



INITIAL STUDY AND PROPOSED MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION Arnold Avery Trail Reconciliation, Wayfinding and Outdoor Literacy Project

Prepared for:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive #205
Auburn, CA 95603

September 2026

INITIAL STUDY AND PROPOSED MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Arnold Avery Trail Reconciliation, Wayfinding and Outdoor Literacy Project

Prepared for:



Sierra Nevada Conservancy

11521 Blocker Drive #205
Auburn, CA 95603

Contact:

Wendy Johnson

General Counsel
530.450.5177

Prepared by:



Ascent

455 Capitol Mall, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

Contact:

Adam Lewandowski

Conservation and Recreation Planning Director
916.444.7301

September 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	II
1 INTRODUCTION	1-1
1.1 Introduction and Regulatory Guidance	1-1
1.2 Summary of Findings.....	1-2
1.3 Document Organization	1-2
2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND.....	2-1
2.1 Background and Purpose of The Project	2-1
2.2 Prior NEPA Document and Incorporation by Reference.....	2-1
2.3 Project Location	2-2
2.4 Project Objectives.....	2-4
2.5 Description of Proposed Project	2-4
3 ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST	3-1
3.1 Aesthetics	3-3
3.2 Agriculture and Forest Resources	3-5
3.3 Air Quality.....	3-7
3.4 Biological Resources.....	3-9
3.5 Cultural Resources	3-14
3.6 Energy	3-15
3.7 Geology and Soils	3-16
3.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions.....	3-18
3.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials.....	3-19
3.10 Hydrology and Water Quality	3-22
3.11 Land Use and Planning	3-25
3.12 Mineral Resources.....	3-26
3.13 Noise.....	3-27
3.14 Population and Housing.....	3-29
3.15 Public Services	3-30
3.16 Recreation	3-31
3.17 Transportation	3-32
3.18 Tribal Cultural Resources.....	3-34
3.19 Utilities and Service Systems.....	3-35
3.20 Wildfire	3-38
3.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance – Including cumulative impacts	3-40
4 REFERENCES	4-1
Figures	
Figure 2-1 Regional Location Map	2-3
Figure 2-2 Proposed Trail Activities	2-5
Tables	
Table 2-1 Description of Trail Activities	2-6

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMP	Best Management Practice
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CCAPCD	Calaveras County Air Pollution Control District
CE	Categorical Exclusion
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CESA	California Endangered Species Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNRA	California Natural Resources Agency
dbh	diameter at breast height
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESU	evolutionary significant unit
FANEC	Finding of Applicability and No Extraordinary Circumstance
GHG	greenhouse gas
IS/Proposed MND	Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration
LOP	limited operating period
MCAB	Mountain Counties Air Basin
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFDRS	National Fire Danger Rating System
NPPA	Native Plant Protection Act
OES	Calaveras County Office of Emergency Services
SNC	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
SPCC	Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures
Stanislaus NF	US Forest Service, Stanislaus National Forest
USC	United States Code
USFS	United States Forest Service

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

This Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/Proposed MND) has been prepared by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to evaluate the potential environmental effects resulting from implementation of the proposed Arnold Avery Trail Reconciliation, Wayfinding and Outdoor Literacy Project. The project site is in Calaveras County, and would consist of modifications to existing unauthorized routes, which would be implemented by the Arnold Rim Trail Association, a nonprofit citizen volunteer group of the Calaveras District of the Stanislaus National Forest.

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

As described in the environmental checklist (Chapter 3, "Environmental Checklist," below), mitigation measures are necessary to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, an IS/MND is the appropriate document for compliance with the requirements of CEQA. This IS/MND conforms to these requirements and to the content requirements of State CEQA Guidelines Section 15071.

Under CEQA, the lead agency is the public agency with primary responsibility for approval of the proposed project. The SNC is considering a discretionary action to award a grant to fund implementation of the project. As such, SNC is the lead agency and has directed the preparation of an analysis that complies with CEQA so as to inform decision-makers and the public of the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed project. This disclosure document is being made available to the public for review and comment. The IS/Proposed MND is available for a 30-day public review period from September 24, 2026 to October 26, 2026.

Supporting documentation referenced in this document is available for review at the SNC office:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive #205
Auburn, CA 95603
Phone: (530) 823-4670

Comments or questions should be addressed to:

Shannon Ciotti
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive #205
Auburn, CA 95603
Phone: (530) 906-7345
Email: Shannon.Ciotti@sierranevada.ca.gov

If you wish to send written comments (including via e-mail), they must be postmarked by October 26, 2026.

After comments are received from the public and reviewing agencies, SNC may (1) adopt the MND and approve the project; (2) undertake additional environmental studies; or (3) abandon the project. If the SNC adopts the MND and authorizes a grant award, then the Arnold Rim Trail Association may proceed with the project only after executing the required grant agreement and obtaining all necessary permits and other approvals.

1.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapter 3 of this document contains the analysis and discussion of potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, based on the Environmental Checklist included as Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Based on the issues evaluated in that chapter, it was determined that the proposed project would have either no impact or a less-than-significant impact on the following issue areas:

- ▶ aesthetics,
- ▶ agricultural resources,
- ▶ air quality,
- ▶ cultural resources,
- ▶ energy,
- ▶ geology and soils,
- ▶ greenhouse gas emissions
- ▶ hazards and hazardous materials,
- ▶ hydrology and water quality,
- ▶ land use and planning,
- ▶ mineral resources,
- ▶ noise,
- ▶ population and housing,
- ▶ public services,
- ▶ recreation,
- ▶ transportation,
- ▶ tribal cultural resources,
- ▶ utilities and service systems,
- ▶ wildfire, and
- ▶ mandatory findings of significance, including cumulative impacts.

Potentially significant impacts were identified for biological resources; however, mitigation measures included in the IS/Proposed MND would reduce all impacts to a less-than-significant level.

1.3 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This IS/MND is organized as follows:

- ▶ **Chapter 1: Introduction.** This chapter introduces the environmental review process. It describes the purpose and organization of this document. It also presents a summary of findings.
- ▶ **Chapter 2: Project Description and Background.** This chapter describes the purpose of and need for the proposed project, identifies project objectives, and provides a detailed description of the proposed project.
- ▶ **Chapter 3: Environmental Checklist.** This chapter assesses a range of environmental issues identified in the CEQA Environmental Checklist and determines if each of a range of impacts would result in no impact, a less-than-significant impact, a less-than-significant impact with mitigation incorporated, or a potentially significant impact. If any impacts were determined to be potentially significant, an EIR would be required. For this project, however, none of the impacts were determined to be significant after implementation of mitigation measures.
- ▶ **Chapter 4: References.** This chapter lists the references used in preparation of this IS/Proposed MND.

2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The Arnold Rim Trail system extends approximately 28 miles and connects the communities of Arnold, Avery, and Hathaway Pines. It contains curated trail opportunities for hikers, cyclists and equestrians. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is considering a grant to the Arnold Rim Trail Association to support the Arnold Avery Trail Reconciliation, Wayfinding and Outdoor Literacy Project. Because SNC is a state agency, CEQA review must be completed to issue the grant. This document, an IS/proposed MND, has been prepared to support a decision by SNC of whether or not to provide funding to support the proposed project.

2.2 PRIOR NEPA DOCUMENT AND INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Because the project is located on National Forest System lands, USFS adopted a Categorical Exclusion (CE)/Finding of Applicability and No Extraordinary Circumstance (FANEC) for the environmental review and approval of the Arnold Avery Non-Motorized Trails project (USFS 2025). The CE/FANEC addressed the environmental impacts associated with the project described below in Chapter 2, "Project Description and Background." USFS adopted the CE/FANEC on November 26, 2025. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and based on the analysis presented in the adopted CE/FANEC, the project was determined to be excluded from preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of action was identified in agency procedures (7 CFR Part 1b.4): USDA-26d-USFS "Construction and reconstruction of trails" and USDA-42d-USFS "Activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize lands occupied by roads and trails, including unauthorized roads and trails and NFS roads and NFS trails, to a more natural condition...." "These categories of actions are applicable because the proposed action is constructing, reconstructing, or restoring trails.

Additionally, no extraordinary circumstances were identified that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. An extraordinary circumstance means a unique situation exists in which actions that normally do not have significant impacts, creates uncertainty whether the degree of the impact is significant for the relevant resources considered (7 CFR 1b.11(a)(17)).

- ▶ Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat or species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat;
 - This project may affect the Foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylei*), a Federally Endangered species, and the Western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*), a species proposed for federal listing. Surveys conducted in 2017/2018 did not detect either species, and management requirements reduce impacts by avoiding suitable habitat by 25 meters (Appendix B [of the CE/FANEC]). Therefore, the degree of effect is not significant. If stream trail crossings need to be constructed within this 25 meter buffer, biological monitors will be present to ensure protection of these species.
 - California red legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), a Federally Threatened species, has not been detected in the upper Calaveras River or Upper Stanislaus River watersheds and has not been detected anywhere on the Stanislaus National Forest since 1967 despite numerous surveys. The nearest historical sighting is over 8 miles away. Surveys were conducted in 2017/2018 for the Arnold Avery Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project in San Antonio Creek, which contains suitable habitat for the species, which confirmed the frogs are not present. Therefore, this project will not affect the California red-legged frog.
 - Due to the lack of occurrences of federally listed wildlife and botanical species and the lack of critical habitat, the project will not affect any federally listed species or critical habitats.
- ▶ Flood plains, wetlands, or other such sensitive areas;

- Lava caps are a unique habitat in the Sierra Nevada Foothills that host many endemic, rare, and sensitive plant species. These habitats are sensitive to disturbance and will be protected from project activities. Refer to Appendix B [of the CE/FANEC] for management requirements related to the protection of these sensitive areas.
- ▶ Special sources of water, such as sole-source aquifers, wellhead protection areas, municipal watersheds, or other water sources that are vital in a region;
 - While no special water sources exist in the project area, the primary water source comes from natural perennial streams. Management requirements for activities within and adjacent to perennial streams would protect riparian areas from any potential adverse effects (see Appendix B and C [of the CE/FANEC]).
- ▶ Areas having formal Federal or state designations, such as wilderness areas, parks, or wildlife refuges; wild and scenic rivers; marine sanctuaries; national natural landmarks; inventoried roadless areas; or national recreation areas;
 - Not present. Recreation opportunity Spectrum is "Roaded natural"
- ▶ Specially managed areas, such as designated research or experimental areas, coral reefs, coastal barrier resources, or, unless exempt, coastal zone management areas;
 - Not present.
- ▶ Important or prime agricultural, forest, or range lands; or
 - Not present.
- ▶ Property (e.g., sites, buildings, structures, and objects) of historic, archeological, or architectural significance, as designated by Federal, Tribal, State, or local governments, or property eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
 - Management requirements described in the Cultural Resources section of Appendix B [of the CE/FANEC] are designed to protect these resources from adverse impacts via the management requirements for cultural resources.

