribes through outreach meetings and collaborative planning discussions to incorporate Tribal knowledge and perspectives into project design. This included a dedicated Tribal engagement field trip held on August 22, 2022, attended by representatives of the Mechoopda Tribe's Office of Environmental Policy and Planning and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. This engagement informed both the development of cultural resource protection measures and broader landscape management strategies. Lassen National Forest staff state they consider consultation to be ongoing with tribes on all projects.

Pakan'yani Maidu of Strawberry Valley Rancheria; Redding Rancheria; Round Valley Reservation/ Covelo Indian Community; Susanville Indian Rancheria.

One tribe (Strawberry Valley) requested additional information, which was sent, but did not respond to follow-up outreach after that. Another tribe, Konkow Valley, requested to survey the Humbug-Willow area prior to implementation (and did so) and also requested to have cultural monitors present during implementation. Accordingly, BCRCD will work with Konkow Valley to ensure cultural monitors can be present during implementation of the Humbug-Willow project.

No additional Tribal responses or requests for information were received prior to completion of this draft document (July 1, 2026).

☐ Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Energy.

☒This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☐This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below

Geology and Soils.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below.

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to geologic, soils, or paleontological resources is considered significant if a project would do any of the following:

♦ *Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:*

•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)

•Strong seismic ground shaking?

•Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

•Landslides?

The project does not involve any seismic impacts and would not expose people to higher than background levels of seismic risk, for the region.

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

Soils in the UBC project area don't include rhyolitic soils (regionally notorious as the most vulnerable to erosion). However, all soils have the potential to erode if mistreated. Soils in the Upper Butte Creek Project area formed from a variety of volcanic parent materials including basalt, andesite, pyroclastic flows, tephra, and stream or glacier deposits derived from those materials. Six individual soils or associations dominate about 96% of the project area being considered for mechanical treatment. These are Windy, Sheld, Yallani-Sheld, Sheld-Aquolls, McCarthy, and Cohassett. These soils have sandy loam and loam textures with nearly all having rock modifiers, meaning they have 15 to 35% rock content. Rock aids in physical stability and provides protection from erosion but also decreases soil water holding capacity. Aquolls are the low-lying soils found in wet meadows and riparian areas, with silt loam to clayey textures and a seasonal water table from one to six feet that can be slow to drain (USDA-FS 2025e).

Additionally, the UBC project lies in mountainous terrain, with about 20% of the area being over 35% slope. Many of the slopes have deep incisions, possibly scars from past post-fire debris flows. As slope increases, the potential for adverse impacts to soil resources increases during mechanical treatment operations.

This project includes a pilot project to try feller buncher/skidder logging on slopes over 35%. Although this would be the first such project on the Lassen National Forest, it is common practice on private timber land. It would be conducted with close monitoring by watershed specialists and halted if soil standards are not being met. The project lies in a climate zone with fairly high storm intensities so maintaining soil cover and preventing displacement would be the key to avoiding soil erosion.

Other than the steep slope pilot project, the ground-disturbing activities planned in the UBC Project are common on the Lassen NF and can be expected to meet soils standards and guidelines. Ten years of soil monitoring on the Forests of the HFQLG pilot project, which includes the Lassen National Forest, have shown that present day logging methods implemented by the National Forests are successful at preventing the detrimental impacts of most concern in the Upper Butte Creek project: loss of soil cover and soil displacement which could lead to erosion. This monitoring effort found that 85-90% of activity units are meeting soil quality standards for soil displacement and soil cover retention, both pre- and post-activity. (HFQLG, 2011)

Numerous integrated design features in the Upper Butte Creek EA reduce the risk of soil erosion to below thresholds of significance. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Sleep-slope logging outcomes would be monitored by the Forest or Ranger District soil scientist or hydrologist, who would consult on a unit-by-unit basis to make sure Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment soils objectives are being met;
- Ground cover of 70 percent (including slash) would be maintained on all skid trails

above 35 percent slope;

- No skidding of fire-killed trees would occur in severely burned areas over 35 percent slope; instead, trees would be piled using feller-bunchers or otherwise disposed of in place, until effective ground cover has re-established with hydrologist or soil scientist consultation;
- Skidding with rubber-tired or fixed track equipment would be limited to slopes under 35 percent; low-ground-pressure tracked equipment (e.g., traditional masticator or feller-buncher) to less than 45 percent; and heel-boom loaders/shovel yarding to less than 40 percent unless otherwise approved by a soil scientist or hydrologist, while dozer piling would be limited to less than 25 percent slopes and mulching mastication treatments to less than 35 percent slope;
- Soil quality standards and appropriate best management practices (BMP) that protect forest soils would be implemented for the entire project. These are described in Water Quality Management Handbook, Best Management Practices (USDA FS 2011b), LNF LRMP (1993), and the 2004 SNFPA ROD. Furthermore, the Humbug Road realignment and Willow Creek Meadow restoration components of the project would be constructed under a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Permit (SWPPP) during RCD-managed phases of construction and monitoring.
- Machine piling operations would remove only enough material to accomplish project objectives and would minimize the amount of soil being pushed into burn piles. Duff and litter layers would remain as intact as possible, and the turning of equipment would be minimized. Piles would be constructed as tall as possible, within limits of safety and feasibility. A mixture of fuel sizes in each pile is preferred, avoiding piles of predominately large wood when practicable;
- To the extent possible, existing landings and skid trails would be used;
- In areas that burned at higher severity, where pre-fire organic ground cover has mostly been consumed by fire, and few needles or leaves remain to fall and provide short term ground cover, additional actions should be taken to increase ground cover either before or as mechanical thinning work starts in an area, or as determined by an appropriate specialist. Additional ground cover could be generated by mastication or hand falling of non-merchantable material or other appropriate methods that would generate more ground cover than would be produced by traditional whole-tree mechanical thinning. In these units, mechanical piling of material would be delayed until at least two winters have passed since any mechanical thinning has occurred;
- In severely burned areas where watercourses are at risk of post-fire sedimentation/debris flows, logs may be contour felled (starting as soon as the area can be safely re-entered) to retain soil and reduce erosion.

♦ *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?*

♦ *Be located on expansive soils, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?*

♦ *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?*

♦ *Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?*

The project area is not located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, would not destabilize soils or have the potential to result in landslides (with the design features integrated form above), and the project would not interfere with any known unique paleontological or geologic features. Building- and development-related standards of significance are irrelevant to this forestry and watershed restoration project.

☐ Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Growth-Inducing Effects.

☒This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☐This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below

Hazards and Hazardous Materials.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to hazards and hazardous materials is considered significant if a project would do any of the following:

♦ *Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?*

No schools exist or are proposed in the remote, rural project area.

♦ *Be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?*

There are no known active/open hazardous materials sites or cleanup sites in the project area (DTSC, 2026; SWQCB, 2026).

♦ *For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted,*

within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

The project is not located within an airport land use plan or within two miles of a public use airport and would not interfere with adopted emergency response or evacuation plans.

♦ *Create vector habitat that would pose a significant public health hazard?*

The project would not increase habitat for vectors such as rats, mosquitoes, ticks, etc., when compared to the no-project alternative.

♦ *Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?*

♦ *Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan (including those located in or near state responsibility areas or land classified as very high Fire Hazard Severity Zones [FHSZ]) or result in inadequate emergency access)?*

The project area is located in the Federal Responsibility Area and the fire hazard in the area is generally high to very high. However, the project does not change any existing land use restrictions so it would not change the number of people who can be exposed to risk from wildland fire. The project would not substantially impair emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans.

In the short term, the project could result in some evacuation roads or lanes being temporarily closed, but advance notification would be provided and would allow people to choose to avoid the areas during closures. A substantial component of the project is its "ingress-egress prescription," which would create shaded fuelbreaks along the 6 most used roads in the project area, enhancing their usefulness as evacuation routes and improving firefighters' ability to control fires.

Over the medium to long term (5-20 years), the program would reduce the overall amount of fuel on the landscape. This would be expected to further reduce the hazard posed by wildfire to some structures and evacuation routes.

♦ *Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?*

♦ *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?*

The program includes routine transport and use of certain hazardous materials, namely certain herbicides, diesel fuel and gasoline, and oil. While the use of these hazardous materials is routine, they can still cause harm if used in a manner inconsistent with their labeling, or if used incautiously, or if accidents occur.

Herbicide would be used in the project as preparation for reforestation and to control

invasive plants. All herbicides carry some hazard to human health or the environment. Other methods of vegetation management also carry risks. It is always unlawful (regardless of CEQA) to use herbicide in a manner inconsistent with its label. Herbicide labels are approved, and herbicide use within a county is regulated, by the Department of Pesticide Regulation and the county agricultural commissioner. This pesticide regulatory program is a State regulatory program that is certified as functionally equivalent to CEQA (CEQA guidelines §15251(i)). When an activity is regulated and authorized by a State regulatory program that is certified as a functional equivalent to CEQA, that project is exempt from the requirement to develop any EIR, negative declaration (§21080.5(c)), or indeed any additional CEQA document at all.

However, a lead agency still has the obligation to consider whether there are any extraordinary circumstances of a project that would result in a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable accidents or spills. In doing so, BCRCD considered that the program area is a rural, sparsely populated area already zoned for timber production and/or resource conservation, and that all herbicides applied under the program would be applied by licensed professionals in accordance with the label directions, a recommendation from a CA-licensed Pest Control Advisor or PCA, and under permit from the Butte County Agricultural Commissioner's office. Herbicide application adjacent to the program area is already common. Compared to herbicide applications already routinely carried out by industrial timber producers in the adjacent areas, Federal herbicide use is constrained by additional integrated design features, such as:

- Herbicide formulations would be limited to those containing one or more of the following active ingredients: aminopyralid, glyphosate, imazapyr and indaziflam.
- Herbicide application methods are limited to select (e.g. wicking, wiping, dipping clippers or hand-held nozzle to aim application at specific target species), directed spray (use of backpack sprayer) and broadcast spray using a backpack. No aerial or vehicle-based broadcast herbicide applications would occur.
- No herbicide would be applied when the National Weather Service forecasts a greater than 50 percent probability of measurable precipitation (greater than 0.1") within the next 48-hour period.
- Applications would cease when wind speed exceeds 10 mph, or 5 mph when spraying within 200 feet of rare plants.
- Spray nozzles would produce a relatively large droplet size (500- 800 microns). The largest droplet size that provides target species control would be used.
- Low nozzle pressures would be used (15 psi).
- Spray nozzles would be kept within 20 inches of target vegetation when spraying.
- Spray would be directed away from live water.
- Reforestation treatments would only occur after consultation with a California licensed Pest Control Advisor (PCA).
- For reforestation treatments, no broadcast or direct applications would occur within 150 feet of TES or Special Interest plant species. For invasive plant treatments, no directed spray or select application would occur within 25 feet of TES or Special Interest plant species. Buffers may be waived if plants are

covered by a protective barrier. Under saturated/wet soil conditions, select is the only herbicide application permitted within 100 feet of rare plant species. Modifications may be made with consultation with a staff botanist.

