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Subject: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE
GATEWAY PARK PROJECT
SCH No. 2026071288

Dear Meghan Schwartz:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received and reviewed the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) from the Placer County Community Development Resource Agency (Placer County) for the Gateway Park Project (Project) in unincorporated Placer County pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) statute and guidelines.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats. Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that it, by law, may need to exercise its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code (Fish & G. Code).

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub.

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

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Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a).). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (Fish & G. Code, § 1802.). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW provides, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW may also act as a Responsible Agency under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381.) CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority. (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.) Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), the project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Project site consists of approximately 112 acres in unincorporated Placer County, located south of Interstate 80 (I-80) near Blue Canyon on portions of Assessor's Parcel Numbers 062-400-022-000, 062-510-020-000, and 062-230-012-000. The project site includes Lake Putt, an approximately 34-acre artificial lake that is contained by earthen dams to the east and west.

The Project consists of the development of a "dude ranch"/"guest ranch," generally consisting of 50 cabin units, a 13,934-sf nature museum, 5,000-sf storage barn, community park, a cafeteria open to overnight and day-use guests, and associated recreational amenities, as well as a seasonal snow park. The 50 cabin units include 23 traditional cabins and 27 treehouses structurally supported by existing on-site trees. The cabin units range in size from approximately 338 sf to 790 sf and will have development footprints smaller than 625 sf. The proposed nature museum will be open to the public and will provide recreational equipment rentals for non-motorized lake activities. In addition, a Placer County Sheriff's field office is contemplated within the nature museum building to serve an underserved area of the County. The community park will include a 60-seat amphitheater, playground, and basketball court. Several walking and hiking trails will also be constructed as a part of the Project, which will connect to existing trails within the Tahoe National Forest. The existing on-site lake, Lake Putt, will be used for recreational activities, including fishing, swimming, paddleboarding, and nonmotorized boating. The recreational activities on Lake Putt will be enabled by a newly constructed earthen pier.

Primary site access will be provided by a new gated connection to Nyack Place (a County-maintained road) to the northeast of the Project site. The Project includes an internal circulation network consisting of 12-foot-wide, one-way and 20-foot-wide, two-way paved roadways that will loop throughout the Project site. Improvements will be made to Nyack Place from the northeast Project entrance to Nyack Road, consisting of widening the existing

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road to 20-feet-wide, constructing a public turnaround prior to the private gated entrance, and striping within the existing semi-truck parking lot to delineate the roadway from the paved parking area. Emergency vehicle access (EVA) to the Project site will be provided from Putt Road, located northwest of the Project site, by way of a new 20-foot-wide, two-lane gated and paved EVA road that will connect to the internal roadway system. The Project will include 165 parking spaces, consisting of 50 spaces for overnight guests, 107 spaces for day use, two bus spaces, eight spaces dedicated for maintenance vehicles, six Americans with Disabilities Act spaces, nine electric vehicle charging stations, and 50 bicycle parking spaces.

The Notice of Preparation states that the Project will require a Minor Use Permit from Placer County.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations presented below to assist Placer County in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, impacts on biological resources. The comments and recommendations are also offered to enable CDFW to adequately review and comment on the proposed Project with respect to impacts on biological resources. CDFW recommends that the forthcoming EIR address the following:

Consistency with Ongoing Wildlife Conservation Projects

The proposed 112-acre Project development footprint is a component of a larger 650-acre fee title acquisition that was funded by a \$2,250,000.00 grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to the 40 Acre Conservation League pursuant to Chapter 4 of Division 2 (commencing with Section 1300) of the California Fish and Game Code and Assembly Bill 179, Section 19.56(a)(9), EY22. As stated in Section 2 (Purposes of Grant) of the executed *Wildlife Conservation Board Grant Agreement for Acquisition of Fee Interest* (Grant Agreement No. WC-2368KM), the purpose of the grant is that "the property shall be held, used, operated, managed and maintained only for the purposes of wildlife habitat preservation, restoration and management, wildlife-oriented education and research, and for compatible public or private uses, all as may be consistent with wildlife habitat preservation and protection of sensitive biological resources."