This IS/MND, therefore, incorporates the entirety of the Arnold Avery Non-Motorized Trails certified CE/FANEC by reference, as allowed by CEQA Guidelines Section 15150. The Arnold Avery Non-Motorized Trails certified CE/FANEC provides a summary of the purpose and need of the project, the proposed action, the findings listed above, the applicability of laws and regulations, and the incorporated management requirements and best management practices.

The Arnold Avery Non-Motorized Trails certified CE/FANEC is available for review on the Arnold Rim Trail Association's website: <https://arnoldrimtrail.org/arnold-rim-trail-planning-resources/>.

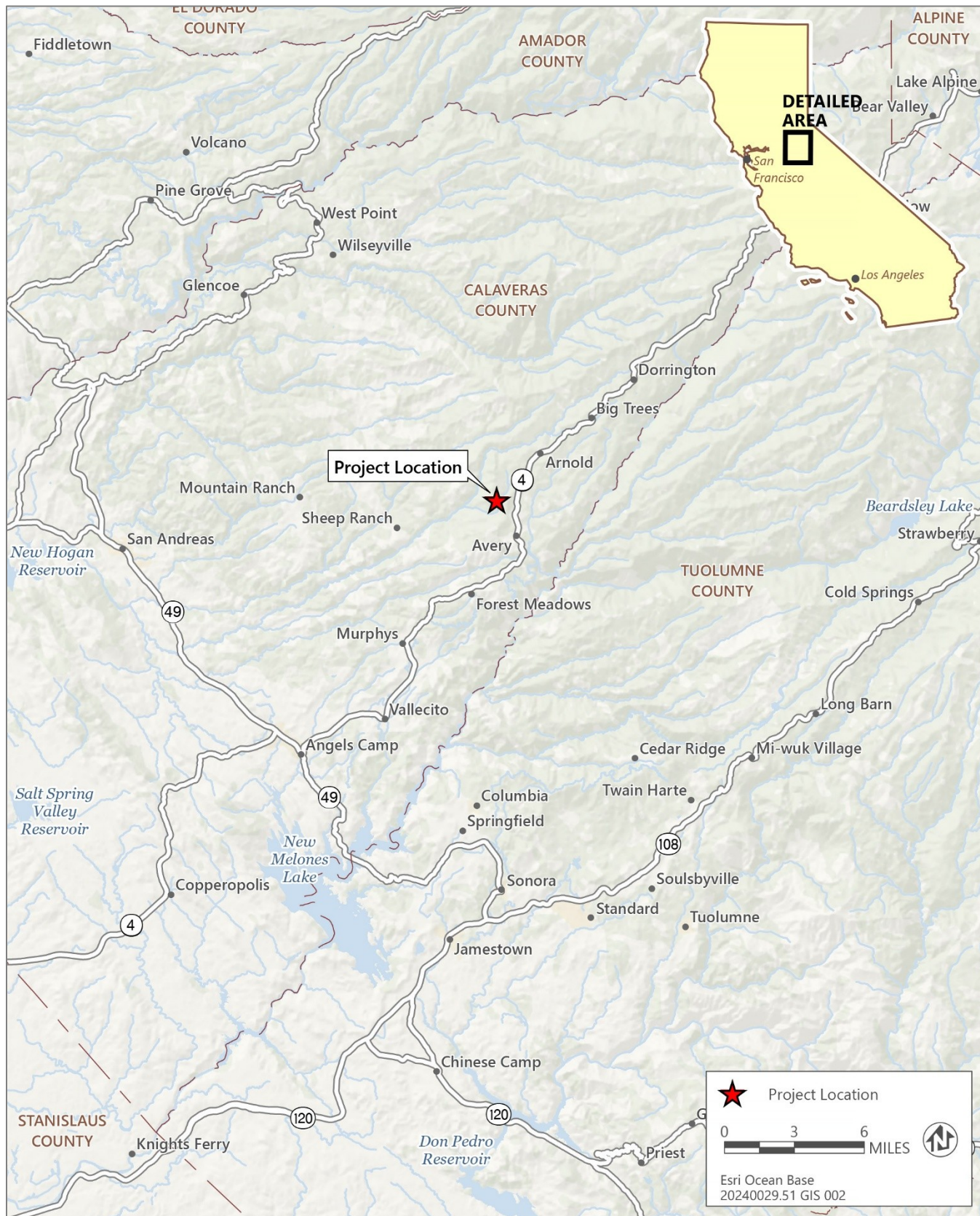
2.3 PROJECT LOCATION

The project site is located in Calaveras County in an 8,000-acre "island" of the Stanislaus National Forest that is isolated from the rest of the Forest by Highway 4 and directly borders the communities of White Pines, Arnold, Avery and Hathaway Pines (Figure 2-1). The current trail system is intended to be non-motorized multi-use with opportunities for hikers, bikers, and equestrians. The project area encompasses approximately 57 miles of existing routes including:

- ▶ 28 miles of existing, authorized National Forest System Trails
- ▶ 12 miles of known existing, unauthorized non-system trails
- ▶ 17 miles of administrative-use only roads

Regional access to site is available from State Route 4. Local access to the project site is generally available from existing trail heads, including those located adjacent to the Sierra Nevada Logging Museum (2148 Dunbar Road, Arnold, CA); the Cedar Center Kiosk (Oak Court, Arnold CA); Valley View Road in Arnold, CA; and Avery Sheep Ranch Road in Avery, CA. The project site is accessible only by non-motorized vehicles along the existing trail system.

Figure 2-1 Regional Location Map



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2023.

2.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project addresses unauthorized trails in the non-motorized portion of the Arnold-Avery Interface and responds to the community's desire for additional access and non-motorized recreation opportunities. The proposed project objectives include the following:

- ▶ modify sections of authorized trails to reduce hazardous trail conditions and unsustainable grades;
- ▶ implement appropriate trail density;
- ▶ provide intuitive connectivity by closing gaps and completing loops; and
- ▶ create clear, logical junctions that support confident navigation for users of varied experience levels.

2.5 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The project involves trails that would be modified as reroutes, new construction, reconstruction, and obliteration and restoration. All future unauthorized routes within the project area would be obliterated, after clearance by qualified specialists, and restored. Informational signage would be incorporated throughout the trail system. All trail improvement activities would incorporate the actions listed below in Section 2.5.2, "Management Requirements," and Section 2.5.3, "Best Management Practices." The proposed activities would occur over a period of approximately 5-10 years, pending resources and funding.

2.5.1 Trail Modification Categories

Implementation of the proposed project would involve five categories of trail modifications:

- ▶ Trail reroute
- ▶ Adopt with reconstruction
- ▶ New trail
- ▶ Obliterate and restore
- ▶ Trailhead kiosks, access location signage, and trail markers.

The following description provides a summary of activities associated with each category of trail project. Figure 2-2 depicts the trails proposed for modification by status category. Table 2-1 provides an overview description of the activities associated with each category of trail condition.