- When applying herbicides, only non-ionic surfactants would be used. All surfactants used within Riparian Conservation Areas will be approved for aquatic applications.
- All wells, ponds, in-stream diversion points, and springs used for domestic water supplies would be protected with a 300-foot buffer for herbicide treatment and mixing. Prior to herbicide application, water rights will be checked with the state and potential affected parties will be contacted.
- Streams used for domestic water supply would be protected with a 15-foot buffer for 0.5 miles upstream of the diversion point for herbicide. Directed spray can occur within this buffer, if (a) Use near a domestic water source is directed on the product label; and (b) Water quality is monitored.
- Except for the indaziflam/glyphosate tank mix, herbicide will not be applied during the wet season (November 1 - April 15) to minimize herbicide transport in the environment.
- Herbicide mixing would not occur within 150 feet of live surface waters, wetlands, fens or intermittent/ephemeral streams.
- Herbicide use buffers have been established for streams and other water bodies (Tables B-2 and B-3 in the Upper Butte Creek EA). Buffers vary by herbicide and application method.
- Application of aminopyralid (including equipment rinsing) would not occur on deep, coarse textured, saturated soils. The appropriate Forest Service specialists would be consulted about the proper timing of herbicide application in the spring prior to treatments.

This is not a complete list of the project's design features regarding herbicide.

For these reasons, BCRCD finds no specially elevated risk or hazard from the application of herbicide as part of this program.

Fuel and oil: Fuel and oil are pollutants that pose a risk to human health and the environment if spilled. While risk from spills can never be entirely eliminated, contracts developed under this project would reduce the risk by contain provisions limited where and how fuel and oil can be handled. For example, a contracting officer's representative would need to approve the location, size and allowable uses of service and refueling areas. If a contractor's operations or servicing of equipment resulted in pollution to soil or water, the contractor would be obligated to conduct cleanup to restore the polluted site.

☐Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Hydrology.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to hazards and hydrology and water quality is considered significant if a project would do any of the following:

♦ *Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?*

Activities such as logging, prescribed fire, herbicide application and road reconstruction can degrade surface or groundwater quality. However, the Upper Butte Creek EA contains integrated design features (IDFs) that would reduce risk below a level of significance. For example,

- Mechanical equipment exclusion zones would be placed around streams, fens, springs and seeps. Zone width would vary from 25 feet around ephemeral streams to 150 feet around perennial streams. 82 feet is a common buffer width for intermittent streams.
- There would be no crossing of perennial streams by mechanical equipment. Crossings of seasonal stream channels would be designated by a qualified specialist prior to implementation. Following use of these specified crossings, a qualified specialist would assess the site for potential repair and/or restoration needed.
- Where mechanical equipment is used to fell timber within riparian conservation areas (RCAs; these are 300 feet on either side of perennial streams and wetlands, 150 feet on either side of intermittent streams), one-end suspension would be used to remove felled timber where feasible. If one-end suspension is not feasible, end-lining would be permitted if objectives for 90 percent groundcover on non-rocky riparian soils are met.
- There would be no construction of new landings or use of old or existing landings within an RCA without concurrence by a qualified specialist. Landings would not be within 25 feet of the existing riparian or meadow vegetation. Landings within RCAs would be decommissioned following project implementation and a qualified specialist would evaluate them for compaction or erosion potential. Mitigations may include obliteration of the landing, spreading of native seed, mulch, woody debris, or certified weed-free straw.
- Soil quality standards and appropriate best management practices (BMP) that protect forest soils would be implemented for the entire project. These are described in Water Quality Management Handbook, Best Management Practices (USDA FS 2011b), LNF LRMP (1993), and the 2004 SNFPA ROD. Additionally, the Humbug Road realignment and Willow Creek Meadow restoration components of the project would be constructed under a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Permit (SWPPP) during RCD-managed phases of construction and

monitoring.

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

The project does not involve any groundwater extraction.

♦ *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:*

•Result in substantial on- or off-site erosion or siltation?

•Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in on or off-site flooding?

•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

•Impede or redirect flood flows?

No new impervious surfaces would be added. However, several other types of activities authorized under the project could, in general, result in substantial on- or off-site erosion or siltation if they were carried out without careful oversight or evidence-based restrictions. To reduce the risk of erosion or siltation below a level of significance, the Upper Butte Creek Project EA contains integrated design features described above, and in the Geology and Soils resource topic, and in the EA itself.

Water quality standards and appropriate best management practices (BMP) would be implemented for the entire project. These are described in Water Quality Management Handbook, Best Management Practices (USDA FS 2011b), LNF LRMP (1993), and the 2004 SNFPA ROD. Additionally, the Humbug Road realignment and Willow Creek Meadow restoration components of the project would be constructed under a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Permit (SWPPP) during RCD-managed phases of construction and monitoring.

♦ *In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?*

The project would not result in flooding or increase potential for flooding. The project would not contribute runoff that would exceed storm water drainage systems or create additional sources of polluted runoff. The project does not involve construction of any residential or other structures. The project is not located in an area that is subject to seiches, tsunamis, or mudflows.

♦ *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?*

The project would not increase water use, create a significant demand on groundwater supply, or otherwise interfere with groundwater volumes or recharge rates.

The project does not include any irrigation of the trees that will be planted. Natural

precipitation and good planting practices will suffice to keep an adequate number of trees alive.

☐Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Land Use.

☒This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☐This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

Mineral Resources.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to mineral resources is considered significant if a project would do either of the following:

♦ *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?*

♦ *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?*

The project would not restrict or remove access to any existing mining claims or other mineral resources. For road construction and reconstruction, the project would utilize some aggregate base and other rock from a Forest Service-owned quarry within the project area (the Scotts John quarry). The use of the rock would serve the region and residents of the state by sustaining an efficient and safe transportation network, and the amounts of rock used would not exhaust the supply at the quarry.

☐Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Noise.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to noise is considered significant if a project would do any of the following:

- *Generate 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?*
- *Generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?*
- *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 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?*

Noise levels would temporarily increase during program work due to the use of power tools and heavy equipment, such as chainsaws and chippers. Localized ground vibrations may occur during implementation of the project due to the use of heavy equipment. Butte County's noise ordinance (Butte County 2026a) states that in non-urban areas, daytime noise levels should not exceed a peak of 60 decibels and a sustained average of 50 decibels. Many chainsaws run at about 120 decibels (some are less noisy). A receptor would need to be at least 2,000 feet away to hear only 60 decibels and over a mile away (6000+ feet) to hear only 50 decibels.

However, noise sources are exempt from the noise ordinance if they are "associated with agricultural and timber management operations in zones permitting agricultural and timber management uses". Therefore, when work takes place on National Forest lands, no noise reduction measures are necessary.

Given the exceptions for timber zones built into the Butte County noise ordinance, BCRCD finds the program would not cause ambient noise levels in excess of standards established in the local noise ordinance. Increases in ambient noise levels would be temporary, intermittent, and localized to the specific area where construction is occurring and would not be significant.

The project area is not located within two miles of a public airport, or private airport, or airstrip; the project would not result in exposure of people to excessive noise levels from airport operations.

☐Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no

significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Population and Housing.

☒This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☐This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below

Recreation.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to recreation is considered significant if a project would do either of the following:

- *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?*
- *Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?*
- *Impair, degrade, or eliminate recreational facilities and opportunities?*

While recreational use of the area is indeed increasing and will continue to increase, due to new recreational infrastructure that has been built in the area and is still being built, the Upper Butte Creek project would not itself increase recreational use to a point at which substantial physical deterioration of the facility would be hastened. The project would not build or expand any recreational facilities.

A popular mode of recreation in the area is exploring forest roads. The project would re-route a popular road (Scotts John Road) that is currently located within a riparian area. Scotts John Road accesses a dispersed campsite 3 miles up Scotts John Creek from the Jonesville Tie Road. The project would replace the current route with a new upland alignment a few hundred feet to the east. This action would reduce the maintenance burden associated with the road while leaving public access to the road's destination unaffected (in fact, it would likely increase the total number of days per year the destination is accessible). The riparian area would continue to be accessible to any traveler on foot.

Another road realignment in the project would re-route Humbug Summit Road out of Willow Creek Meadow. The meadow would continue to be accessible to any traveler on foot. The new road route would be longer, but would have a reduced maintenance burden overall and would also offer an improved route for snowmobiles to traverse in winter.

Other routine project activities, such as logging and mastication, have the potential to degrade or displace recreational opportunities in the short term. However, the Upper

Butte Creek EA contains integrated design features (IDFs) that would keep impacts to recreation below a level of significance. For example,

- Where damaged by operations trails would be restored to a standard condition for the designated use as described by the trail management objective for those trails.
- Trails and roads accessing trailheads and day use areas would be kept open and free of debris.
- In addition to seasonal closures identified by Forest Service Travel Management, roads identified as open for public use may be temporarily closed via Forest Order during inclement weather to protect reconstruction investments until those roads have stabilized.
- Forest roads and trails would be signed as needed for safety during project implementation.
- Recreation related infrastructure and improvements would be protected during activities.
- During operations within 300 feet of the PCT, traffic controls will be set up to accommodate PCT hikers and equestrians. Operations will be stopped to allow hikers and equestrians through and then operations will resume.
- Trees and snags will be felled away from the Pacific Crest Trail within limits of safety and operability. Stumps will be cut as low as possible within the immediate foreground viewing distance zone (300 feet) from the PCT.
- Trees to remain within leave-tree marked cutting units will have DBH paint mark facing away from the PCT within the immediate foreground viewing distance (300 feet) from the trail.
- No skidding or mechanically operations will occur on the PCT except where needed to cross the trail. All skid trails will be at least 70 feet from the PCT except where needed to cross the trail. Landings will be placed so they are not visible within immediate viewing distance from the trail (300 feet).
- Skid trail and mechanical crossings on the PCT will be minimized. Crossings will be made perpendicular to the trail, unless review by recreation staff and timber sale or contract administrator determines that site disturbance can be minimized by crossing at a different angle.
- Skid trails and mechanical crossings that intersect the PCT will be revegetated, camouflaged with scattered material, or barricaded with natural materials where they cross the trail to discourage use by off-highway vehicles (OHV) once they are no longer in use.
- Piles within mechanically treated units will be placed and burned outside of the immediate foreground viewing distance zone (300 feet) from the PCT, as conditions allow.
- When the PCT is used as a control line for prescribed fire or wildland fire response, the trail tread will be restored to Forest Service PCT standards.