Subsequently, The Wildlife Conservation Board, acting as CEQA Lead Agency, approved the Tahoe Gateway Forest Health Implementation Project in partnership with the 40 Acre Conservation League, and determined that the project qualified as a statutorily exempt restoration project under CEQA. On January 8, 2024, CDFW issued a concurrence to the Wildlife Conservation Board that the project qualifies as a statutorily exempt restoration project pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (e). The approved Tahoe Gateway Forest Health Implementation Project included activities to conserve, restore, protect, enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat on which they depend, on the 592-acre project site. Specific project activities consisted of a multi-pronged treatment plan including mechanical, hand-thinning, pruning,

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chemical, and mastication activities; planting conifers; implementing mechanical and chemical invasive plant species control; and enhancing understory vegetation for the benefit of pollinator insects.

Furthermore, the Project site is located immediately adjacent to two (2) major wildlife crossing projects being constructed on I-80 by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The two crossings, which are independent of the Tahoe Gateway Forest Health Implementation Project and the proposed Project, will provide passage for the declining Nevada City and Blue Canyon migratory deer herds, in addition to several other wildlife species. This multi-million-dollar investment by Caltrans is designed to increase wildlife movement, connect wildlife habitats on either side of I-80, provide movement north to south across the Sierra Nevada foothills and mountain range, and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVC). As currently proposed, the project compromises this movement by converting habitat to development, interrupting or decreasing movement corridors, and possibly increasing WVC at the fence end. Coupled with direct loss of this acreage, the activities, and human presence here will disrupt breeding, fawning, foraging, and other wildlife activities.

CDFW is concerned that the proposed Project is not consistent with the intended purpose of the grant-funded fee title acquisition and may adversely affect ongoing wildlife conservation actions underway on or immediately adjacent to the Project site. Development of the Project will result in the conversion of conserved wildlife habitat to roads, parking lots, living structures, and other buildings and facilities that will significantly increase human presence and may eliminate or disrupt wildlife breeding, fawning, foraging, and migration both on- and off-site.

CDFW recommends the forthcoming EIR analyze the Project's potentially significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to, and consistency with, the intended conservation values of the grant funded fee title acquisition and subsequent Tahoe Gateway Forest Health Implementation Project approved by the Wildlife Conservation Board. In addition, CDFW recommends the EIR include appropriate and adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the intended conservation value of the property that are expected to occur as a result of the construction and long-term operation and maintenance of the Project.

CDFW also recommends the EIR include an analysis of potential Project alternatives that would retain conserved land in a natural state to facilitate wildlife movement and ensure the intended conservation values of the property are maintained. CDFW recommends the EIR include an analysis of potential Project alternatives that would:

- Reduce the size of the development to conserve open forest land for declining migratory deer herds and other wildlife species to traverse the landscape and benefit from the crossing structure being constructed by Caltrans on the assumption of connecting conserved lands on either side of I-80.

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- Reduce the footprint of paved roads and buildings/structures that would impact native vegetation.
- Provide a detailed trail map with both existing and newly proposed trails, in addition to the adjacent US Forest Service trail system and private property boundaries.
- Consider Project alternatives that would significantly reduce or eliminate wildlife habitat conversion, fragmentation, and increased human presence on the site such as incorporating limited day use, non-paved roads and trails, and offsite lodging.
- Leave at least half of the Lake Putt shoreline undeveloped to allow undisturbed wildlife passage, access to water, and maintain an open corridor from the I-80 crossing to conserved lands on either side of I-80.
- Reduce littoral and lakebed impacts within Lake Putt by considering an open pile pier design instead of the proposed earthen pier.
- Ensure that wildlife access to Lake Putt is not cut off or restricted by fencing, pavement, buildings, etc. Any fencing installed on the property should be wildlife friendly to allow movement of species of various sizes.