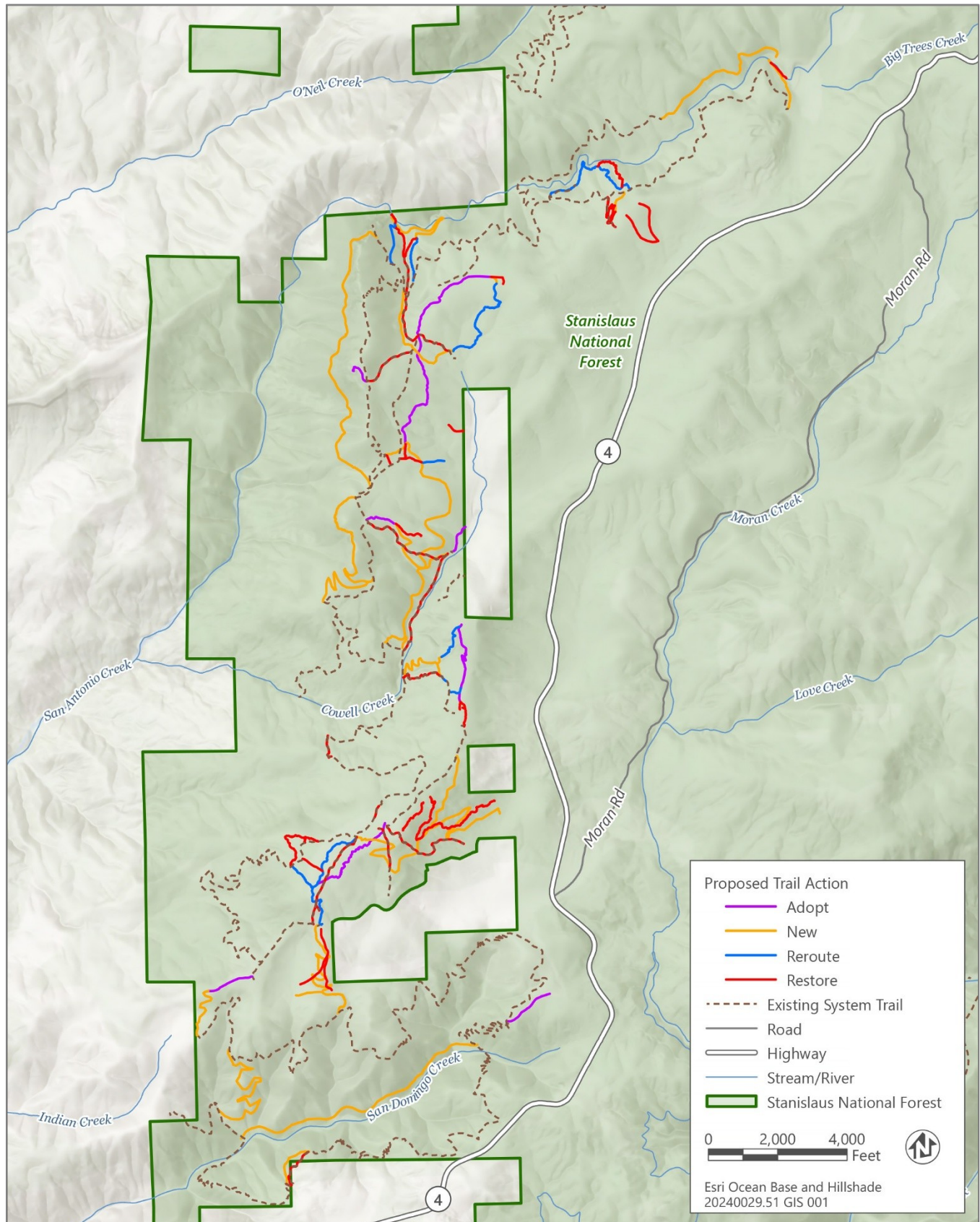
Trail Rerouting

The rerouting of trails involves moving a trail to a new location. It requires hand or mechanized construction of a new trail segment and obliteration/restoration of the old segment. Due to factors such as terrain, land ownership, or the presence of sensitive resources, rerouting of trails may result in a net gain or loss of overall trail system length. However, the overall purpose of a re-route is not to add or subtract trail miles. Reroutes are being considered where trails intersect with roadways or private property, where use can be better maintained, enhanced safety, user experience improved, or in cases where the current location is causing resource impacts.

Actions associated with trail reroutes could include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ Tread construction;
- ▶ Removing trees, rocks, stumps, and roots;
- ▶ Installing water control features such as water bars, drainage dips, and culverts;
- ▶ Brushing, trimming, and removing trees and vegetation; and
- ▶ Installing trail infrastructure such as stairs, bridges, puncheons, causeways, retaining walls, rip rap, and other armoring.

Figure 2-2 Proposed Trail Activities



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2023.

Adopt with Reconstruction

Trail reconstruction is rebuilding a trail in place, adding trail infrastructure, and/or completing deferred maintenance that requires ground disturbance. It is used when a reroute is not practical and/or the trail's current alignment is not the primary issue. Reconstruction may involve many of the same actions described above.

New Trail

A new trail project involves creation of an entirely new trail by hand or mechanized methods means to improve access, create new opportunities, or develop loops. Activities associated with construction of new trails would be similar to those described above for trail rerouting; however, the overall purpose of this action is to add additional miles.

Obliterate and Restore

The goal of obliteration and restoration is to return a trail to as natural a state as possible, reduce further impacts, and prevent further use. Typical techniques include seeding, decompacting soil, and placing downed logs or other vegetation to discourage continued use.

Table 2-1 Description of Trail Activities

Current Trail Status	Construction Types	Description	Approximate Miles
Unauthorized, Existing Trail	Obliteration/restoration	These trails are currently causing natural, cultural, or social impacts. In coordination with resource specialists, these routes would be restored and naturalized.	6
	Adopt with reroutes	These routes would be adopted with modification to their current alignment but the exact reroute is not yet known. They may require substantial reroutes or structures, and may be causing natural, cultural, or social resource concerns. Reroutes would be used to create more sustainable grades and alignments that avoid resource concerns and support the desired experience of the trail. Final alignment of any trail reroute will be surveyed by a Forest Service Specialists prior to any ground disturbance.	3
	Adopt as is, some reconstruction needed	These routes would be adopted without modification to their current alignment. They may require some additional reconstruction or construction of trail structures.	3
Planned, Does Not Exist	Construction of new non-motorized trails	These routes do not currently exist and are not associated with any reroutes but would provide loops, additional access, or new recreation opportunities designed to accommodate hikers, bikers, and equestrians.	10
	Construction of proposed reroutes	These are proposed reroutes of existing trails. Reroutes will be used to create more sustainable grades and alignments that avoid resource concerns and support the desired experience of the trail. Final alignment of any trail reroute will be surveyed by Forest Service Specialists prior to any ground disturbance.	5.5
Authorized, Existing	Obliteration/restoration	These are existing authorized routes that are unsustainable or causing resource concerns	3.5
	Adopt with reroutes	These are existing authorized trails that need modification to their current alignment but the exact reroute is not yet known	0.5
Approximate Total			31

Trailhead kiosks, access location signage, and trail wayfinding

The project would implement a four-tier signage strategy designed to match infrastructure levels with visitor needs and site complexity. All signs would be installed at existing trailheads and access points or within the trail system, within the existing system infrastructure footprint. The four-tier signage strategy is described as follows.

1. Primary Trailheads

Multi-panel trailhead kiosks with protective roofing at the four of the existing primary trailheads listed below. Two new kiosks would be installed and the existing two would remain in place.

- a. Upper Valley View – Sunset Loop: New kiosk to be installed
- b. Cedar Center: Existing kiosk; update information only
- c. Logging Museum: Existing kiosk; update information only
- d. Avery Connector: New kiosk to be installed

2. Secondary access points with parking

4-foot-by-4-foot Backboard signs (4-foot-by-4-foot) with mounted waterproof maps would be installed at the existing 10 secondary access points with parking areas, listed below.

- a. Lower Valley View, at the intersection with Avery-Sheep Ranch Rd
- b. Cowboy Trailhead (East) at the Middle Valley View / Boy Scout Kiosk area
- c. Cowboy Trailhead (West)
- d. San Domingo headwaters, also known as 4N41Y
- e. Sidewinder Trailhead on Fullen Road
- f. Lone Madrone Trailhead on Fullen Road
- g. Heliport Trailhead
- h. Hillcrest Trailhead
- i. Mountain bike park (Valley View) at the top of Yabba Dabba Doo trail
- j. Four Corners

3. Neighborhood access points.

Minimalist 4-foot-by-4-footwood post signs indicating trailhead and “You Are Here” map by Forest Service gate and county right-of-way on four existing community access points that do not have parking infrastructure, listed below.

- a. Crystal Gate, in the Meadowmont community
- b. Fairway Gate in the Meadowmont community
- c. Lakemont Gate in the Lakemont community
- d. unnamed gate in the Lakemont community

4. On-trail Wayfinding Points

Minimalist 4-foot-by-4-footwood posts or flexible Carsonite fiberglass markers with trail names would be installed at trail junctions/crossings within the trail system.

2.5.2 Management Requirements

As noted above in Section 2.2, “Prior NEPA Document and Incorporation by Reference,” a CE/FANEC was previously adopted by USFS to support the proposed project. As part of the NEPA process, the following management requirements were listed for inclusion during project implementation. These have been incorporated into the project evaluated in this IS/MND.

General

1. Prior to any ground disturbing activities, consult with District Ranger and specialists for final review and approval. Document and file the review and approval as part of the project record.

Trails

1. Consult the 2025 Trail Maintenance and Construction Notebook for best practices.
2. Incorporate Forest Service Trail Fundamentals for all trails: FSH 2309.18 Trails Management Handbook, Chapter 10 Trail Planning, Section 14 Trail Fundamentals.
3. Incorporate Forest Service Trail Design Parameters based on FSH 2309.18 guidance in section 14.5 and the corresponding set of Design Parameters in sections 23.1 through 23.13.
4. Create a formalized agreement with external partners for maintenance of trails in the project area.
5. Ensure changes in the trail system are updated in Forest Service geospatial and tabular databases.

Soils

1. Consult the steps in the 2025 Trail Maintenance and Construction Notebook for trail obliteration ("Naturalize the old trail," pg. 247).
 - a. *If equipment is available* for obliteration and restoration, follow these guidelines for soil decompaction:
 - Decompect soil via subsoiling, chunking (e.g., with an excavator bucket), or roughening soil surface, but only when trail gradient is less than 15 percent. When trail gradient exceeds 15 percent, install erosion control if necessary, apply ground cover, and disguise the obliterated trail, but do not loosen the trail tread surface.
 - b. *If equipment is not available* during obliteration:
 - Attempt to loosen soil surface by hand, at least for the first 50-100 feet of an obliterated trail, and disguise as best as possible beyond that. Decompaction/soil loosening will be much easier and most effective if done in the spring, Late march through late May. This makes soil easier to dig and gives it time to settle before intense winter rains.

Cultural Resources

1. Prior to implementation, ensure implementation coordinator/lead has reviewed maps for heritage resource sites and coordinates activities with a Forest Service Archeologist if there is potential for activities to impact sites.
2. Avoid trail construction or maintenance activities within heritage resource sites. Sites may or may not be flagged on the ground.
3. Construct or reroute trails in coordination with a Forest Service Archeologist as needed to avoid potential impacts to sites. Notify the District Archaeologist if any cultural resources are found during implementation and cease all project activities in the vicinity of the find.

Botanical Species

1. Avoid using heavy machinery and driving vehicles on lava cap habitats, riparian vegetation or any other sensitive habitats that are found during surveys.
2. Do not construct trail through lava cap habitats and known rare plant populations.