☐Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Transportation.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to transportation and traffic is considered significant if a project would do any of the following:

♦ *Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?*

The project would not conflict with any program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

♦ *Conflict or be inconsistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b)?*

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) was adopted in December 2018 by the California Natural Resources Agency. These revisions to the State CEQA Guidelines criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts reduce emphasis on *travel time*, and focus emphasis on *vehicle miles traveled*, or VMT. The revisions are primarily focused on projects within transit priority areas (TPAs). The Upper Butte Creek project is not within a TPA. However, despite the area's remote and rural nature, part of it is technically within a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), because all of Butte County is an MPO. (All counties in California which contain at least one metropolitan area of 100,000 people or more are Metropolitan Planning Organizations.)

VMT increases within a TPA or MPO are generally considered significant; however, agencies are also encouraged to consider that not all parts of an MPO will experience the same impacts from an increase in VMT. For example, the Upper Butte Creek project is in a remote, sparsely inhabited part of the county that already experiences a Daily Home-Based VMT per Resident that is under 85% of the Regional Average (BCAG 2021).

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is a measure of the total number of miles driven to or from a development and is sometimes expressed as an average per trip or per person. The only increases in VMT connected to the Upper Butte Creek project come from the Humbug Road Realignment project. Since the Humbug Road Realignment project would Humbug Road, it would increase VMT on that segment of road. Specifically, after the project is completed, the east-west trip (i.e., a 'through' trip on Humbug Road) would be lengthened from 11.2 to 12.2 miles. (North-south trips through the project area (i.e., with Cirby Meadow or Milkhouse Flat as their destination) would not be increased in length). An analysis of this effect's significance follows.

VMT added: Based on the ~7 months per year the road is accessible to passenger vehicles, and an estimate of 20 east-west trips per day (higher on weekends with mostly recreational travel by light cars and trucks and, especially, side-by-sides; lower during the week), BCRCD estimates this segment of road receives about 4,200 east-west trips per year. Therefore, post-construction, the project would result in 4,200 extra VMT per year in perpetuity. If we assume that usage of the area may double in the next 24 years, we would anticipate 8,400 additional VMT per year to result from the project by 2050.

VMT avoided: Construction of the project is expected to eliminate at least 1 road repair event every 2 years. Assuming the VMT from a road repair event was 6 108-mile round-trips from Oroville, plus 5 drivers forced to make the 50-mile detour over Humboldt Summit instead, the project would *avoid* 449 VMT per year when averaged over 3 years.

Total VMT change from the project: The added VMT minus the avoided VMT = 7,051 miles additional VMT per year.

Butte County's VMT per capita per year is modeled to be 11,061 miles traveled in 2025 and 11,949 by 2050 (SVAQEEP 2024). Therefore, the added VMT from the completed Humbug-Willow project would be less than that of one additional Butte County resident in 2050. Averaged across all Butte County residents in 2025, the increase in annual VMT attributable to the project would be 0.04 miles traveled per resident.

Some sources state that *any* increase of VMT in an MPO should generally be considered a significant impact under CEQA. However, lead agencies have the authority and the responsibility to analyze each project on a case-by-case basis. In analyzing this small increase in VMT, BCRCD took into account:

- The site's rural nature;
- A review of BCAG guidance and an informal consultation with BCAG staff;
- The recent trend of overall declining rural road mileage available for travel in Butte County, due to Sierra Pacific Industries gating formerly County-maintained roads. This trend removed 8-11 road miles from the County system in the last 1-3 years, according to BCPW, not all of which can be replaced by recreationists or travelers choosing other roads; therefore, it functions as a partial offset;
- the fact that the project will not attract additional trips (for example, by creating a new attraction or by making the trip faster or cheaper).
- The fact that, because Humbug Summit Road would never be closed to traffic, the project would not cause an increase (permanent or temporary) in traffic elsewhere.
- Guidance to lead agencies stating that projects do not cause a transportation impact if they are: rehabilitation, maintenance, replacement, safety, and repair projects designed to improve the condition of existing transportation assets and that do not add additional motor vehicle capacity. (OPR, 2018 pp 20-21).

For these reasons, BCRCD finds the project's impact under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) would be ***less than significant***.

♦ *Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?*

The road reconstruction components of the project would not introduce any new design features or road users that are not already common and standard in the forest transportation network, nor would it result in loss of access to any user.

♦ *Result in inadequate emergency response access?*

Despite the possibility of brief road closures, the project would improve emergency response access overall, since it would include the establishment of a shaded fuelbreak up to 200 feet wide on either side of the area's six main ingress-egress routes. For more detail, see the **Wildfire** resource topic below and the Upper Butte Creek EA.

☐Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Utilities and Public Services.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to utilities and public services is considered significant if a project would do any of the following:

♦ *Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?*

♦ *Have insufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?*

♦ *Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it does not have adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?*

♦ *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 soil waste reduction goals?*

♦ *Fail to comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?*

♦ *Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:*

•Fire protection?
•Police protection?
•Schools?
•Park?
•Other public facilities?

The Upper Butte Creek Project is not a development project and would not have any impact on water supplies, solid waste management systems, or other utilities. Furthermore, it would not increase visitorship to the area, so there would be no expectation of increased need for police or fire services, schools, parks or similar services. However, BCRCD finds the project would lengthen one County-(co)maintained road by one mile, slightly increasing the mileage Butte County Public Works maintains annually.

The road in question is Humbug Summit Rd (BU 91513), which is cooperatively maintained by Butte County Public Works (BCPW) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS). The cooperative maintenance agreement has been in effect since 1973.

Under the UBC project, starting in 2027, a 0.40-mile stretch of Humbug Summit Rd would be replaced by a 1.40-mile permanent new route. The new route would be an upland alignment that entirely avoids the meadow and stream complex the current route traverses (i.e., Willow Creek Meadow).

Currently, the road and stream are in hydrological conflict. At the meadow crossing site, overtoppings, headcuts, clogged culverts and minor washouts must be corrected each year (sometimes multiple times in one year). Once the new alignment is in use, this maintenance burden would no longer exist. Therefore, even though the total system *mileage* would be increased by the project, the total system *maintenance burden* would be reduced. (Furthermore, the road would still be open to traffic during new alignment construction.) For this reason, BCRCD finds there would be no adverse net impact on the County-maintained road system or any other public services.

☐Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Wildfire.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment

are provided below**:**

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact related to wildfire is considered significant if a project is located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as VHFHSZs and would do any of the following:

♦ *Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

♦ *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?*

♦ *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?*

♦ *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?*

The project area is located in the Federal Responsibility Area and the fire hazard in the area is generally high to very high. However, the project does not change any existing land use restrictions so it would not change the number of people who can be exposed to risk from wildland fire. The project would not substantially impair emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans.

In the short term, the project could result in some evacuation roads or lanes being temporarily closed, but advance notification would be provided and would allow people to choose to avoid the areas during closures.

A substantial component of the project is its “ingress-egress prescription,” which would create shaded fuelbreaks along the 6 most used roads in the project area, enhancing their usefulness as evacuation routes and improving firefighters’ ability to control fires.

Over the medium to long term (5-20 years), the program would reduce the overall amount of fuel on the landscape. This would be expected to further reduce the hazard posed by wildfire to some structures and evacuation routes.

While the risk of post-wildfire floods and/or debris flows cannot be completely eliminated, the prescribed fire component of the project contains integrated design features that would minimize the risk of downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. For example,

- All firing operations entering RCAs would be backing fires. This increases the chances that woody debris and leaf litter will remain unconsumed along streams, helping to slow and filter post-fire runoff. No ignitions would take place in RCAs.
- For the same reasons, large, downed wood in stream channels and hydrologic depressions would remain in place.
- No piling of material for burning would occur within 25 feet of an aquatic feature. If

piles for burning cover more than 10 percent of the RCA in a unit, only one-third of the piles would be burned in any given year. This is to avoid impacting the nearby riparian environment.

- In areas that burned at higher severity, where pre-fire organic ground cover has mostly been consumed by fire, and few needles or leaves remain to fall and provide short term ground cover, additional actions would be taken to increase ground cover either before or as mechanical thinning work starts in an area, or as determined by an appropriate specialist. Additional ground cover could be generated by mastication or hand falling of non-merchantable material or other appropriate methods that would generate more ground cover than would be produced by traditional whole-tree mechanical thinning. In these units, mechanical piling of material would be delayed until at least two winters have passed since any mechanical thinning has occurred.
- Where it exists, large woody material greater than 20 inches in diameter would be retained at a rate of at least five logs per acre.
- In severely burned areas where watercourses are at risk of post-fire sedimentation/debris flows, logs may be contour felled (starting as soon as the area can be safely re-entered) to retain soil and reduce erosion. A soil specialist would establish the timing of contour felling and ideal log spacing.

☐Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

Mandatory findings of significance.

☐This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
☒This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

The project as designed does not have the potential to 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, 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. The project does not have impacts that are cumulatively considerable (i.e., incremental effects that become considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects). The project does not have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

☐ Based on the above analysis, impacts from the project could be significant and unavoidable. An EIR will be prepared.

☒ Based on the above analysis, the project with design features incorporated would have no significant impacts. A Negative Declaration (ND) is appropriate.