Project Description

The Project description should include the whole action as defined in the CEQA Guidelines § 15378 and should include appropriate detailed exhibits disclosing the Project area including temporary impacted areas such as equipment stage area, spoils areas, adjacent infrastructure development, staging areas, and access and haul roads if applicable.

As required by § 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines, the EIR should include an appropriate range of reasonable and feasible alternatives that would attain most of the basic Project objectives and avoid or minimize significant impacts to resources under CDFW's jurisdiction.

Assessment of Biological Resources

Section 15125(c) of the CEQA Guidelines states that knowledge of the regional setting of a project is critical to the assessment of environmental impacts and that special emphasis should be placed on environmental resources that are rare or unique to the region. To enable CDFW staff to adequately review and comment on the Project, the EIR should include a complete assessment of the flora and fauna within and adjacent to the Project footprint, with emphasis on identifying rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species and their associated habitats. CDFW recommends the EIR specifically include:

1. An assessment of all habitat types located within the Project footprint, and a map that identifies the location of each habitat type. CDFW recommends that floristic, alliance- and/or association-based mapping and assessment be completed following, *The Manual of California Vegetation*, second edition (Sawyer 2009). Adjoining habitat

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areas should also be included in this assessment where site activities could lead to direct or indirect impacts offsite. Habitat mapping at the alliance level will help establish baseline vegetation conditions.

2. A general biological inventory of the fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species that are present or have the potential to be present within each habitat type onsite and within adjacent areas that could be affected by the Project. CDFW recommends that the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), as well as previous studies performed in the area, be consulted to assess the potential presence of sensitive species and habitats. A nine United States Geologic Survey 7.5-minute quadrangle search is recommended to determine what may occur in the region, larger if the Project area extends past one quad (see *Data Use Guidelines* on the CDFW webpage www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Maps-and-Data). Please review the webpage for information on how to access the database to obtain current information on any previously reported sensitive species and habitat, including Significant Natural Areas identified under Chapter 12 of the Fish and Game Code, in the vicinity of the Project. CDFW recommends that CNDDDB Field Survey Forms be completed and submitted to CNDDDB to document survey results. Online forms can be obtained and submitted at: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>.

Please note that CDFW's CNDDDB is not exhaustive in terms of the data it houses, nor is it an absence database. CDFW recommends that it be used as a starting point in gathering information about the *potential presence* of species within the general area of the Project site. Other sources for identification of species and habitats near or adjacent to the Project area should include, but may not be limited to, State and federal resource agency lists, California Wildlife Habitat Relationship System, California Native Plant Society Inventory, agency contacts, environmental documents for other projects in the vicinity, academics, and professional or scientific organizations.

3. A complete and recent inventory of rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species located within the Project footprint and within offsite areas with the potential to be affected, including California Species of Special Concern and California Fully Protected Species (Fish & G. Code § § 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515). Species to be addressed should include all those which meet the CEQA definition (CEQA Guidelines § 15380). The inventory should address seasonal variations in use of the Project area and should not be limited to resident species. The EIR should include the results of focused species-specific surveys, completed by a qualified biologist and conducted at the appropriate time of year and time of day when the sensitive species are active or otherwise identifiable. Species-specific surveys should be conducted in order to ascertain the presence of species with the potential to be directly, indirectly, on or within a reasonable distance of the Project activities. CDFW recommends Placer County rely on survey and monitoring protocols and guidelines available at: www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols. Alternative survey protocols may be warranted; justification should be provided to substantiate why an

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alternative protocol is necessary. Acceptable species-specific survey procedures should be developed in consultation with CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where necessary. Some aspects of the Project may warrant periodic updated surveys for certain sensitive taxa, particularly if the Project is proposed to occur over a protracted time frame, or in phases, or if surveys are completed during periods of drought or deluge.