3. Surveys will be conducted prior to any ground disturbing or vegetation alteration work by a qualified botanist and adhere to Forest Service standards for botanical surveys as defined by FSH 2609.26. Such as conducting surveys at an appropriate time of year for the known and potential species that could occur.
4. Directionally fell trees away from lava cap or sensitive occurrences. Do not chip woody debris or lop and scatter slash in habitats or sensitive plant populations.
5. Do not construct burn piles in habitats or known sensitive occurrences.
6. Any seeds or other plant propagules collected for restoring unauthorized trails or other damaged areas must be native species and will be appropriate to the location; correct range and elevation, must be collected locally to where they will be used. Species list and distribution plan must be approved by a Forest Service botanist.
7. Attempt to retain all manzanitas with a DBH of 4 inches or greater, blue oak, valley oak and black oak with a DBH of 3 inches or greater, and all dogwoods with a DBH of 3 inches or greater. If this is not possible, consult with a Forest Service botanist prior to taking any removal action. Smaller dogwoods, black oaks, blue oaks, and valley oaks shall be retained to the greatest extent feasible where they do not compromise operability.
8. Retain all elderberry, Pacific yew, and hazelnut shrubs/trees.
9. Retain all obligate riparian hardwood species and generally direct trails away from riparian vegetation.
10. No subsoiling or other ground disturbing activity in lava cap, meadow, riparian, or fen habitats or known sensitive plant occurrences.

Invasive Plants

1. Take proactive approaches to prevent the introduction, establishment and spread of invasive plants. Utilize Early Detection and Rapid Response (FSM 2902, FSM 2903).
2. Surveys will be conducted prior to any ground disturbing or vegetation alteration work by a qualified botanist and adhere to Forest Service standards for botanical surveys as defined by FSM 2900.
3. All off-road equipment will be cleaned completely to ensure it is free of soil, seeds, and vegetative matter before entering National Forest lands.
4. Use certified weed-free, native materials including but not limited to rock, aggregate base, straw, native seed, fill dirt, wattles, mulch, sand, and gravel.
5. Monitor invasive plant populations after they have been treated to ensure the invasive population has been eradicated, or if a follow-up treatment is needed.
6. Promote education/reporting of invasive plant populations by all field staff and contractors.

Terrestrial Biology

1. During trail maintenance or construction: do not cut standing trees 11" DBH or greater unless it is a tree with high hazard potential and a biologist has been consulted. Consult with a biologist if any other standing tree over the DBH limit is being considered for cutting; this is expected to be rare.
2. Do not use chainsaws or other machines within ¼ mile of an activity center during the primary nesting season. This limited operating period (LOP) can be lifted if the chainsaw/machine work takes less than 1 day per ½ mile of trail, if the work is to fell trees with immediate high hazard potential, if surveys determine non-nesting, or if a biologist approves a site-specific circumstance. Because trail-building will not notably manipulate habitat and will be limited in scope and intensity, the LOP will only cover the primary nesting season. For CSO (California Spotted Owl) and GGO (Great Grey Owl), the LOP will be March 1 through July 9. For AMGO (American Goshawk), the LOP will be February 15 through July 31. These dates are based on local fledging dates and the draft conservation measures provided by USFWS in 2025.

Aquatics Biology

1. Construct new trails and reroutes at least 25 meters from perennial creeks. If this is not possible, or when crossings need to occur, consult an Aquatic Biologist. Onsite biological monitoring may be required if crossings are constructed.

Water Quality Management – BMPs

1. Implement all applicable BMPs during project construction (see Appendix C BMP checklist [of the CE/FANEC])

2.5.3 Best Management Practices

As noted above in Section 2.2, “Prior NEPA Document and Incorporation by Reference,” a CE/FANEC was previously adopted by USFS to support the proposed project. As part of the NEPA process, the following best management practices (BMPs) were listed for inclusion during project implementation. These BMPs have been incorporated into the project evaluated in this IS/MND.

Construction BMPs:

- ▶ #1 AqEco-2, Rec-2, Fac-2 / BMP 1.19, 2.3: Maintain erosion-control measures to function effectively throughout the project area during construction.
- ▶ #2 AqEco-2, Rec-2, Fac-2 / BMP 1.19, 2.3: Keep erosion-control measures sufficiently effective during ground disturbance to allow rapid closure when weather conditions deteriorate.
- ▶ #3 AqEco-2, Rec-2, Fac-2 / BMP 1.19, 2.3: Complete all necessary erosion control and stabilization prior to precipitation that could result in surface runoff.
- ▶ #4 AqEco-2, Rec-2, Fac-2 / BMP 1.19, 2.3: Stabilize disturbed areas with mulch, erosion fabric, vegetation, rock, large organic materials, engineered structures, or other measures according to designs and contract specifications.
- ▶ #5 AqEco-2, Rec-2, Fac-2 / BMP 1.19, 2.3: Prevent project generated materials (e.g., soil, asphalt, etc.) from entering waterbodies.
- ▶ #6 AqEco-2, Rec-2, Fac-2 / BMP 1.19, 2.3: Remove all project generated debris from the project area and dispose of off NFS lands.

PARKING AND STAGING AREAS / EQUIPMENT REFUELING AND SERVICING Best Management Practices

- ▶ #1 Road-10 / BMP 2.10 / 2.11: Rehabilitate temporary staging, parking, and refueling/servicing areas immediately following use.
- ▶ #2 Road-10 / BMP 2.11: Allow temporary refueling and servicing only at approved sites located outside of RCAs.
- ▶ #3 Road-10 / BMP 2.11: Provide a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures (SPCC) plan on all projects as per the contract. Review and ensure spill plans are up to date.
- ▶ #4 Road-10 / BMP 2.11: Report spills and initiate appropriate clean-up action in accordance with applicable State and Federal laws, rules and regulations. The Forest Service hazardous materials coordinator’s name and phone number shall be available to Forest Service personnel who administer or manage activities utilizing petroleum- powered equipment.
- ▶ #5 Road-10 / BMP 2.11: Remove contaminated soil and other material from NFS lands and dispose of this material in a manner according to controlling regulations.
- ▶ #6 Road-10 / BMP 2.11: Install temporary wash sites only in areas where the water and residue can be adequately collected and either filtered on site or conveyed to an appropriate wastewater treatment facility.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

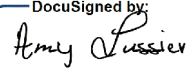
The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Aesthetics | ☐ Agriculture and Forest Resources | ☐ Air Quality |
| ☐ Biological Resources | ☐ Cultural Resources | ☐ Geology / Soils |
| ☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions | ☐ Hazards & Hazardous Materials | ☐ Hydrology / Water Quality |
| ☐ Land Use / Planning | ☐ Mineral Resources | ☐ Noise |
| ☐ Population / Housing | ☐ Public Services | ☐ Recreation |
| ☐ Transportation / Traffic | ☐ Utilities / Service Systems | ☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance |
| | | ☒ None with Mitigation |
-
- ☐ None

DETERMINATION (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- ☐ I find that the proposed project could not have a significant effect on the environment, and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.
- ☒ I find that although the proposed project **COULD** have a significant effect on the environment, there **WILL NOT** be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.
- ☐ I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required.
- ☐ I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a "potentially significant impact" or "potential significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attachment sheets. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- ☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION**, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

DocuSigned by:

007085582B6E4AD...
Signature

September 24, 2026

Date

Amy Lussier

Printed Name

Deputy Executive Officer

Title

Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Agency

3.1 AESTHETICS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
I. Aesthetics				
Except as provided in Public Resources Code section 21099 (where aesthetic impacts shall not be considered significant for qualifying residential, mixed-use residential, and employment centers), would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.1.1 Discussion

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Less than significant impact. A scenic vista is generally considered to be a location from which the public can experience unique and exemplary high-quality views—typically from elevated vantage points that offer panoramic outlooks of great breadth and depth. The visual character of the site is that of undeveloped forested lands. The project proposes modifications to the existing trail system that would include trail signs and wayfinding features, adoption, rerouting, and restoring of existing trails or development of new trails. Upon completion, the project site would maintain the existing undeveloped and forested visual character of the site and scenic vistas would not be adversely affected by these activities. Because the existing forested visual character of the site would remain, and the potential for visual impacts from catastrophic fire would decrease, this impact would be less than significant.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

Less than significant impact. Portions of the project site would be located near to State Route 4, an officially designated scenic highway (Caltrans 2026); however, project activities would not be visible to travelers along this route due to the existing topography and vegetation. The project would not involve new uses and would maintain the existing character of the project site, which consists of a trail system in undeveloped forested land. No additional uses would be allowed, and the trail would remain available to non-motorized uses only. Thus, there would not be substantial damage to scenic resources within a state scenic highway, and this impact would be less than significant.

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

Less than significant impact. As discussed above under a) and b), the project would not involve new uses and would maintain the existing character of the project site, which consists of a trail system in undeveloped forested land. Because there would be no changes to the visual character or quality of the site this impact would be less than significant.

- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

No impact. The project does not propose installation of new lighting fixtures or structures that could result in light or glare. There would be no impact.

3.2 AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
II. Agriculture and Forest Resources.				
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997, as updated) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland.				
In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.2.1 Discussion

- a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

No impact. The project is not located on land designated as grazing land and farmland of local importance. There is no Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance within the project area (DOC 2022). There would be no impact.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?

No impact. The project involves modifications to an existing trail system within the Stanislaus National Forest. It does not include actions that would change zoning of or the use of lands within the project site. There would be no impact.

c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

No impact. The project involves modifications to an existing trail system within the Stanislaus National Forest. It does not include actions that would change zoning of or the use of lands within the project site. There would be no impact.

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No impact. See discussion c), above.

e) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No impact. See discussion a), b). and c), above.

3.3 AIR QUALITY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
III. Air Quality. Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied on to make the following determinations. Are significance criteria established by the applicable air district available to rely on for significance determinations? Would the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.3.1 Discussion

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

Less than significant impact. Calaveras County is part of the Mountain Counties Air Basin. Air quality within the County is under the jurisdiction of the Calaveras County Air Pollution Control District (CCAPCD). CCAPCD manages the County's air quality through education and enforcement of CCAPCD rules and California Air Resources Board (CARB) measures and regulations. Emissions that could be created by the proposed project would not result from temporary impacts during construction of the tower. There would be no new sources of emissions associated with operation of the project (i.e., use of modified trails).