4.) Additional Conditions: Other Public Agency Review/Permits Required

This Negative Determination ***is contingent on*** implementers' securing, and following the terms of, the following additional authorizations:

☐ Alterations to a watercourse (CDFW - Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement) - Although the project does include some in-stream work which would alter a watercourse, CDFW permits are not required on Federal lands.

☒ 401 water quality certification: Any work with the potential to discharge sediment or other pollutants to waters of the State normally requires authorization from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB) under section 401 of the Clean Water Act as well as under California's Porter-Cologne Act. The Forest Service has a unique and dynamic regulatory relationship with CVRWQCB, so permitting and reporting requirements for sub-projects under UBC will need to be determined on a project-by-project basis.

☐Conversion of timberland (Cal Fire - Conversion Permit or Exemption)

☒Herbicide application (permit required from Butte County Agricultural Commissioner)

☐Demolition (Local Air District - Demolition Permit)

☒Soil disturbance over 1 acre (RWQCB SWPPP and local grading permit) - Necessary for some road relocation components of project (e.g. the Humbug-Willow project and potentially a Scotts John Road relocation).

☒Fill of possible wetlands or Waters of the United States (404 Permit - USACE)

☒Other: Pile burning and prescribed fire: Local Air Quality District approval necessary

☒Decommissioning of a road segment co-maintained by FS and another jurisdiction (i.e., BU91513/Humbug Summit Rd, which is co-maintained by Butte County): Written agreement amending the existing cooperative maintenance agreement, or equivalent document, in which the other jurisdiction indicates it has abandoned its interest in that segment of roadway to be decommissioned.

☐None/Not applicable

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Appendix A:
Biological Resource Assessment Tables

Species	Listing Status* (Fed/State)	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present	Determination
Amphibians				
foothill yellow-legged frog (Rana boylii)	SSC		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
Cascades frog (Rana cascadae)	CE/SSC		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
California red-legged frog (Rana draytonii)	FT		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
southern long-toed salamander (Ambystoma macrodactylum sigillatum)	SSC	High elevation meadows and lakes during early life stages, while adults primarily live underground (California Herps).	Suitable habitat exists in project area based on CNDDB records.	Less than significant
Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Rana siearrae)	FE/ST/WL		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
Birds				
American goshawk (Astur atricapillus)	SSC		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
greater sandhill crane (Antigone canadensis tabida)	ST/FP	Summers in open habitat near shallow water or freshwater marshes and winters in valleys near bodies of fresh water.	Analyzed in NEPA EA	
osprey (Pandion haliaetus)	WL	Prefers shallow water such as rivers, lakes, reservoirs, lagoons, swamps, and marshes.	Analyzed in NEPA EA	

Species	Listing Status* (Fed/State)	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present	Determination
California Spotted Owl (Strix occidentalis occidentalis)	PE/PT/SSC		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
willow flycatcher (Empidonax traillii)	SE		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus)	SE/FP		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
lesser sandhill crane (Antigone canadensis canadensis)	SSC	Shallow wetlands, marshes, and agricultural lands.	No suitable habitat in the project area.	No impact
yellow warbler (Setophaga petechia)	SSC	Low, open-canopy riparian woodlands, often dominated by willows and cottonwoods, as well as montane riparian areas.	Analyzed in NEPA EA.	
great gray owl (Strix nebulosa)	SE		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
olive-sided flycatcher (Contopus cooperi)	SSC	Coniferous forests, burn scars, edge habitat of open areas.	Analyzed in NEPA EA.	
little willow flycatcher (Empidonax traillii brewsteri)	SE		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
yellow-breasted chat (Icteria virens)	SSC	Dense thickets of brush, abandoned farm fields, clearcuts, forest edges and openings, swamps, edges of streams and ponds.	Habitat is present in project area	Less than significant

Species	Listing Status* (Fed/State)	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present	Determination
golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos)	FP/WL	Open and semi-open areas, avoiding uniterrupted stretches of forest.	Analyzed in NEPA EA.	
Coopers hawk (Astur cooperii)	WL	Forest and woodland habitat, often nesting in pines, oaks, Douglas-firs, beeches, or spruces.	Habitat is present in project area.	Less than significant
northern harrier (Circus hudsonius)	SSC	Low, thick vegetation found in large areas of wetlands or grasslands.	Habitat is present in the project area, most likely to be utilized during the summer months.	Less than significant
short-eared owl (Asio flammeus)	SSC	Large, open areas with low vegetation, including meadows, marshes, and agricultural areas. Winter habitat includes woodlots, stubble fields, marshes, weedy fields, gravel pits, rock quarries, and shrub thickets.	Habitat is present in project area.	Less than significant
Fish				
steelhead - Central Valley DPS (Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus pop. 11)	FT/SSC		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
chinook salmon - Central Valley spring-run ESU (Onchorhynchus tshawytscha pop. 11)	FT/ST		Analyzed in NEPA EA	

Species	Listing Status* (Fed/State)	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present	Determination
chinook salmon - Central Valley fall / late fall-run ESU (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha pop. 13)	SSC	Primarily in the Sacramento River and its major tributaries with oxygenated, cold water available.	The extent of anadromy is limited by a permanent fish barrier more than 22 river miles downstream of the project area (Final Fisheries Biological Assessment Upper Butte Creek Forest Health Project).	
hardhead (Mylopharodon conocephalus)	SSC	Low to mid-elevations in deep, rock and sand bottomed pools of river systems.	Cold, fast flowing headwaters in the project area are not considered suitable habitat for these mid to low elevation fish.	
riffle sculpin (Cottus gulosus)	SSC	Permanent, cool, headwater streams.	Habitat present	Less than significant
green sturgeon - southern DPS (Acipenser medirostris pop. 1)	FT/SSC	Most of their lives are spent in coastal marine waters, estuaries, and lower reaches of large rivers.	Project area falls outside of their range and critical habitat (CNDDB).	
central California roach (Hesperoleucus symmetricus symmetricus)	SSC	Warm, slow-moving, intermittent streams with deep pools.	Habitat is present in the project area	Less than significant
Invertebrates				
western bumble bee (Bombus occidentalis)	CE		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
Mammals				
gray wolf (Canis lupus)	FE/SE		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
Sierra Nevada red fox - southern Cascades DPS (Vulpes vulpes nectar pop. 1)	ST		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare (Lepus americanus tahoensis)	SSC	Dense, understory thickets of montane riparian habitats or shrubby understories of young conifer habitats.	Habitat present	Less than significant

Species	Listing Status* (Fed/State)	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present	Determination
Fisher (Pekania pennanti)	SSC		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
spotted bat (Euderma maculatum)	SSC	Roosts in rock crevices, occasionally in caves. Habitat includes arid deserts, grasslands, and mixed conifer forests.	Although typically found in Southern California (CDFW, May 2000), suitable habitat is present in the project area.	Less than significant
American badger (Taxidea taxus)	SSC	Prefers dry opens tages of most shrub, forest, and herbaceaous habitats with friable soils.	Not known to occur in the project area. Suitable habitat is present but potential is low.	No impact
northern California ringtail (Bassariscus astutus raptor)	FP	Riparian habitats and shrub habitats at low to mid elevations.	Habitat present	Less than significant
Sierra Nevada mountain beaver (Aplodontia rufa californica)	SSC	Dense stands of small deciduous trees and shrubs in riparian areas.	Project area falls outside of range (CWHR Range Map).	No impact
western red bat (Lasiurus frantzii)	SSC	Utilizes a variety of habitats (grasslands, shrublands, open woodlands, forests, croplands), and tends to roost in riparian trees adjacent to streams.	Habitat present	Less than significant
Reptiles				
northwestern pond turtle (Actinemys marmorata)	FPT/SSC		Analyzed in NEPA EA	
Communities				

Species	Listing Status* (Fed/State)	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present	Determination
Central Valley Drainage Spring-Run Chinook Stream		Within the UBC project area there is no designated critical habitat (DCH) identified for ESA-listed fish, as extent and distribution of anadromy for both ESA-listed CCV steelhead and CV spring-run Chinook are limited by a permanent fish barrier more than 19 miles downstream of the UBC project boundary.	Not present	No impact
Central Valley Drainage Resident Rainbow Trout Stream			Rainbow trout are known to be within the project area. Impacts to fish habitat are unlikely.	No impact
Sphagnum Bog			Fen habitat is present in the project area, no work is permitted within 150 ft. unless reviewed by Forest Service botany personnel.	No impact

Scientific Name	Species	Listing Status* (Fed/ State)	CA Rare Plant Rank	LNF status**	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present?	Determination
Agrostis humilis	mountain bent grass (Agrostis humilis)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.3	-	Per CNPS, exists in CA only in alpine and subalpine Southern Sierra Nevada, 8760 - 10500' (but more common outside CA).	As taxon and its range are defined by CNPS, no suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Allium jepsonii	Jepsons onion (Allium jepsonii)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	-	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Allium sanbornii var. sanbornii	Sanborns onion (Allium sanbornii var. sanbornii)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Arctostaphylos mewukka ssp. truei	Trues manzanita (Arctostaphylos mewukka ssp. truei)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	-	The non-basal-burl variant of the species. Originally described from the Feather River Canyon where it begins to appear along the Feather River Highway near Cresta; also found around Paradise-Magalia-Stirling City and Forbestown. Chaparral and lower montane coniferous forest, 1395 - 4300'	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Astragalus pauperculus	depauperate milk-vetch (Astragalus pauperculus)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Rocky volcanic (e.g. Tuscan series) outcroppings, 195 - 3985 feet	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Astragalus pulsiferae var. pulsiferae	Pulsifers milk-vetch	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	-	Granitic soil on brushy slopes. 4700–5100, sagebrush scrub, Great Basin and eastside Sierra Nevada	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Astragalus pulsiferae var. suksdorfii	Suksdorfs milk-vetch (Astragalus pulsiferae var. suksdorfii)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Sandy volcanic soil in sagebrush or pines around Lassen Volcanic National Park; 4500-6500 ft.	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Astragalus rattanii var. rattanii	Rattans milk-vetch (Astragalus rattanii var. rattanii)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	-	Known only from Coast Ranges	ID on CNDDB in proximity to project area is likely a mistake	Not present
Betula glandulosa	dwarf resin birch (Betula glandulosa)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	SI	Streams, meadow edges; 4000-7200 feet	Potential suitable habitat present, and historic records immediately adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Boechera constancei	Constances rockcress (Boechera constancei)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.1	TES	Serpentine soils or rock outcrops 3500-6750 ft.	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Botrychium ascendens	upswept moonwort (Botrychium ascendens)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	TES	fens	Present; analyzed in NEPA EA	**May Affect Not Likely**