4. A thorough, recent (within the last two years), floristic-based assessment of special-status plants and natural communities, following CDFW's *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities* (see www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Plants).
5. Information on the regional setting that is critical to an assessment of environmental impacts, with special emphasis on resources that are rare or unique to the region (CEQA Guidelines § 15125[c]).

Analysis of Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts to Biological Resources

The EIR should provide a thorough discussion of the Project's potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on biological resources. To ensure that Project impacts on biological resources are fully analyzed, the following information should be included in the EIR:

1. The EIR should define the threshold of significance for each impact and describe the criteria used to determine whether the impacts are significant (CEQA Guidelines, § 15064, subd. (f)). The EIR must demonstrate that the significant environmental impacts of the Project were adequately investigated and discussed and it must permit the significant effects of the Project to be considered in the full environmental context.
2. A discussion of potential impacts from lighting, noise, human activity, and wildlife-human interactions created by Project activities especially those adjacent to natural areas, exotic and/or invasive species occurrences, and drainages. The EIR should address Project-related changes to drainage patterns and water quality within, upstream, and downstream of the Project site, including: volume, velocity, and frequency of existing and post-Project surface flows; polluted runoff; soil erosion and/or sedimentation in streams and water bodies; and post-Project fate of runoff from the Project site.
3. A discussion of potential indirect Project impacts on biological resources, including resources in areas adjacent to the Project footprint, such as nearby public lands (e.g., National Forests, State Parks, etc.), open space, adjacent natural habitats, riparian ecosystems, wildlife corridors, and any designated and/or proposed reserve or mitigation lands (e.g., preserved lands associated with a Conservation or Recovery Plan, or other conserved lands).

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4. A cumulative effects analysis developed as described under CEQA Guidelines section 15130. The EIR should discuss the Project's cumulative impacts to natural resources and determine if that contribution would result in a significant impact. The EIR should include a list of present, past, and probable future projects producing related impacts to biological resources or shall include a summary of the projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or statewide plan, that consider conditions contributing to a cumulative effect. The cumulative analysis shall include impact analysis of vegetation and habitat reductions within the area and their potential cumulative effects. Please include all potential direct and indirect Project-related impacts to riparian areas, wetlands, wildlife corridors or wildlife movement areas, aquatic habitats, sensitive species and/or special-status species, open space, and adjacent natural habitats in the cumulative effects analysis.

Mitigation Measures for Project Impacts to Biological Resources

The EIR should include appropriate and adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that are expected to occur as a result of the construction and long-term operation and maintenance of the Project. CDFW also recommends the environmental documentation provide scientifically supported discussion regarding adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to address the Project's significant impacts upon fish and wildlife and their habitat. For individual projects, mitigation must be roughly proportional to the level of impacts, including cumulative impacts, in accordance with the provisions of CEQA (Guidelines § § 15126.4(a)(4)(B), 15064, 15065, and 16355). In order for mitigation measures to be effective, they must be specific, enforceable, and feasible actions that will improve environmental conditions. When proposing measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts, CDFW recommends consideration of the following:

1. *Fully Protected Species*: Several Fully Protected Species (Fish & G. Code, §§ 3511 & 4700) have the potential to occur within or adjacent to the Project area, including, but not limited to: Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Greater Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis tabida*), Northern California ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus raptor*), and Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*). Project activities described in the EIR should be designed to completely avoid any fully protected species that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the Project area. If fully protected species cannot be completely avoided, the Project should obtain incidental take coverage for all species that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the Project Area². CDFW also recommends the EIR fully analyze potential adverse impacts to fully protected species due to habitat modification, loss of foraging habitat, and/or interruption of migratory and breeding behaviors. CDFW recommends that Placer County include in the analysis how appropriate avoidance,

² CDFW may only issue incidental take permits for specified projects if certain conditions are satisfied per SB 147.

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minimization and mitigation measures will reduce indirect impacts to fully protected species.