The County has been classified as a non-attainment area for the State and Federal ozone standards (1-hour and 8-hour) and Particulate Matter standards (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀). An area is designated in attainment for the Federal standards if concentration for the specified pollutant is not exceeded on average more than once per year. The primary source of secondary particulate matter (i.e., ROG and NO_x) is mobile sources, including cars, trucks, buses, construction equipment, and agricultural equipment. Common sources of particulate matter pollution in the County include residential, development, and land management related activities such as woodstoves, windblown dust and/or diesel from construction activities, and forestry management burning.

Limited, temporary, on-site construction activities would occur within the boundaries of the existing site. Construction would trail signs and wayfinding features and trail reroutes, construction, and reconstruction that would involve hand and or mechanized construction techniques and would not require substantial use of heavy equipment. These construction activities are not substantial or prolonged enough to create emissions that would violate applicable air quality standards or substantially contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less than significant impact related to the potential to conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan, or to 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.

- b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

Less than significant impact. See discussion a), above.

- c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Less than significant impact. Sensitive receptors near the project area include recreational users. However, as described above under a) and b), emissions would not be substantial. This impact would be less than significant.

- e) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

No impact. The project does not include new odor sources (e.g., wastewater treatment plant, landfills). There would be no impact.

3.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
IV. Biological Resources. Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.4.1 Discussion

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the US Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less than significant with mitigation incorporated. Several special-status animal and plant species are known or have potential to occur in the project area. The certified CE/FANEC document approved for the Arnold Avery Non-Motorized Trails Project (incorporated by reference, per Section 2.2, "Prior NEPA Document and Incorporation by Reference," above) discussed the results of recent surveys, which did not detect California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylei*), and northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) in the vicinity of the project area. Consistent with the certified CE/FANEC, the project includes

management requirements and BMPs that address botanical species, terrestrial biology, and aquatic biology (see Section 2.5.2, "Management Requirements," and 2.5.3, "Best Management Practices"). For example, as required by the aquatic biology management requirement, new trail and reroutes would be constructed at least 25 meters (i.e., 82 feet) from perennial streams; and, if this extent of avoidance is not possible or a crossing is necessary, then aquatic biologist should be consulted and monitoring may be required. These actions would avoid adverse effects on aquatic species. With regard to terrestrial species, trees over 11 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) should be avoided and LOPs are integrated into the project and would be implemented within buffer zones around territories/breeding sites of California spotted owl, great gray owl, and American goshawk to avoid project-related disturbances to these species during sensitive breeding periods (see Section 2.5.2, "Management Requirements," under subheading, "Terrestrial Biology"). Additionally, botanical surveys would be conducted prior to trail construction, trails would not be conducted through known rare plant populations occurrences of sensitive plant species, and plants and seeds collected for restoration of decommissioned trails will be collected locally and approved by a Forest Service botanist (see Section 2.5.2, "Management Requirements," under subheadings, "Botanical Species" and "Invasive Plant"). The implementation of specific management requirements and BMPs combined with the obliteration and restoration of unsustainable trails and limited footprint of new non-motorized trails would not result in a substantial adverse effect on special-status animal and plant species (USFS 2025).

Review of the certified CE/FANEC for the project (USFS 2025), as well as a search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB 2026), the California Native Plants Society inventory of rare, threatened, and endangered plants (CNPS 2026), CDFW Areas of Conservation Emphasis Terrestrial Species database (CDFW 2026a), and other relevant sources were performed to determine if plants or animals listed under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) or Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) could be affected by the project. The CNDDDB and CNPS database queries evaluated all documented occurrences of state and federally identified special-status species within the Murphys, Fort Mountain, and Stanislaus US Geological Survey quadrangles containing the project area. The search of relevant information found that there were no CESA or NPPA listed botanical species reported within the project area or vicinity. The search found historical or recent records of the following CESA listed and candidate animal species that were not addressed in the certified CE/FANEC for the project (USFS 2025).

- ▶ Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*), CESA candidate
- ▶ Western bumble bee (*Bombus occidentalis*), CESA candidate
- ▶ Willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), CESA endangered
- ▶ Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), CESA endangered
- ▶ Fisher - southern Sierra Nevada evolutionary significant unit (ESU) (*Pekania pennanti*), CESA threatened

The project area is outside of the current range of western bumble bee (CDFW 2023) and the southern Sierra Nevada ESU of fisher (USFWS 2025); therefore, although western bumble bee was documented to occur historically (CNDDDB 2026), and the project is in the former range of fisher, neither of these species is likely to currently occur within the project area. Therefore, the project would not affect western bumble bee or the southern Sierra Nevada ESU of fisher.

The project is located within the current documented range of Crotch's bumble bee (CDFW 2023); however, there are no recent occurrences in the vicinity. A single Crotch's bumble bee historical CNDDDB occurrence from 1967 is recorded for a location near the project area in the general vicinity of Arnold, and the closest recent occurrence was documented in 2024 in the vicinity of Hogback Mountain, approximately 16 miles west of the project area (Bumble Bee Atlas 2026; CNDDDB 2026). Knowledge regarding the life history characteristics and behaviors of Crotch's bumble bee is limited. The species nests in abandoned rodent burrows or other similar locations within grassland, shrubland, chaparral, and semi-urban settings, which also provide floral resources for foraging (CDFW 2026b). Generally, bumble bee queens may be found overwintering in woodlands adjacent to nesting habitat in soft, well-drained, disturbed soil (Licznar and Colla 2019). Potential nesting habitat for the Crotch's bumble bee is limited within the project area, and unlikely to support the species. The project area consists primarily of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) stands, sierran mixed conifer, montane hardwood, and montane hardwood

conifer. While isolated shrub-dominated habitats, small grasslands, and meadows are present within the project area, the more expansive grassland, chaparral, and shrub habitats typically used by Crotch's bumble bee are not present within the project alignment. Most of the trail work for the project would be conducted within forested areas; however, a relatively small portion of trails would be constructed and restored within and adjacent to isolated shrub, grassland, and meadow habitats. Trail work within these habitats could result in the loss of nests, overwintering queens, and foraging habitat in the unlikely event that the species is present. However, due to the lack of recent records of Crotch's bumble bee in the project vicinity, the isolated nature of the shrub, grassland, and meadow habitats, which are unlikely to support the species, and the limited ground disturbance within these habitats, the project would not result in loss of nests, overwintering queens, or foraging habitat for Crotch's bumble bee or have substantially adverse effects on the species.

Willow flycatchers nest and forage in willow-dominated riparian habitats, and more commonly wet meadows associated with perennial streams. Increased over-nest cover, dense vegetation surrounding the nest site, larger meadow size, greater distance from forest edges, and wetter meadow conditions are associated with high-quality nesting habitat. The project area is within the range of willow flycatcher and modeled habitat for the species is present within the vicinity of the project footprint along San Antonio Creek and around portions of White Pines Lake (BIOS 2023; USFS 2006). However, all trail work proposed by the project is farther than approximately 300 feet from these modeled habitats, and therefore, no direct removal of nests or disturbance of nesting behavior would occur due to project implementation. Furthermore, no adverse effects on modeled habitat for the species are anticipated, because work would not occur within or adjacent to this habitat, and water quality BMPs would avoid downstream hydrologic effects from trail construction (i.e., as noted above management requirements contain an 82-foot setback from perennial streams). Therefore, the project would not substantially adversely affect willow flycatcher.

Mature forest stands in along San Antonio Creek and around portions of White Pines Lake may provide nesting trees for bald eagles, and the species has been recently documented at White Pines Lake during the nesting season (iNaturalist 2026). Project activities that use non-motorized hand tools are not likely to result in adverse effects on bald eagles. However, the use of chainsaws or other machines to clear vegetation or construct trails could result in disturbance of nesting bald eagles that may result in loss of eggs and young if an active nest occurs within 0.25 miles of these activities. In addition, felling of a nest tree could result in loss of eggs, young, and the nest itself in the unlikely event that the nest tree is removed for trail alignment. The loss of eggs or young, or the loss of a bald eagle nest either within or outside of the nesting season, would be a substantial adverse effect on the local population of bald eagle.

In summary, the project would not affect plants listed under CESA and the NPPA, western bumble bee, or the southern Sierra Nevada ESU of fisher. The proposed project, with the inclusion of management requirements and BMPs would not result in a substantial adverse effect on special-status animal and plant species analyzed in the project NEPA, Crotch's bumble bee, or willow flycatcher. The project would, however, result in potential adverse effects on bald eagle, so the impact on special-status species would be **potentially significant**.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1: Avoid Bald Eagle Injury, Mortality, and Loss of Nests

The following mitigation measures shall be incorporated into construction plans and as a condition of issuance of the SNC grant to fund the project.

To avoid injury or mortality of bald eagles, within 14 days prior to project construction using chainsaws or other machines, a qualified biologist shall conduct focused nest surveys for bald eagle nests in nesting habitat within 0.5 miles of project activities. If no bald eagle nests are detected, then no further mitigation is required. If a bald eagle nest is detected, implement a LOP restricting all use of chainsaws or other machines within 0.5 miles of the nest during the period December 1 through July 31, or until chicks have fledged, as determined by a qualified biologist. The size of the nest buffer may be adjusted by a qualified biologist based on topography, vegetative screening, existing disturbance and other factors, provided the reduced buffer is equally protective. Furthermore, if a nest is detected within the trail alignment, the nest tree will not be removed at any time, and the trail realigned in consultation with a qualified biologist to avoid impacts on the tree.