Scientific Name	Species	Listing Status* (Fed/ State)	CA Rare Plant Rank	LNF status**	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present?	Determination
Botrychium crenulatum	scalloped moonwort (Botrychium crenulatum)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	TES	Fens, wetlands, seeps	Present; analyzed in NEPA EA	**May Affect Not Likely**
Botrychium minganense	Mingan moonwort (Botrychium minganense)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	TES	Fens, wetlands, seeps	Present; analyzed in NEPA EA	**May Affect Not Likely**
Botrychium montanum	western goblin (Botrychium montanum)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.1	TES	Fens, wetlands, seeps	Present; analyzed in NEPA EA	**May Affect Not Likely**
Brasenia schreberi	watershield (Brasenia schreberi)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.3	SI	Ponds, slow streams, below 7000'	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Bulbostylis capillaris	thread-leaved beakseed (Bulbostylis capillaris)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Open damp/dry sandy-gravelly soil, 1300-6800'	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Calochortus syntrophus	Callahans mariposa-lily (Calochortus syntrophus)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.1	-	Stony volcanic sandstone (Kilarc series) in oak woodland below 5,500 feet	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Calycadenia oppositifolia	Butte County calycadenia (Calycadenia oppositifolia)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	-	Oak woodlands, openings and serpentine grasslands, 295 - 3100 feet	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Calystegia atriplicifolia ssp. buttensis	Butte County morning-glory (Calystegia atriplicifolia ssp. buttensis)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest, valley and foothill grassland, 1855 - 5000 feet	Habitat that exists in project area has been surveyed since 2006 and no CAATB found.	Not present
Cardamine pachystigma var. dissectifolia	dissected-leaved toothwort (Cardamine pachystigma var. dissectifolia)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	-	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Carex davyi	Davys sedge (Carex davyi)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.3	SI	Subalpine and upper montane coniferous forest, 4920 - 10500 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Carex geyeri	Geyers sedge (Carex geyeri)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Open forest, slopes; 3790 - 7200 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Carex limosa	mud sedge (Carex limosa)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	SI	wetlands	Present	No significant effect; SI***

Scientific Name	Species	Listing Status* (Fed/ State)	CA Rare Plant Rank	LNF status**	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present?	Determination
Castilleja lassenensis	Lassen paintbrush (Castilleja lassenensis)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.3	SI	endemic to volcanic substrates on the flanks of Mt. Lassen	No suitable habitat in the project area.	No significant effect; SI***
Clarkia gracilis ssp. albicaulis	(Clarkia gracilis ssp. albicaulis)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Disturbed or dynamic slopes w volcanic substrate, far southern Cascades, foothills 805 - 2560 feet	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Clarkia mildrediae ssp. mildrediae	Mildreds clarkia (Clarkia mildrediae ssp. mildrediae)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.3	TES	Decomposing granite specialist on disturbed areas, roadcuts etc	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Clarkia mosquinii	Mosquin's clarkia (Clarkia mosquinii)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.1	-	Decomposing granite specialist on disturbed areas, roadcuts etc	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Claytonia palustris	marsh claytonia (Claytonia palustris)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Marshy meadows, springs, streambanks, 3280-8000'.	Present	No significant effect; SI***
Cryptantha crinita	silky cryptantha (Cryptantha crinita)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Foothill gray pine forest and blue oak woodlands near the Ishi Wilderness, below 3700 ft.	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Cypripedium californicum	California ladys-slipper (Cypripedium californicum)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	TES	Along streams, on wet ledges, in seeps and bogs, in moist woods, often on serpentine. 1600–4100 ft, yellow pine forest.	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Cypripedium fasciculatum	clustered ladys-slipper (Cypripedium fasciculatum)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	TES	Rare in open woods on moist shaded slopes near creeks or seeps, 2600-4800'	Habitat well surveyed and species not found.	Not present
Cypripedium montanum	mountain ladys-slipper (Cypripedium montanum)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	TES	Moist mixed coniferous forests and riparian areas with high canopy cover; 2800-6000 ft.	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; TES***
Darlingtonia californica	California pitcherplant (Darlingtonia californica)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Bogs, fens, meadows, seeps; to 9000'	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Delphinium uliginosum	swamp larkspur (Delphinium uliginosum)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	-	Only known from Lake, Napa, and western Colusa counties	ID on CNDDB in proximity to project area is likely a mistake	Not present
Diplacus pygmaeus	Egg Lake monkeyflower (Diplacus pygmaeus)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Known only from E of Sierran-Cascade crest	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Drosera anglica	English sundew (Drosera anglica)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.3	SI	Fens and bogs	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Engellaria obtusa	obtuse starwort (Engellaria obtusa)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Moist areas in woodland, shaded edges of creeks, 5000-6500 feet	Known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Eremogone cliftonii	Cliftons eremogone (Eremogone cliftonii)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.3	TES	Chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest, upper montane coniferous forest in the Feather River drainage; 1495 - 6825 ft.	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present

Scientific Name	Species	Listing Status* (Fed/ State)	CA Rare Plant Rank	LNF status**	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present?	Determination
Erigeron inornatus var. calidipetris	hot rock daisy (Erigeron inornatus var. calidipetris)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Loose sand, lava beds, depression edges, forest; 3500-6500 ft	Potential suitable habitat present, and historic records immediately adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Erigeron petrophilus var. sierrensis	northern Sierra daisy (Erigeron petrophilus var. sierrensis)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Eriogonum tripodum	tripod buckwheat (Eriogonum tripodum)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	On serpentine 85-95% of the time, 655 - 5250 feet	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Eriogonum umbellatum var. ahartii	Aharts buckwheat (Eriogonum umbellatum var. ahartii)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	SI	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Eriogonum ursinum var. erubescens	blushing wild buckwheat (Eriogonum ursinum var. erubescens)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.3	-	Gravelly places 2460 - 6235 feet; but CNPS only considers it to exist in the Klamath-Siskiyou ranges	ID on CNDDB in proximity to project area is likely a mistake	Not present
Eriophorum gracile	slender cottongrass (Eriophorum gracile)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Wet meadows, bogs, generally 2000-9000 '	Known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Erythranthe filicifolia	fern-leaved monkeyflower (Erythranthe filicifolia)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	-	Decomposing granite specialist in seeps; known only from Feather River drainage, North Fork and below	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Erythranthe glaucescens	shield-bracted monkeyflower (Erythranthe glaucescens)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Springs, seeps and ephemeral streams on serpentine and volcanic lahar; 195 - 4070 feet	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Frangula purshiana ssp. ultramafica	Caribou coffeeberry (Frangula purshiana ssp. ultramafica)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Fritillaria eastwoodiae	Butte County fritillary (Fritillaria eastwoodiae)	CA rare, see CRPR	3.2	TES	Lower westside mixed conifer or brushy areas; 100-4000 ft.	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Hesperocyparis bakeri	Baker cypress (Hesperocyparis bakeri)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Rocky forest soils usually volcanic or serpentine, 2690 - 6545 feet	Potential suitable habitat present, but not present in project area	Not present
Iliamna bakeri	Bakers globe mallow (Iliamna bakeri)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Chaparral, rocky openings in forest, scrub, and juniper woodland; 3280 - 8205 ft	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***

Scientific Name	Species	Listing Status* (Fed/ State)	CA Rare Plant Rank	LNF status**	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present?	Determination
Lewisia cantelovii	Cantelows lewisia (Lewisia cantelovii)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	-	Granitic and metavolcanic outcrops, 1800-3500', yellow pine forest	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Lewisia kelloggii ssp. hutchisonii	Hutchisons lewisia (Lewisia kelloggii ssp. hutchisonii)	CA rare, see CRPR	3.2	TES	Gravelly, windswept ridges	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; TES***
Lilium humboldtii ssp. humboldtii	Humboldt's lily (Lilium humboldtii ssp. humboldtii)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Dry openings in forest, 295 - 4200 feet	Habitat that exists in project area has been surveyed since 2006 and no LIHUH found.	Not present
Limnanthes floccosa ssp. floccosa	woolly meadowfoam (Limnanthes floccosa ssp. floccosa)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Vernal pools and meadows below about 2000' elevation	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Lupinus dalesiae	Quincy lupine (Lupinus dalesiae)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, montane coniferous forest, 2805 - 8205 feet	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area; endemic to Plumas county not very close to project area	Not present
Lycopus uniflorus	northern bugleweed	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Moist areas, marshes, near springs; < 6700'	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Lysimachia thyrsiflora	tufted loosestrife (Lysimachia thyrsiflora)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.3	SI	Wet places 2,600-4,500'	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Meesia triquetra	three-ranked hump moss (Meesia triquetra)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Bogs and fens, 4265 - 9690 feet	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area.	No significant effect; SI***
Meesia uliginosa	broad-nerved hump moss (Meesia uliginosa)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	TES	Fens	Present; tracked by LNF as a TES species; analyzed in NEPA EA	**May Affect Not Likely**
Monardella follettii	Folletts monardella (Monardella follettii)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Oreostemma elatum	tall alpine-aster (Oreostemma elatum)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	-	Westside fens or very wet meadows 3800-6200 ft.	Habitat well surveyed and species not found. No known occurrences on the LNF.	Not present
Packera eurycephala var. lewisrosei	Lewis Roses ragwort (Packera eurycephala var. lewisrosei)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Peltigera gowardii	western waterfan lichen (Peltigera gowardii)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	TES	Riparian forest, on rocks in cold water creeks with little or no sediment or disturbance. 3495 - 8595 ft.	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; TES***