2. *Species of Special Concern*: Several Species of Special Concern (SSC) have the potential to occur within or adjacent to the Project area, including, but not limited to: Southern long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum sigillatum*), American Goshawk (*Astur atricapillus*), California Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*), Olive-Sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*), Sierra Nevada mountain beaver (*Aplodontia rufa californica*), Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus tahoensis*), Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*), Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*), Northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*), Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*). Project activities described in the EIR should be designed to avoid any SSC that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the Project area. CDFW also recommends that the EIR fully analyze potential adverse impacts to SSC due to habitat modification, loss of foraging habitat, and/or interruption of migratory and breeding behaviors. CDFW recommends Placer County include in the analysis how appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures will reduce impacts to SSC.
3. *Sensitive Plant Communities*: CDFW considers sensitive plant communities to be imperiled habitats having both local and regional significance. Plant communities, alliances, and associations with a statewide ranking of S-1, S-2, S-3, and S-4 should be considered sensitive and declining at the local and regional level. These ranks can be obtained by querying the CNDDDB and are included in *The Manual of California Vegetation* (Sawyer 2009). The EIR should include measures to fully avoid and otherwise protect sensitive plant communities from Project-related direct and indirect impacts.
4. *Native Wildlife Nursery Sites*: CDFW recommends the EIR fully analyze potential adverse impacts to native wildlife nursery sites, including but not limited to bat maternity roosts. Based on review of Project materials, aerial photography, and observation of the site from public roadways, the Project area contains potential nursery site habitat for structure and tree roosting bats and is near potential foraging habitat. Bats are considered non-game mammals and are afforded protection by state law from take and/or harassment, (Fish & G. Code, § 4150; Cal. Code of Regs, § 251.1). CDFW recommends that the EIR fully identify the Project's potential impacts to native wildlife nursery sites, and include appropriate avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures to reduce impacts or mitigate any potential significant impacts to bat nursery sites.
5. *Mitigation*: CDFW considers adverse Project-related impacts to sensitive species and habitats to be significant to both local and regional ecosystems, and the EIR should include mitigation measures for adverse Project-related impacts to these resources. Mitigation measures should emphasize avoidance and reduction of Project impacts.

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For unavoidable impacts, onsite habitat restoration, enhancement, or permanent protection should be evaluated and discussed in detail. If onsite mitigation is not feasible or would not be biologically viable and therefore not adequately mitigate the loss of biological functions and values, offsite mitigation through habitat creation and/or acquisition and preservation in perpetuity should be addressed.

The EIR should include measures to perpetually protect the targeted habitat values within mitigation areas from direct and indirect adverse impacts in order to meet mitigation objectives to offset Project-induced qualitative and quantitative losses of biological values. Specific issues that should be addressed include restrictions on access, proposed land dedications, long-term monitoring and management programs, control of illegal dumping, water pollution, increased human intrusion, etc.

6. *Habitat Revegetation/Restoration Plans*: Plans for restoration and revegetation should be prepared by persons with expertise in the regional ecosystems and native plant restoration techniques. Plans should identify the assumptions used to develop the proposed restoration strategy. Each plan should include, at a minimum: (a) the location of restoration sites and assessment of appropriate reference sites; (b) the plant species to be used, sources of local propagules, container sizes, and seeding rates; (c) a schematic depicting the mitigation area; (d) a local seed and cuttings and planting schedule; (e) a description of the irrigation methodology; (f) measures to control exotic vegetation on site; (g) specific success criteria; (h) a detailed monitoring program; (i) contingency measures should the success criteria not be met; and (j) identification of the party responsible for meeting the success criteria and providing for conservation of the mitigation site in perpetuity. Monitoring of restoration areas should extend across a sufficient time frame to ensure that the new habitat is established, self-sustaining, and capable of surviving drought.