Significance Following Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1 will avoid and minimize adverse effects on bald eagle by conducting surveys for nests prior to project activities with the potential to result in nest disturbance, applying an LOP for project activities using chainsaws and other machines within 0.5 miles of active nests that are present within or adjacent to the project area, and preventing removal of nest trees. Therefore, with implementation Mitigation Measure BIO-1, the impact to bald eagle would be clearly reduced to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

- b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the US Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less than significant impact. The project area may contain sensitive natural communities and sensitive habitats, including lava cap habitats, fens, and riparian habitat. The certified CE/FANEC for the project includes specific management requirements and BMPs to minimize, avoid, or mitigate potential effects of project implementation on sensitive natural communities and riparian habitats (see Section 2.5.2 and 2.5.3). For example, trail construction would be avoided through lava cap habitats, trees would be felled away from lava cap habitats, all obligate riparian hardwood species would be retained, trails directed away from riparian vegetation, and no subsoiling or other ground disturbing activities would occur in lava cap, meadow, riparian, or fen habitats (see Section 2.5.2, "Management Requirements," above) (USFS 2025). The implementation of specific management requirements and BMPs combined with the obliteration and restoration of unsustainable trails and the limited footprint of new non-motorized trails would not result in a substantial adverse effect on riparian habitats or sensitive natural communities and this impact would be less than significant.

- c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

Less than significant impact. Perennial creeks occur within the project area, and other waters of the US and waters of the State that are protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act may also be present. The certified CE/FANEC for the project includes specific management requirements and BMPs (see Section 2.5.2 and 2.5.3), that would avoid direct and indirect adverse effects to federally protected waters, such as avoiding trail construction within 82 feet of perennial creeks if possible, stabilizing disturbed areas, and preventing project generated materials from entering waterbodies (USFS 2025). Implementation of these management requirements and additional water quality BMPs would avoid adverse effects to perennial streams and other state or federally protected waters. This impact would be less than significant.

- d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Less than significant impact. Approximately 57 miles of existing authorized and unauthorized trails are present within the project area. The proposed project would add approximately 15 miles of new and rerouted trails, while closing and restoring approximately 9.5 miles of existing trails. The new and rerouted trails would be open for non-motorized use and would not result in a physical barrier that would substantially interfere with the movement of native wildlife or fish. Furthermore, adding approximately 5.5 miles of trail to the project area where 57 miles of trail currently exist would not result in a substantial increase in the amount of recreation in the area. New trails would not substantially affect the amount of activity within the Arnold Rim Trail system and would therefore not substantially interfere with wildlife movement. There are no documented wildlife nursery sites within the project area; thus, the project would not impede the use of any nursery sites. For the reasons discussed above the impact from the proposed project on the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, or native wildlife nursery sites would be less than significant.

- e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

No impact. The project would occur within Calaveras County. The Calaveras County General Plan contains policies related to the protection of biological resources. However, the proposed project would occur on federal lands and local ordinances and the policies within the general plan do not apply. Therefore, there is no conflict with local policies or ordinances, and no impact.

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

No impact. There are no Habitat Conservation Plans or Natural Community Conservation Plans associated with the project area; therefore, there would be no impact.

3.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
V. Cultural Resources. Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially disturb human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	☐	☐	☒	☐

3.5.1 Discussion

- a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5?

Less than significant impact. A California Historical Resources Information System records search was conducted through the Central California Information Center (CCIC) at California State University, Sacramento (File No.: 13850J) on August 24, 2026. The results identified one built environment feature within the project site and a 250 foot radius; the Shay Locomotive (P-05-003473) is located within the Sierra Nevada Logging Museum. The project does not include modifications to built environment features, including the Shay Locomotive. As described above and as identified in the certified CE/FANEC for the project, management requirements have been included for project implementation. Trail construction and maintenance activities would be avoided within heritage resource site boundaries. This impact would be less than significant.

- b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

Less than significant impact. The CCIC records search identified 11 archaeological sites within the project site and an additional 12 within the 250 foot search radius. These sites are a mixture of historic-era and indigenous, and consist of building foundations, trash scatters, fence line remnants, road beds, lithic scatters, and bedrock mortars. Protection measures to avoid cultural resources would be implemented for the project, as outlined through the NEPA process. These include reviewing maps for heritage resource sites and coordinating activities with a Forest Service Archeologist, avoiding trail construction or maintenance activities within heritage resource sites, and notifying the Forest Service District Archaeologist if any cultural resources are found during implementation. This impact would be less than significant.

- c) Substantially disturb human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Less than significant impact. The project would not include substantial ground-disturbing activities that could encounter human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries. Additionally, California law recognizes the need to protect Native American human burials, skeletal remains, and items associated with Native American burials from vandalism and inadvertent destruction. Compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and California Public Resources Code Section 5097 would provide an opportunity to avoid or minimize the disturbance of human remains, and to appropriately treat any remains that are discovered. This impact would be less than significant.

3.6 ENERGY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VI. Energy.				
Would the project:				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.6.1 Discussion

- a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

Less than significant impact. During implementation of the project, energy would be required to operate and maintain construction equipment, transport workers, and to produce and transport construction materials. Construction-related activities would occur incrementally on specific projects carried out over many years, which would result in minimal energy use for construction each year. No new energy demand would be associated with operation of the project because only non-motorized uses would be allowed and there would not be a substantial increase in the number of visitors to the Arnold Rim Trail system. Because the Arnold Rim Trail provides a high-quality public access and recreation resource for the region and implementation of the project would not increase electrical demand, natural gas use, or substantial new vehicles trips above baseline conditions, the impact would be less than significant.

- b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency

No impact. The project involves modifications to an existing trail system. There would be no operational changes that would create a change in energy use. Thus, there would be no potential to conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. There would be no impact.

3.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VII. Geology and Soils.				
Would the project:				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42.)	☐	☐	☐	☒
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☐	☒
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☐	☒
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994, as updated), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☒	☐

3.7.1 Discussion

- a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
 - i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42.)
 - ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?
 - iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?
 - iv) Landslides?

No impact: The project involves construction, reconstruction, and restoration of trails within the Arnold Rim Trail system. The project would not cause rupture of a known earthquake fault, will not cause seismic ground shaking, will not cause seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, and will not cause any landslides or increase landslide potential.

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

Less than significant impact: The project involves construction, reconstruction, and restoration of trails within the Arnold Rim Trail system. The project includes implementation of the requirements decompaction provided in Section 2.5.2, "Management Requirements," and the erosion control requirements listed under Section 2.5.3, "Best Management Practices," which require erosion-control measures during construction. With implementation of these requirements, impacts would be less than significant.

- c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?
- d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994, as updated), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

No impact: The project involves construction, reconstruction, and restoration of trails within the Arnold Rim Trail system. The project would not involve development of new structures that would increase the exposure of people or structures to unstable or expansive soils. There would be no impact.

- e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

No impact. No septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems are associated with the project. There would be no impact.

- f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

Less than significant impact. The project would not include substantial ground-disturbing activities that could encounter paleontological resources or unique geologic resources. This impact would be less than significant.

3.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VII. Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.8.1 Discussion

- a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Less than significant impact. The types of construction activity needed for implementation of the project (e.g., limited vegetation removal, linear grading necessary for trail development, and placement of natural surface material along trail routes) are primarily carried out with field crews using hand tools and accessing construction site via light-duty vehicles. The need for heavy equipment would be intentionally minimized by the limited nature of the construction. The level of construction would be inconsequential, compared to typical construction projects. Minimizing heavy construction equipment use, emphasizing trail development by field crews with hand tools, and limiting the extent of construction activity would also minimize greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, resulting in sufficient reduction for a less-than-significant GHG impact conclusion. For these reasons, GHG emission impacts would be less than significant.

- b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

No impact. The project does not include changes to the existing uses of the project area. That is, trails would continue to be used by non-motorized modes of transportation. Thus, there would be no potential impact related to conflicts with plans, policies, or regulations adopted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

3.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

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

3.9.1 Discussion

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

Less than significant impact. Project implementation activities would involve the use of operating machinery, which rely on hazardous materials, such as lubricants, gasoline, and oil. The use and storage of these materials could potentially expose and adversely affect workers, the public, or the environment due to improper handling or use; accident; environmentally unsound disposal methods; or fire, explosion, or other emergencies, resulting in adverse health effects. All activities would be subject to compliance with Federal, State, and local hazardous materials regulations (e.g., Occupational Safety and Health Administration and California Department of Toxic Substances Control). Therefore, it is anticipated that the routine use of these materials handled in accordance with these laws and regulations would not create any adverse hazard to the public or the environment. This impact would be less than significant.

- b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Less than significant impact. As described above under a), project activities would involve the use of hazardous materials. However, it is anticipated that the routine use of these materials handled in accordance with laws and regulations would not create any reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions on the public or the environment. This impact would be less than significant.

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

No impact. No schools are located within one-quarter mile of the project area. There would be no impact.

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

No impact. There are no hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 within the project area. There would be no impact.

- e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?

No impact. There are no airports within 2 miles of the project area. Thus, there would be no impact.

- f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Less than significant impact. Transport of construction mechanical equipment along roadways to the project area could occur along evacuation routes. However, the Calaveras County Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates information, plans for resources, and supports priorities among County agencies, local governments, and special districts. OES serves as a link between the Federal Emergency Management Agency, California Emergency Management Agency and the County's cities, towns, villages and special districts. In the event of an emergency, OES would notify the public of a possible hazardous condition and provide broadcasts of ongoing information and actions the public should take to protect its health and safety. Transport of equipment along possible evacuation routes would be minimal and would comply with direction provided by OES. This impact would be less than significant.

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

Less-than-significant impact. The project involves construction, reconstruction, and restoration of trails and installation of signage and wayfinding features within the existing Arnold Rim Trail system. The project would overall improve trail conditions but would not substantially affect forest fuels. While construction equipment would largely be hand tools, some mechanical equipment may be used as well. Pursuant to United States Code (USC) Title 16, Section 551 and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 36, Section 261.50(a), within the High Fire Hazard Area of the Stanislaus National Forest, a spark arresting device that is properly installed, maintained, and in effective working order is required while operating or using any internal or external combustion engine in accordance with US Forest Service Standard 5100-1 (36 CFR Section 261.520). The project is located within the High Fire Hazard Area of the Stanislaus National Forest (USFS 2020); thus, this requirement applies to project construction activities. In addition, the project would be subject to the Project Activity Level requirements, which uses the National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS). NFDRS is a scientifically based fire danger rating system that calculates indices and components using weather data from remote automatic weather stations and danger

rating algorithms that have been thoroughly tested and provides for reliable results to inform the Project Activity Level. Project Activity Level is a decision support tool designed to help fire and timber resource managers establish the level of industrial precaution for the following day. These protective requirements would be in place during construction of the project and would ensure that there would not be a substantial increase in risk of wildfire ignition; thus, this impact would be less than significant.