Scientific Name	Species	Listing Status* (Fed/ State)	CA Rare Plant Rank	LNF status**	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present?	Determination
Penstemon heterodoxus var. shastensis	Shasta beardtongue (Penstemon heterodoxus var. shastensis)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Broadleafed upland forest, chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, upper montane coniferous forest, 3610 - 7875 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Penstemon personatus	closed-throated beardtongue (Penstemon personatus)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Yellow pine forests in Feather River drainage	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Platanthera colemanii	Colemans rein orchid (Platanthera colemanii)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Chaparral and lower montane coniferous forest, 3935 - 7545 feet	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Poa sierrae	Sierra blue grass (Poa sierrae)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.3	-	Decomposing granite specialist; in Butte County known only from Feather River drainage	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Polygonum bidwelliae	Bidwells knotweed (Polygonum bidwelliae)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Tuscan mudflow outcroppings and gravel flats, 195 - 3935 feet	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Potamogeton robbinsii	Robbins pondweed (Potamogeton robbinsii)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.3	SI	Deep water of lakes	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Rhynchospora alba	white beaked-rush (Rhynchospora alba)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	SI	Boggy open sites below 7000'	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Rhynchospora capitellata	brownish beaked-rush (Rhynchospora capitellata)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	SI	Various moist habitats to 6560 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist near project area	No significant effect; SI***
Rupertia hallii	Halls rupertia (Rupertia hallii)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Disturbed, open sunny areas on productive conifer forest soils (e.g. Cohasset series), Butte and Tehama Counties	Present; analyzed in NEPA EA	No significant effect; TES***
Sanicula tracyi	Tracys sanicle (Sanicula tracyi)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2		Cismontane woodland and coniferous forest, 330 - 5200 feet	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No effect; ***SATR**
Schoenoplectus heterochaetus	slender bulrush (Schoenoplectus heterochaetus)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.1	SI	Fresh marshes, lakes, often emergent, below 5500'	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Schoenoplectus subterminalis	water bulrush (Schoenoplectus subterminalis)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.3	SI	Fresh lakes, streams low in nutrients, below 7,500'	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***

Scientific Name	Species	Listing Status* (Fed/ State)	CA Rare Plant Rank	LNF status**	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present?	Determination
Scytinium siskiyouense	Siskiyou jellyskin lichen (Scytinium siskiyouense)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.1	SI	Bark of mature hardwood trees in mesic refugia such as river canyons	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area. Tracked by LNF as an SI species.	No significant effect; SI***
Sedum albomarginatum	Feather River stonecrop (Sedum albomarginatum)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Serpentine and rock outcrops in Feather River drainage; 1000-5600 ft.	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Senecio hydrophiloides	sweet marsh ragwort (Senecio hydrophiloides)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Damp hillsides, meadows, seeps, 3900-7000 feet	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Sidalcea gigantea	giant checkerbloom (Sidalcea gigantea)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Wetlands and streams 2200 - 6400 feet; in Butte County known only from the Feather River drainages	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Sidalcea robusta	Butte County checkerbloom (Sidalcea robusta)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	-	Blue oak woodland endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Silene occidentalis ssp. longistipitata	long-stiped campion (Silene occidentalis ssp. longistipitata)	CA rare, see CRPR	1B.2	TES	Openings in mid-elevation mixed coniferous forests; 4500-6100 ft.	Present; analyzed in NEPA EA	**May Affect Not Likely**
Silene occidentalis ssp. occidentalis	western campion (Silene occidentalis ssp. occidentalis)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Chaparral and montane coniferous forest, 3380 - 6855 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Sparganium natans	small bur-reed (Sparganium natans)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Bogs and fens, meadows and seeps, shallow ponds in creeks, lake margins; 5330 - 8205 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist near project area	No significant effect; SI***
Stellaria longifolia	long-leaved starwort (Stellaria longifolia)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	SI	Moist areas, creeksides, around 3000-5500 feet	Potential suitable habitat present, and known immediately adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Streptanthus drepanoides	sickle-fruit jewelflower (Streptanthus drepanoides)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Openings in pine forest, oak woodland; 2345 - 4920 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Streptanthus longisiliquus	long-fruit jewelflower (Streptanthus longisiliquus)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	SI	Serpentine endemic	No suitable habitat in the project area.	Not present
Subularia aquatica ssp. americana	water awlwort (Subularia aquatica ssp. americana)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.3	-	Shallow lake margins, streambanks, wet sedge meadows, muddy flats, salt marshes, 6235-10170 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist adjacent to project area	No effect: ***SUAQA**

Scientific Name	Species	Listing Status* (Fed/ State)	CA Rare Plant Rank	LNF status**	Habitat	Species or potential suitable habitat present?	Determination
Trichodon cylindricus	cylindrical trichodon (Trichodon cylindricus)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	SI	Sandy or sometimes clay soil, open, disturbed sites, roadside banks, trails, fields; low to high elevations (30-2000 m)	Potential suitable habitat present, but not known from project area.	No significant effect; SI***
Trillium oettingeri	Salmon Mountains wakerobin (Trillium oettingeri)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Moist shaded slopes and forest floor. 4000–5700 ft, yellow pine forest	Not known from project area	No significant effect; SI***
Utricularia intermedia	flat-leaved bladderwort (Utricularia intermedia)	CA rare, see CRPR	2B.2	SI	Shallow (< 1 m) water; 4,000-8,900 feet	Potential suitable habitat present; known to exist adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Utricularia minor	lesser bladderwort (Utricularia minor)	CA rare, see CRPR	4.2	SI	Shallow (generally < 30 cm) acidic waters 2,600-8,900 ft	Known to exist adjacent to project area	No significant effect; SI***
Vaccinium coccineum	Siskiyou Mountains huckleberry (Vaccinium coccineum)	CA rare, see CRPR	3.3	-	On serpentine about 75% of the time; yellow pine forest, 3595 - 7005 feet	Only marginal suitable habitat in the project area; nearest known occurrence is 6+ air miles away from project area	No effect: ***VACO**

** ***TES = Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive:*** *These taxa are tracked by LNF through botanical surveys and the botany geodatabase, and are analyzed in NEPA documents.* ***SI = Special Interest:*** *These taxa are tracked by LNF through botanical surveys and the botany geodatabase, but are not analyzed in NEPA documents. Therefore, these spp may require independent analysis by BCRCD to determine whether the UBC project's integrated design features, such as pre-implementation surveys and avoidance measures, adequately protect these taxa from significant impacts as defined by CEQA.*

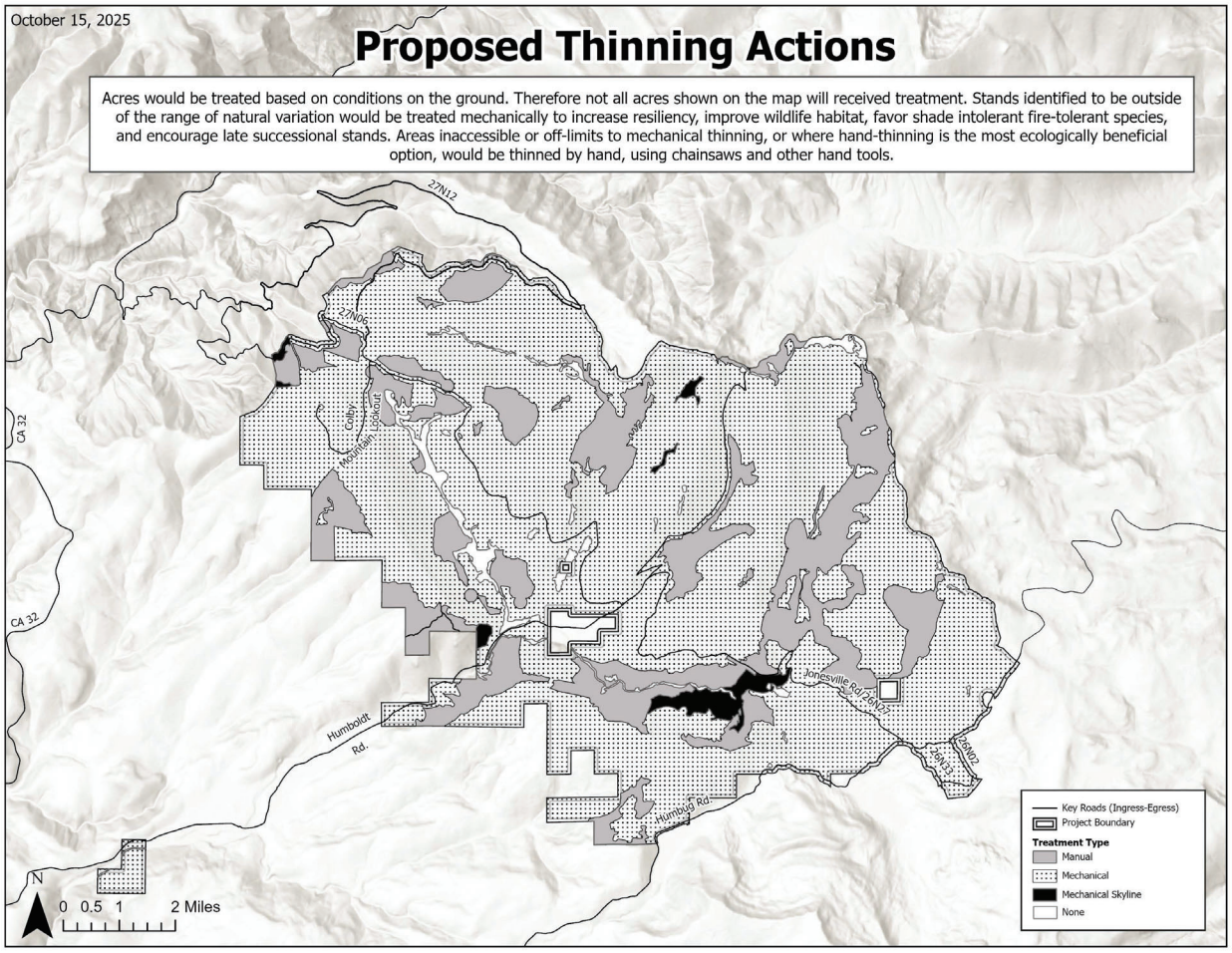
*** *All SI and TES species are determined by BCRCD to be protected from significant adverse effects during the project. This is because SI and TES species are identified during LNF botany surveys, which precede all activities. Therefore, SI species occurrences are flagged, and will be avoided as appropriate (depending on activity) during implementation.*