CDFW recommends that local onsite propagules from the Project area and nearby vicinity be collected and used for restoration purposes. Onsite seed collection should be appropriately timed to ensure the viability of the seeds when planted. Onsite vegetation mapping at the alliance and/or association level should be used to develop appropriate restoration goals and local plant palettes. Reference areas should be identified to help guide restoration efforts. Specific restoration plans should be developed for various Project components as appropriate. Restoration objectives should include protecting special habitat elements or re-creating them in areas affected by the Project. Examples may include retention of woody material, logs, snags, rocks, and brush piles. Fish and Game Code sections 1002, 1002.5 and 1003 authorize CDFW to issue permits for the take or possession of plants and wildlife for scientific, educational, and propagation purposes. Please see our website for more information on Scientific Collecting Permits at www.wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Scientific-Collecting#53949678-regulations.

7. *Nesting Birds*: Please note that it is the Project proponent's responsibility to comply with all applicable laws related to nesting birds and birds of prey. Migratory non-game

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native bird species are protected by international treaty under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918, as amended (16 U.S.C. 703 *et seq.*). CDFW implemented the MBTA by adopting the Fish and Game Code section 3513. Fish and Game Code sections 3503, 3503.5 and 3800 provide additional protection to nongame birds, birds of prey, their nests and eggs. Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the Fish and Game Code afford protective measures as follows: section 3503 states that it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by the Fish and Game Code or any regulation made pursuant thereto; section 3503.5 states that it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by the Fish and Game Code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto; and section 3513 states that it is unlawful to take or possess any migratory nongame bird as designated in the MBTA or any part of such migratory nongame bird except as provided by rules and regulations adopted by the Secretary of the Interior under provisions of the MBTA.

Potential habitat for nesting birds and birds of prey is present within the Project area. The Project should disclose all potential activities that may incur a direct or indirect take to nongame nesting birds within the Project footprint and its vicinity. Appropriate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to avoid take must be included in the EIR.

CDFW recommends the EIR include specific avoidance and minimization measures to ensure that impacts to nesting birds or their nests do not occur. Project-specific avoidance and minimization measures may include, but not be limited to: Project phasing and timing, monitoring of Project-related noise (where applicable), sound walls, and buffers, where appropriate. The EIR should also include specific avoidance and minimization measures that will be implemented should a nest be located within the Project site. In addition to larger, protocol level survey efforts (e.g., Swainson's hawk surveys) and scientific assessments, CDFW recommends a final preconstruction survey be required no more than three (3) days prior to vegetation clearing or ground disturbance activities, as instances of nesting could be missed if surveys are conducted earlier.

8. *Moving out of Harm's Way*: The Project is anticipated to result in the clearing of natural habitats that support native species. To avoid direct mortality, Placer County should state in the EIR a requirement for a qualified biologist with the proper handling permits, will be retained to be onsite prior to and during all ground- and habitat-disturbing activities. Furthermore, the EIR should describe that the qualified biologist with the proper permits may move out of harm's way special-status species or other wildlife of low or limited mobility that would otherwise be injured or killed from Project-related activities, as needed. The EIR should also describe qualified biologist qualifications and authorities to stop work to prevent direct mortality of special-status species. CDFW recommends fish and wildlife species be allowed to move out of harm's way on their own volition, if possible, and to assist their relocation as a last resort. It should be noted

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that the temporary relocation of onsite wildlife does not constitute effective mitigation for habitat loss.