3.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
IX. Hydrology and Water Quality. Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:	☐	☐	☒	☐
i) Result in substantial on- or offsite erosion or siltation;	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.10.1 Discussion

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?

Less than significant impact. Waterways within the project area consist primarily of natural perennial streams (USFS 2025). Construction activities associated with trail modification would generally be associated with the use of hand tools to removal vegetation and grade new trails or restore areas support unauthorized trails. Removal of soil and vegetation exposes bare earth and could cause unstable conditions, resulting in soils that are easily disturbed by equipment and eroded by rain and wind. Additionally, project construction activities on road/trail alignments situated on steep slopes in areas underlain by unstable geology or sensitive soils are prone to higher erosion hazard that could result in erosion of surface soils during construction activities. Finally, accidental spills of construction-related contaminants, such as fuels, oils, solvents, and cleaners, could occur during project construction, resulting in contamination of surface soils.

The trails would be constructed consistent with the Forest Service Trail Management Handbook (Handbook 2309.18, USDA 2025). This handbook establishes survey requirements and design standards that affect trail location, including avoidance of wetland areas and flat areas with difficult drainage, locations subject to snow drifting and late-season snowmelt, steep slopes, and fragile vegetation areas; and instead favors ridges, natural opening, natural drainages, and well-drained soils. In addition, specifications for trail construction include guidance for clearing and grubbing, trail bed excavation, turnpikes, switchbacks, and drainage. These considerations are intended to support sustainable trails, which are defined as trails that are planned, designed, constructed, managed, and maintained in a way that does not adversely affect the adjacent natural and cultural resources, meets trail visitor expectations, and is affordable.

The project is subject to the requirements listed above under Section 2.5.2, "Management Requirements," and Section 2.5.3., "Best Management Practices." Management requirements include guidelines for soil decompaction, which would reduce the potential for erosion and changes to drainage patterns. Project BMPs include requirements that address erosion control and stabilization of soils, prevention of materials entering waterways, disposal of project-generated debris, rehabilitation of temporary staging, parking, and refueling/servicing areas, and implementation of a SPCC (see Section 3.9, "Hazards and Hazardous Materials," above for more information related to the SPCC. These requirements would prevent mobilization of eroded materials from entering waterway. Because implementation of the project management requirements and BMPs would ensure that new potential sources of pollutants would not enter waterways, the project would not degrade surface or groundwater quality. This impact would be less than significant.

- b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of preexisting nearby wells would drop to a level that would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?

No impact. The project would not involve the use of groundwater or otherwise affect recharge of a groundwater aquifer because it does not increase water demand or involve application of impervious surfaces. Thus, there would be no impact.

- c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial on- or offsite erosion or siltation?
- i) Result in substantial on- or offsite erosion or siltation;
- ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;
- iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or
- iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

Less than significant impact. As discussed above under a), project management requirements include guidelines to follow the 2025 Trail Maintenance and Construction Notebook (USDA 2025) for trail obliteration, which addresses compaction/soil loosening practices that would reduce the potential for erosion and changes to drainage. Additionally, project implementation would include BMPs that address construction activities, as well as parking and staging areas/equipment refueling and servicing activities. The project involves development of new trails, modifications to some existing trails, and obliterating/restoration of some unauthorized trails. The project does not include paving or other activities that would increase impervious surfaces in the area. Thus, with

implementation of management requirements and BMPs, the project would not alter drainage patterns or generate substantial additional stormwater runoff. Thus, because the project would not substantially alter surface runoff associated with trail users this impact would be less than significant.

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

No impact. The project is located in the Sierra Nevada and not in proximity to the coast or a large body of water, or otherwise in an area subject to flood, tsunami, or seiche. No structures would be developed, and no new uses would be introduced to the project area. Thus, implementation of the project would not affect the potential for pollutants to be released due to project inundation. There would be no impact.

e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

No impact. As discussed in items a) and b) above, implementation of the project would not affect surface or groundwater quality, nor would it affect groundwater recharge. The project is not located near to a waterbody that is subject to the State Water Resources Control Board's 303(d) list of impaired waterways (SWRCB 2024); thus, it would not affect implementation of a water quality control plan. There would be no impact.

3.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
X. Land Use and Planning. Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.11.1 Discussion

- a) Physically divide an established community?

No impact. The project would not be located within an established community. Thus, there would be no impact.

- b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

No impact. The project consists of modifications to an existing trail system and would not affect land uses in the project area. Thus, there would be no impact.

3.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XI. Mineral Resources. Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.12.1 Discussion

- a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

No impact. The project involves modification to an existing trail system, the activities of which would not affect availability of a known mineral resource because there would not be paving or substantial excavation of materials. Thus, there would be no impact.

- b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?

No impact. See discussion a), above.

3.13 NOISE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XII. Noise. Would the project result in:				
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies, or a substantial temporary or permanent increase in noise levels above existing ambient levels that could result in an adverse effect on humans?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.13.1 Discussion

- a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies, or a substantial temporary or permanent increase in noise levels above existing ambient levels that could result in an adverse effect on humans?

Less than significant impact. Equipment associated with mechanical and manual construction could generate varying levels of noise, depending upon the equipment being used. Modification to trails would be carried out in stages, during which the character and magnitude of noise levels surrounding the treatment area changes as different equipment is used and the location of the noise-generating work moves throughout the treatment area. However, these activities would be located in wooded, recreational areas, and sensitive receptors would not be affected. Calaveras County Code, Title 9, Chapter 9.02 exempts sound from construction activity, provided that all construction in or adjacent to residential areas is limited to the daytime hours between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.. Construction-related noise would be short-term, occur during daytime hours, and would not be considered substantial or to exceed noise ordinances. No new sources of noise are associated with project implementation (i.e., user groups and types would remain the same). This impact would be less than significant.

- b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Less than significant impact. As described under a), above, the project would require the use of mechanical and manual construction equipment. This equipment could generate groundborne vibration or groundborne noise. However, activities would be located in rural areas for a short duration during daytime hours. Thus, they would not be considered excessive. This impact would be less than significant.

- c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

No impact. Airstrips are not located within the vicinity of the project area. The nearest airstrips are located approximately 10 miles from where treatments would occur. There would be no impact.

3.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XIII. Population and Housing. Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.14.1 Discussion

- a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

No impact. The project does not include construction of new homes, businesses, road extensions, or other infrastructure. There would be no impact.

- b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

No impact. The project consists of trail modifications and would not affect existing homes. There would be no impact.

3.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XIV. Public Services. Would the project:				
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.15.1 Discussion

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

Fire protection?

Police protection?

Schools?

Parks?

Other public facilities?

No impact. Implementation of the project would not include new residences or otherwise create a situation that would require provisions of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities. Thus, there would be no impact.

3.16 RECREATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XV. Recreation. Would the project:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

3.16.1 Discussion

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

Less than significant impact. Implementation of the project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood or regional parks or other recreational facilities to the extent that substantial physical deterioration would occur. This type of impact typically results from projects that induce population growth, such as new residential development or commercial uses that generate substantial new employment. The project does not include construction of housing, commercial development, or other facilities that would increase local population or generate new regional recreation demand. Trail improvements under the project would include trail signs and wayfinding features; reconstruction, rerouting, removal and restoration of existing routes; and limited new trail construction. This would expand available trails to the area and eliminate trails determined to not be sustainable. Therefore, implementation of the project would not increase the use of existing recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration would occur or be accelerated. This impact would be less than significant.

- b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

Less than significant impact. Implementation of the project would not include the construction of new recreational facilities or the expansion of existing facilities in a manner that would result in a substantial adverse physical effect on the environment. Trail improvements under the project would include trail signs and wayfinding features; reconstruction, rerouting, removal, and restoration of existing routes; and limited new trail construction. The project does not propose new campgrounds, visitor centers, large structures, or other high-intensity recreational amenities that would increase capacity or introduce new environmental impacts. Because the project would not introduce new recreational facilities or expand existing facilities in a way that substantially increases use or environmental footprint, implementation of the project would not result in an adverse physical effect on the environment. This impact would be less than significant.

3.17 TRANSPORTATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XVII. Transportation.				
Would the project:				
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.17.1 Discussion

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

No impact. Implementation of the project would involve construction of trail signs and wayfinding features, new trails, rerouted trails, and adopting or obliterating unauthorized trails within the Arnold Rim Trail system. Construction of these trails would not damage or adversely affect any existing transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities; permanently disrupt existing bicycle, pedestrian, or transit facilities; or adversely affect any planned bicycle, pedestrian, or transit facilities. Therefore, the project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing bicycle, pedestrian, or transit facilities. There would be no impact.

- b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b), which pertains to vehicle miles travelled?

Less than significant impact. Construction activities associated with implementation of the project would be temporary and intermittent in nature; thus, construction would not result in long-term increase in vehicular trips. There would not be a substantial increase in visitor rate to the Arnold Rim Trail system due to project implementation because it would provide the same use type and would not expand other visitor services, such as parking lots, interpretive centers, or other recreation amenities. There is no evidence to suggest that new trips would occur with project implementation. For these reasons, the project would not conflict or be inconsistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, and the impact would be less than significant.

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

No impact. Projects associated with the implementation of the project would be limited to non-motorized trails located within the Arnold Rim Trail system. There would be no changes to roadways or uses on roadways. Thus, there would be no impact.

d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

No impact. Projects associated with the implementation of the project would be limited to non-motorized trails located within the Arnold Rim Trail system. There would be no changes to roadways or uses on roadways. User groups and types would remain substantially the same during project operation. Thus, there would be no impact.