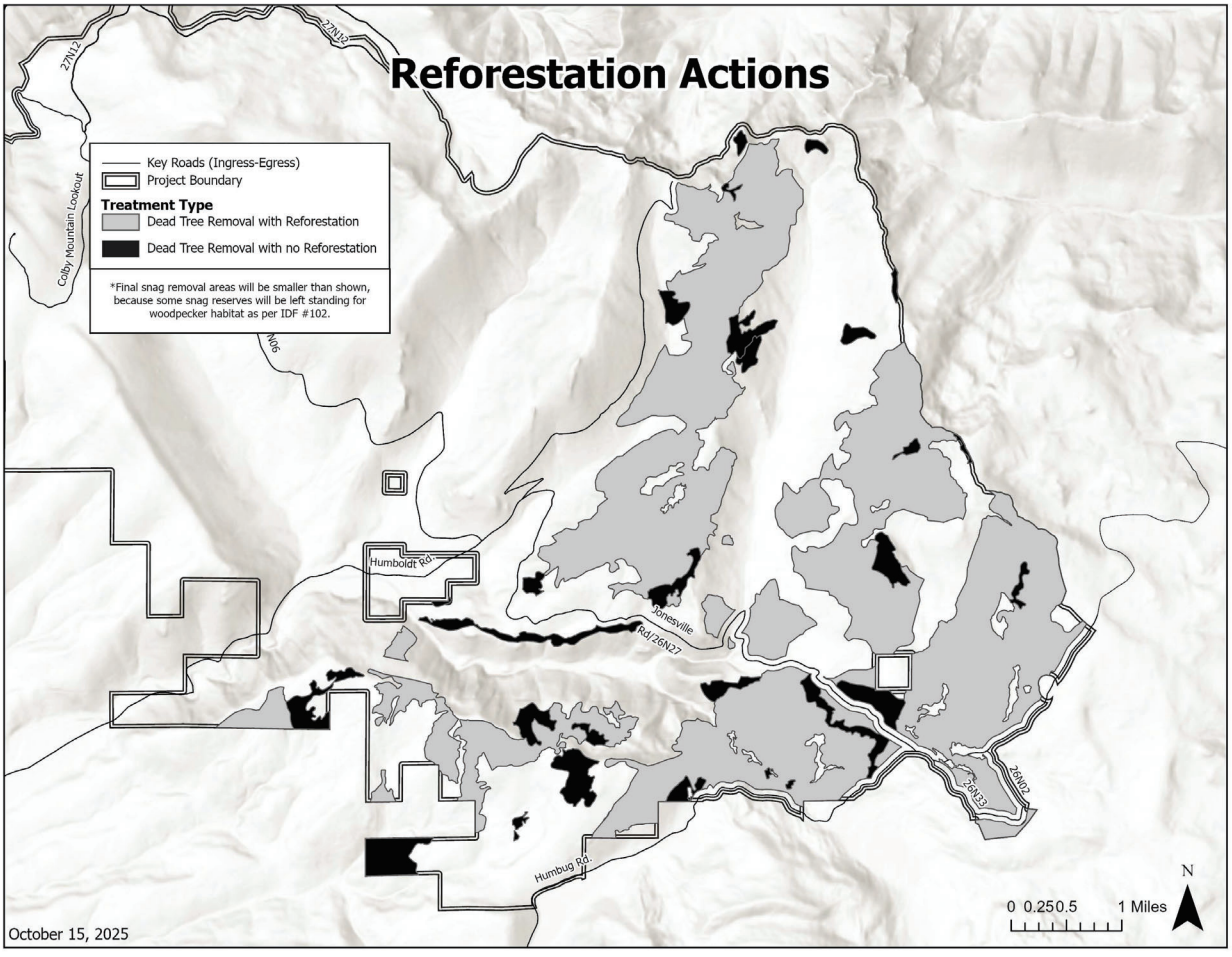
* **VACO***: This taxon, classified by CNPS as "In need of further study" and "Not very threatened in California," is not known from Lassen NF. However, it is known from two subpopulations, one in the Klamath mountains, and the other in Plumas National Forest 6+ air miles from the UBC project area. The Plumas NF subpopulation is the reason this taxon appears on a CNDDB search for the UBC project area. However, CNPS currently states that the Plumas NF population is "not morphologically or genetically distinct from* V. membranaceum.*" (CNPS, "Vaccicium coccineum, https://rareplants.cnps.org/Plants/Details/1535 , accessed 6/17/2026.) V. membranaceum is not a sensitive species. Therefore, BCRCD finds "*Vaccinium coccineum*" warrants no further analysis in the context of its possible occurrence within the UBC project area.*

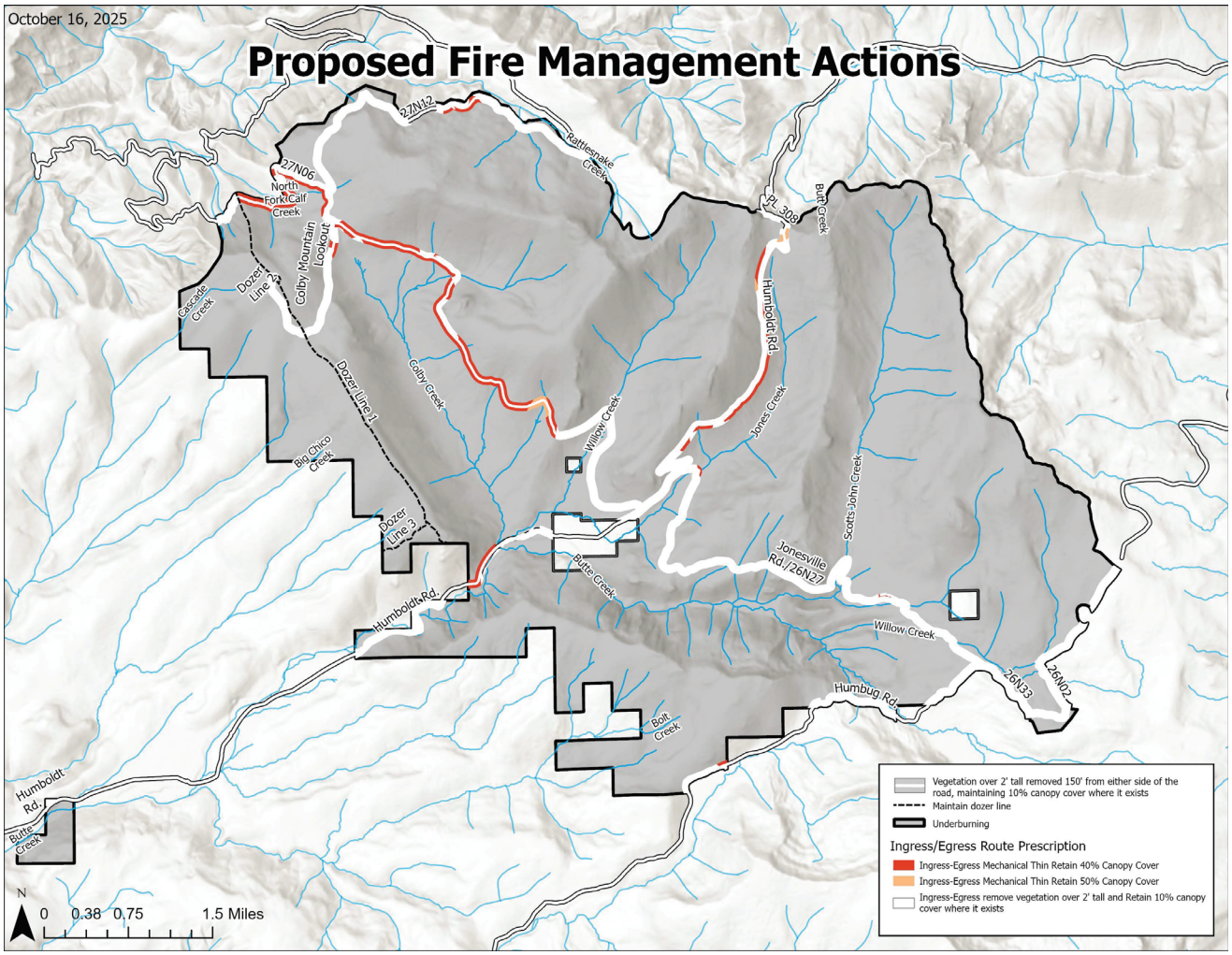
* **SUAQA***: This taxon is aquatic. Aquatic environments would only be disturbed during activities designed to enhance aquatic habitats over the longer term (e.g. process-based restoration to create deeper pools and reconnect strems to their floodplains; stream crossing improvements to reduce sediment contributions from roads to streams). While these activities could cause harm to individuals of this species if they are present, over the long term the next effects of the project would be beneficial. Because this species is, furthermore, considered by CNPS to be "not very threatened in California," BCRCD finds* Subularia aquatica ssp. americana *warrants no further analysis in the context of its possible occurrence within the UBC project area.*