9. *Translocation of Species*: CDFW generally does not support the use of relocation, salvage, and/or transplantation as the sole mitigation for impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species as these efforts are generally experimental in nature and largely unsuccessful. Therefore, the EIR should describe additional mitigation measures utilizing habitat restoration, conservation, and/or preservation, in addition to avoidance and minimization measures, if it is determined that there may be impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species.
10. *Human-Wildlife Conflict*: CDFW recommends that the EIR include feasible mitigation measures to reduce adverse Project-related impacts resulting in increased human-wildlife conflict. Such measures include but are not limited to:
 - Include bear proof dumpsters, trash receptacles, and food storage boxes throughout the property.
 - Implement educational signage using BearWise messaging about living and recreating safely in bear country, particularly at trail heads, cabins, and anywhere trash is collected.
 - Ensure all buildings are devoid of crawl spaces or decks that bears may access for denning.
 - Consider infrastructure for electrification of some facilities (hot wire), particularly the food service area(s) and any other structures with kitchens and/or food storage.
 - Consider an increase in depredation requests to CDFW and the Placer Co Ag Commission.
11. *Water Quality and Use*: The project proposes to use existing stormwater runoff patterns/locations and the installation of new wells and septic systems. CDFW suggests the following considerations be incorporated into the EIR:
 - Conduct a water availability study, including groundwater/subsurface, to ensure new wells, water infrastructure, and all septic systems are feasible and assess the loss of water availability on the forest environment.
 - Create a stormwater management plan that avoids impacts to Lake Putt and negative impacts to wildlife and humans, including on-going management and monitoring. Incorporate an appropriately sized stormwater conveyance system and retention area that can accommodate 100-year flows into the project design.

The EIR should incorporate mitigation performance standards that would ensure that impacts are reduced to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures proposed in the EIR

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should be made a condition of approval of the Project. Please note that obtaining a permit from CDFW by itself with no other mitigation proposal may constitute mitigation deferral. CEQA Guidelines section 15126.4, subdivision (a)(1)(B) states that formulation of mitigation measures should not be deferred until some future time. To avoid deferring mitigation in this way, the EIR should describe avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures that would be implemented should the impact occur.

California Endangered Species Act

CDFW is responsible for ensuring appropriate conservation of fish and wildlife resources including threatened, endangered, and/or candidate plant and animal species, pursuant to CESA. CDFW recommends that a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) be obtained if the Project has the potential to result in "take" (Fish & G. Code § 86 defines "take" as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill") of State-listed CESA species, either through construction or over the life of the Project.

State-listed and candidate species with the potential to occur in the area include but are not limited to: Western bumble bee (*Bombus occidentalis*), Willow Fly Catcher (*Empidonax traillii*), Foothill yellow-legged frog - north Sierra DPS (*Rana boylei* pop. 3), and Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (*Rana sierrae*).

The EIR should disclose the potential of the Project to take State-listed species and how the impacts will be avoided, minimized, and mitigated. Please note that mitigation measures that are adequate to reduce impacts to a less-than significant level to meet CEQA requirements may not be enough for the issuance of an ITP. To facilitate the issuance of an ITP, if applicable, CDFW recommends the EIR include measures to minimize and fully mitigate the impacts to any State-listed species the Project has potential to take. CDFW encourages early consultation with staff to determine appropriate measures to facilitate future permitting processes and to engage with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or National Marine Fisheries Service to coordinate specific measures if both State and federally listed species may be present within the Project vicinity.

Native Plant Protection Act

The Native Plant Protection Act (Fish & G. Code § 1900 *et seq.*) prohibits the take or possession of State-listed rare and endangered plants, including any part or product thereof, unless authorized by CDFW or in certain limited circumstances. Take of State-listed rare and/or endangered plants due to Project activities may only be permitted through an ITP or other authorization issued by CDFW pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Title 14, section 786.9 subdivision (b).

Lake and Streambed Alteration Program

The EIR should identify all perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral rivers, streams, lakes, other hydrologically connected aquatic features, and any associated biological resources/habitats present within the entire Project footprint (including utilities, access and

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staging areas). The environmental document should analyze all potential temporary, permanent, direct, indirect and/or cumulative impacts to the above-mentioned features and associated biological resources/habitats that may occur because of the Project. If it is determined the Project will result in significant impacts to these resources the EIR shall propose appropriate avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may do one or more of the following:

1. Substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream or lake;
2. Substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel or bank of any river, stream, or lake; or
3. Deposit debris, waste or other materials where it may pass into any river, stream or lake.

Please note that "any river, stream or lake" includes those that are episodic (i.e., those that are dry for periods of time) as well as those that are perennial (i.e., those that flow year-round). This includes ephemeral streams and watercourses with a subsurface flow. It may also apply to work undertaken within the flood plain of a body of water.