3.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XVIII. Tribal Cultural Resources.				
Has a California Native American Tribe requested consultation in accordance with Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1(b)?	☒ Yes		☐ No	
Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?	☐	☐	☒	☐

3.18.1 Discussion

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

- a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?

OR

- b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in

subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

Less-than-significant impact. Under PRC section 21080.3.1 and 21082.3, Sierra Nevada Conservancy must consult with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project site that have requested consultation. The parties must consult in good faith. Consultation is deemed concluded when the parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect on a tribal cultural resource when one is present or when a party concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached. Mitigation measures agreed on during the consultation process must be recommended for inclusion in the environmental document. On August 17, 2026, Sierra Nevada Conservancy sent notification letters that the project was being addressed under CEQA, as required by PRC Section 21080.3.1. Notifications were sent to Native American tribes identified by the Native American Heritage Commission, plus additional contacts that Sierra Nevada Conservancy had previously sent general notifications about this project:

- ▶ Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians
- ▶ Calaveras Band of Mi-Wuk Indians
- ▶ California Valley Miwok Tribe (new contact)
- ▶ Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians
- ▶ Lone Band of Miwok Indians
- ▶ Jackson Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians
- ▶ Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians
- ▶ Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation
- ▶ Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians
- ▶ Wilton Rancheria
- ▶ United Auburn Indian Community
- ▶ Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California
- ▶ Pakan'yani Maidu of Strawberry Valley Rancheria
- ▶ Nashville Enterprise Miwok-Maidu-Nishinam Tribe
- ▶ Susanville Indian Rancheria

Susanville Indian Rancheria and United Auburn Indian Community responded on August 17 and August 19, 2026, respectively, and did not request consultation. Susanville Indian Rancheria deferred to other tribal groups while United Auburn Indian Community stated that the project area is outside their cultural affiliation. SNC received a letter from the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians on September 22, 2026, indicating that they do not wish to consult but would like to receive any cultural surveys or report that have been completed for the site, as well as future project updates and information of any new discoveries made during project implementation. SNC will help coordinate these actions.

Calaveras Band of Mi-Wuk Indians responded on September 18, 2026, requesting consultation and a site visit. Sierra Nevada Conservancy replied on the same day, offering dates for a site visit. Consultation is on-going. Protection measures to avoid tribal cultural resources would be implemented for the project, as outlined through the NEPA process. These include reviewing maps for heritage resource sites and coordinating activities with a Forest Service Archeologist, avoiding trail construction or maintenance activities within heritage resource sites, and notifying the Forest Service District Archaeologist if any tribal cultural resources are found during implementation. This impact would be less than significant.

3.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XVII. Utilities and Service Systems. Would the project:				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Have insufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it has inadequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Fail to comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.19.1 Discussion

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

No impact. The project would not result in any changes to utility facilities or create new demand for utilities. There would be no impact.

- b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?

No impact. No water supply is required to implement the project. There would be no impact.

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

No impact. No wastewater treatment capacity is required to implement the project. There would be no impact.

- d) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?

Less than significant impact. The project would involve some vegetation removal and grading. Vegetation removed as part of the project would either be hauled to a composting facility or chipped and scattered within the general area of construction. Soil would be graded into the cut of trails or spread within the surrounding areas. During operation, there would be no increase in solid waste generation associated with the overall Arnold Rim Trail system. This impact would be less than significant.

- e) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

No impact. See discussion d), above. The project would comply with all federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste. There would be no impact.

3.20 WILDFIRE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XX. Wildfire.				
Is the project located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as high fire hazard severity zones?				
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:				
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Require the installation 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.20.1 Discussion

- a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?
- b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?
- c) Require the installation 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?
- d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

No Impact. The project site is located in the Stanislaus National Forest and not within a state or local responsibility area. However, it is located near lands classified as a very high fire severity within a state responsibility area and within a High Fire Hazard Area of the Stanislaus National Forest (USFS 2020). As discussed above under Section 3.9, "Hazards and Hazardous Materials," under topic g), USC Title 16, Section 551 and CFR Title 36, Section 261.50(a) require a spark arresting device that is properly installed, maintained, and in effective working order while operating or using any internal or external combustion engine in accordance with US Forest

Service Standard 5100-1 (36 CFR Section 261.520) within the High Fire Hazard Area of the Stanislaus National Forest. Additionally, the project would be subject to the Project Activity Level requirements, which uses the NFDRS to guide the protective requirements that would be in place during construction of the project. These requirements would ensure that there would not be a substantial increase in risk of wildfire ignition. The project involves trail modifications and would not affect fuel availability within the project area. Thus, because there would not be an increase in risk of ignition or changes to fuels availability, there would be no impact associated with wildfire-related environmental impacts.

3.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE – INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

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

Authority: Public Resources Code Sections 21083, 21083.5.

Reference: Government Code Sections 65088.4.

Public Resources Code Sections 21080, 21083.5, 21095; *Eureka Citizens for Responsible Govt. v. City of Eureka* (2007) 147 Cal.App.4th 357; *Protect the Historic Amador Waterways v. Amador Water Agency* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th at 1109; *San Franciscans Upholding the Downtown Plan v. City and County of San Francisco* (2002) 102 Cal.App.4th 656.

3.21.1 Discussion

- a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

Less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1, identified in Section 3.4, "Biological Resources," of this IS/MND will ensure that the project does not adversely affect wildlife species. The project would not otherwise substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or eliminate important examples of the major period of California history or prehistory.

The project-related impacts would occur during construction and would be mitigated to be less than significant levels. The post-project operation would not adversely affect biological or cultural resources. Therefore, the potential of the project to potentially degrade the environment is considered less than significant with mitigation.

- b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)

Less than significant impact. As presented throughout this environmental checklist, the project would result in less than significant impacts or impacts that are mitigated to less than significant levels. Mitigation measures are presented in Chapter 3 that would reduce potentially significant impacts to biological resources to a less than significant level. Therefore, the project would not result in significant construction or operational environmental impacts, and the project would not contribute to significant cumulative impacts.

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

Less than significant impact. The project would not result in direct or indirect impacts on human beings, as demonstrated in this IS/MND. In fact, the project would improve the recreation experience for trail users. This impact would be less than significant.

This page is intentionally left blank.

4 REFERENCES

- Biogeographic Information and Observation System. 2023. Willow Flycatcher Predicted Habitat – CWHR B315 [ds2221]. California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Retrieved August 25, 2026.
- BIOS. See Biogeographic Information and Observation System.
- Bumble Bee Atlas. 2026. Data Highlights. Available: <https://www.bumblebeeatlas.org/pages/data-highlights>. Accessed August 25, 2026.
- DOC. See California Department of Conservation.
- California Department of Conservation. 2022. Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Search for Maps, Reports, and Data. Available: https://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Pages/county_info.aspx. Accessed August 2026.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2023. Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Candidate Bumble Bee Species California. Available: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=213150&inline>. Accessed October 30, 2025.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2026a. Terrestrial Species List – Areas of Conservation Emphasis [ds2700]. Retrieved August 25, 2026.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2026b. (August) Considerations for Conserving Crotch’s Bumble Bee (*Bombus crotchii*), Franklin’s Bumble Bee (*Bombus franklini*), Western Bumble Bee (*Bombus occidentalis*), and Suckley’s Cuckoo Bumble Bee (*Bombus suckleyi*). California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Sacramento, CA.
- California Department of Transportation. 2026. California State Scenic Highways. Available: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways>. Accessed August 2026.
- California Native Plant Society. 2026. Rare Plant Inventory (online edition, v9.5). Results of electronic records search of the following US Geological Survey quadrangles: Murphys, Fort Mountain, and Stanislaus. Available: <http://www.rareplants.cnps.org>. Retrieved August 19, 2026.
- California Natural Diversity Database. 2026. Results of electronic records search of the following US Geological Survey quadrangles: Murphys, Fort Mountain, and Stanislaus. California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Biogeographic Data Branch. Sacramento, CA. Retrieved August 19, 2026.
- Caltrans. See California Department of Transportation.
- CNDDDB. See California Natural Diversity Database.
- CNPS. See California Native Plant Society.
- iNaturalist. 2026. Observations of Bald Eagle from Calaveras County. Available: <https://www.inaturalist.org/>. Retrieved August 2026.
- Liczner A. R., and S. R. Colla. 2019. “A Systematic Review of the Nesting and Overwintering Habitat of Bumble Bees Globally.” *Journal of Insect Conservation* 23: 787–801.
- SWRCB. See State Water Resources Control Board.
- State Water Resources Control Board. 2024. 2024 California Integrated Report Map. Available: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/water_quality_assessment/2024-integrated-report.html. Accessed August 2026.

USDA. See United States Department of Agriculture.

United States Department of Agriculture. 2025 (February). Trail Maintenance and Construction Notebook. Available: https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/trail-maintenance-notebook.pdf. Accessed August 2026.

US Fish and Wildlife Service. 2025. 5-Year Review, Southern Sierra Nevada Distinct Populations Segment of Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*). Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, Sacramento, CA.

US Forest Service. 2006. Sierra Nevada Willow Flycatcher Habitat. Available: <https://databasin.org/datasets/d74226ec5afc42a4bd9c0ba285433e57/>. Retrieved August 24, 2026.

US Forest Service. 2020. Forest Order STF-16-2026-11. Stanislaus National Forest. Temporary Fire Strictions. Exhibit A. Available: https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/nfs/files/r05/stanislaus/image/alerts/STF-16-2026-11TempFireRestrict_ExhibitA_Map_0.jpg. Accessed September 2026.

US Forest Service. 2025. Arnold Avery Non-Motorized Trails. Categorical Exclusion/Finding of Applicability and No Extraordinary Circumstance. Calaveras Ranger District.

USFS. See US Forest Service.

USFWS. See US Fish and Wildlife Service.