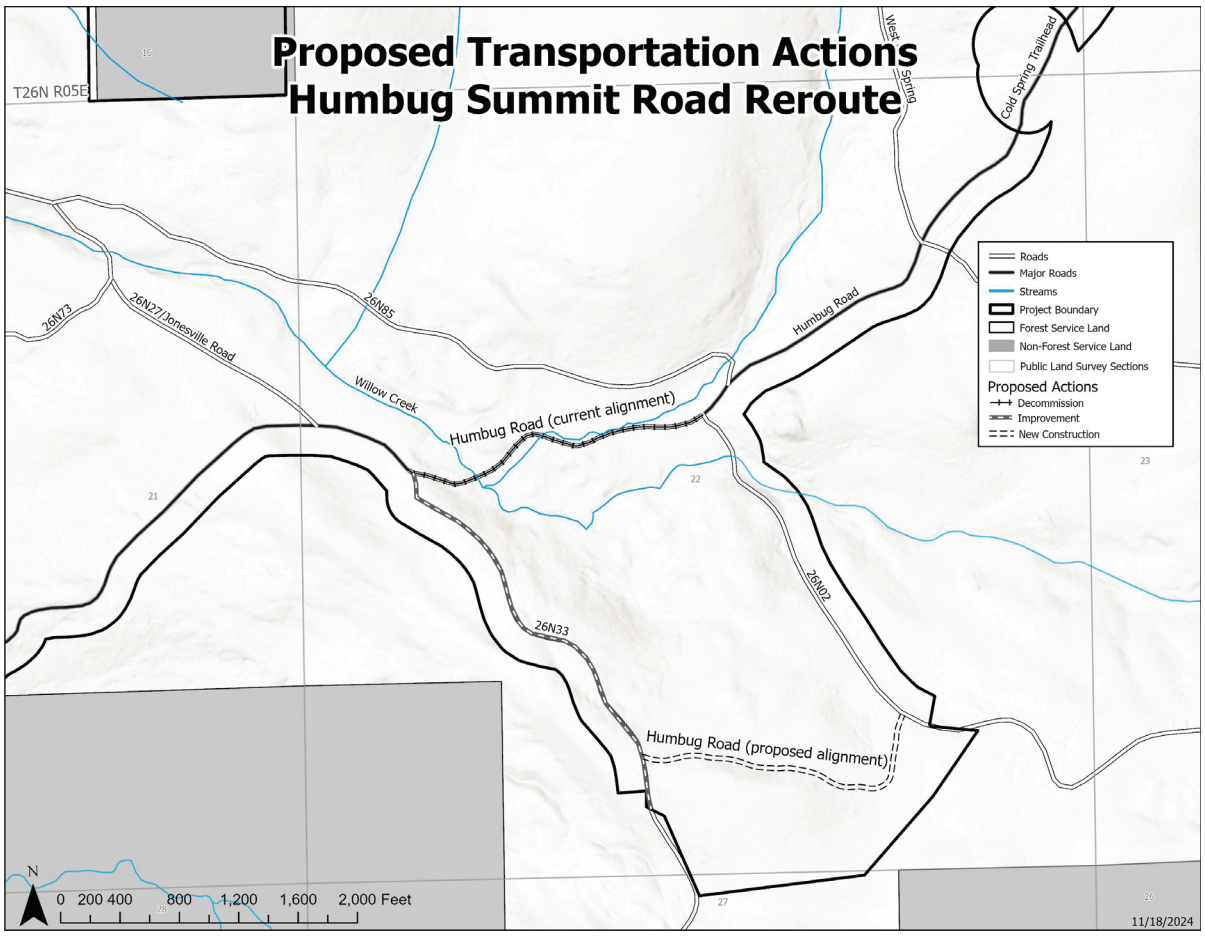
* ***SATR:*** *CNPS currently states that "Occurrences from BUT, DNT, TEH, and YUB counties are not this taxon; needs further study". (CNPS, "Sanicula tracyi", https://rareplants.cnps.org/Plants/Details//?taxon=Sanicula+tracyi, accessed 6/17/2026.) These occurrences are the reason this taxon appears on a CNDDB search for the UBC project area. Therefore, BCRCD finds "*Sanicula tracyi*" warrants no further analysis in the context of its possible occurrence within the UBC project area.*

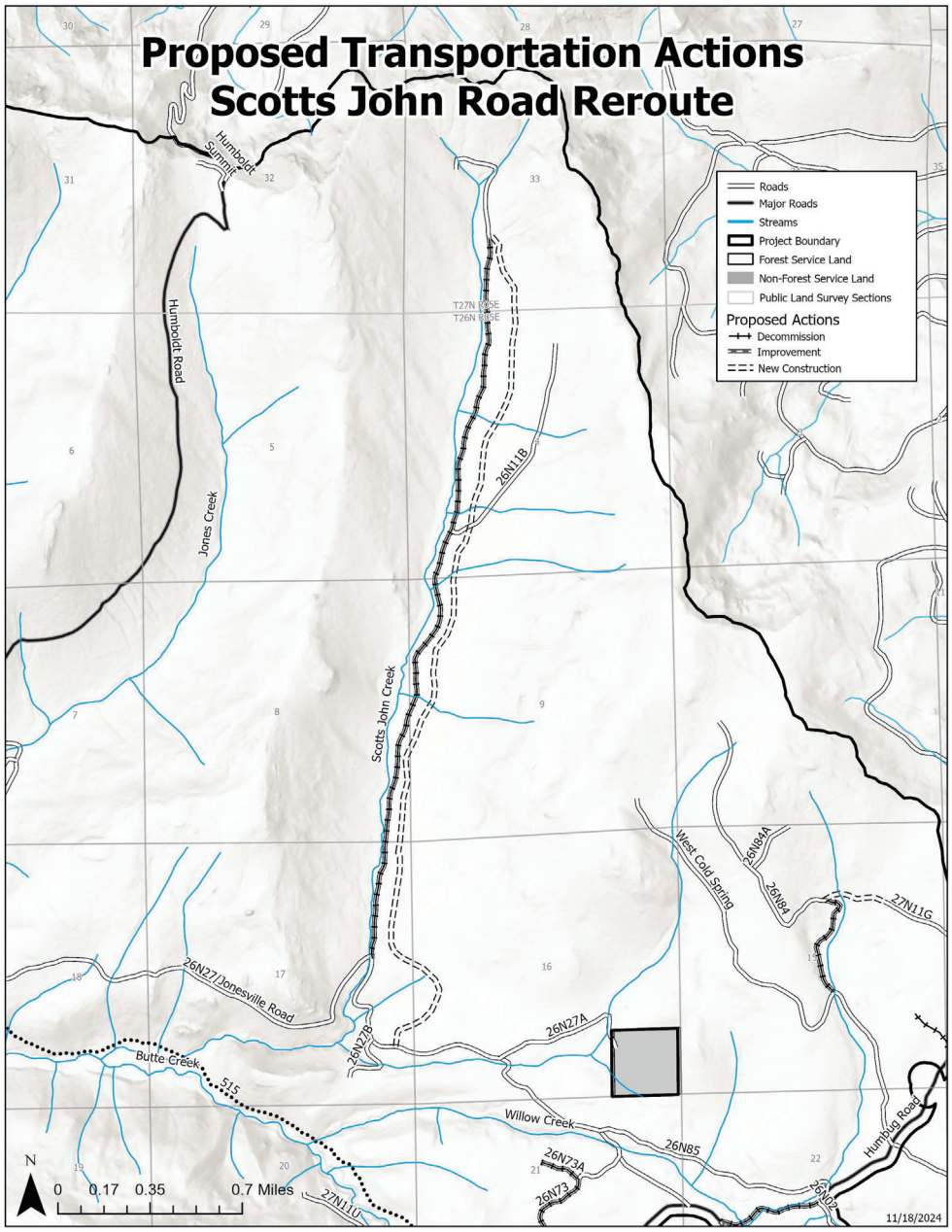
Appendix B:
Maps


October 15, 2025
Proposed Thinning Actions
Acres would be treated based on conditions on the ground. Therefore not all acres shown on the map will received treatment. Stands identified to be outside of the range of natural variation would be treated mechanically to increase resiliency, improve wildlife habitat, favor shade intolerant fire-tolerant species, and encourage late successional stands. Areas inaccessible or off-limits to mechanical thinning, or where hand-thinning is the most ecologically beneficial option, would be thinned by hand, using chainsaws and other hand tools.
27N12
27N06
Colby Mountain Lookout
CA 32
CA 32
Humboldt Rd.
Jonesville Rd/26N27
26N02
26N33
Humbug Rd.
Key Roads (Ingress-Egress)
Project Boundary
Treatment Type
Manual
Mechanical
Mechanical Skyline
None
N
0 0.5 1 2 Miles


Reforestation Actions
Key Roads (Ingress-Egress)
Project Boundary
Treatment Type
Dead Tree Removal with Reforestation
Dead Tree Removal with no Reforestation
*Final snag removal areas will be smaller than shown, because some snag reserves will be left standing for woodpecker habitat as per IDF #102.
27N12
Colby Mountain Lookout
N06
Humboldt Rd.
Jonesville Rd/26N27
26N02
26N33
Humbug Rd.
N
0 0.250.5 1 Miles
October 15, 2025


October 16, 2025
Proposed Fire Management Actions
27N12
27N06
North Fork Calf Creek
Rattlesnake Creek
PL 308
Butt Creek
Colby Mountain Lookout
Dozer Line 2
Cascade Creek
Humboldt Rd.
Dozer Line 1
Colby Creek
Willow Creek
Jones Creek
Big Chico Creek
Scotts John Creek
Dozer Line 3
Jonesville Rd./26N27
Butte Creek
Humboldt Rd.
Willow Creek
26N33
26N02
Humbug Rd.
Bolt Creek
Humboldt Rd.
Butte Creek
Vegetation over 2' tall removed 150' from either side of the road, maintaining 10% canopy cover where it exists
Maintain dozer line
Underburning
Ingress/Egress Route Prescription
Ingress-Egress Mechanical Thin Retain 40% Canopy Cover
Ingress-Egress Mechanical Thin Retain 50% Canopy Cover
Ingress-Egress remove vegetation over 2' tall and Retain 10% canopy cover where it exists
N
0 0.38 0.75 1.5 Miles


Proposed Transportation Actions
Humbug Summit Road Reroute
T26N R05E
West Spring
Cold Spring Trailhead
26N73
26N27/Jonesville Road
26N85
Willow Creek
Humbug Road
Humbug Road (current alignment)
26N02
26N33
Humbug Road (proposed alignment)
Roads
Major Roads
Streams
Project Boundary
Forest Service Land
Non-Forest Service Land
Public Land Survey Sections
Proposed Actions
Decommission
Improvement
New Construction
N
0 200 400 800 1,200 1,600 2,000 Feet
11/18/2024


Proposed Transportation Actions
Scotts John Road Reroute
Roads
Major Roads
Streams
Project Boundary
Forest Service Land
Non-Forest Service Land
Public Land Survey Sections
Proposed Actions
Decommission
Improvement
New Construction
Humboldt Summit
Humboldt Road
Jones Creek
Scotts John Creek
26N11B
26N27/Jonesville Road
26N27B
26N27A
Butte Creek
515
Willow Creek
26N85
26N73A
26N73
27N11U
West Cold Spring
26N84A
26N84
27N11G
Humbug Road
T27N R05E
T26N R05E
N
0 0.17 0.35 0.7 Miles
11/18/2024