If upon review of an entity's notification, CDFW determines that the Project activities may substantially adversely affect an existing fish or wildlife resource, a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement will be issued which will include reasonable measures necessary to protect the resource. CDFW's issuance of an LSA Agreement is a "project" subject to CEQA (see Pub. Resources Code 21065). To facilitate issuance of an LSA Agreement, if one is necessary, the EIR should fully identify the potential impacts to the lake, stream, or riparian resources, and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, and monitoring and reporting commitments. Early consultation with CDFW is recommended, since modification of the Project may avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources. All LSA Notification types must be submitted online through CDFW's Environmental Permit Information Management System (EPIMS). For more information about EPIMS, please visit <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/EPIMS>. More information about LSA Notifications, paper forms and fees may be found at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/LSA>.

Please note that other agencies may use specific methods and definitions to determine impacts to areas subject to their authorities. These methods and definitions often do not include all needed information for CDFW to determine the extent of fish and wildlife resources affected by activities subject to Notification under Fish and Game Code section 1602. Therefore, CDFW does not recommend relying solely on methods developed specifically for delineating areas subject to other agencies' jurisdiction (such as United States Army Corps of Engineers) when mapping lakes, streams, wetlands, floodplains, riparian

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areas, etc. in preparation for submitting a Notification of an LSA.

CDFW relies on the lead agency environmental document analysis when acting as a responsible agency issuing an LSA Agreement. CDFW recommends lead agencies coordinate with us as early as possible, since potential modification of the proposed Project may avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources and expedite the Project approval process.

The following information will be required for the processing of an LSA Notification and CDFW recommends incorporating this information into any forthcoming CEQA document(s) to avoid subsequent documentation and Project delays:

1. Mapping and quantification of lakes, streams, and associated fish and wildlife habitat (e.g., riparian habitat, freshwater wetlands, etc.) that will be temporarily and/or permanently impacted by the Project, including impacts from access and staging areas. Please include an estimate of impact to each habitat type.
2. Discussion of specific avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to reduce Project impacts to fish and wildlife resources to a less-than-significant level. Please refer to section 15370 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Based on review of Project materials, aerial photography, and observation of the site from public roadways, the Project site supports Lake Putt, Blue Ravine Creek, and its associated riparian habitat. CDFW recommends the EIR fully identify the Project's potential impacts to the stream and/or its associated vegetation and wetlands.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database, which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to CNDDDB. The CNDDDB field survey form can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The completed form can be submitted online or mailed electronically to CNDDDB at the following email address: CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov.

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an effect on fish and wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by Placer County and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

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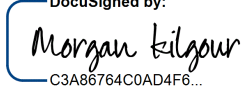
CONCLUSION

Pursuant to Public Resources Code sections 21092 and 21092.2, CDFW requests written notification of proposed actions and pending decisions regarding the Project. Written notifications shall be directed to: California Department of Fish and Wildlife North Central Region, 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670 or emailed to R2CEQA@wildlife.ca.gov.

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation of the EIR for the Gateway Park Project and recommends that Placer County address CDFW's comments and concerns in the forthcoming EIR. CDFW personnel are available for consultation regarding biological resources and strategies to minimize impacts.

If you have any questions regarding the comments provided in this letter or wish to schedule a meeting and/or site visit, please contact Patrick Moeszinger, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) at (916) 767-3935 or patrick.moeszinger@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

C3A86764C0AD4F6...

Morgan Kilgour, PhD
Regional Manager

cc: Billie Wilson, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)
Patrick Moeszinger, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, State Clearinghouse, Sacramento

REFERENCES

Sawyer, J. O., T. Keeler-Wolf, and J. M. Evens. 2009. A Manual of California Vegetation, 2nd ed. California Native Plant Society Press, Sacramento, California. <http://vegetation.cnps.org/>