



Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

County of Sonoma

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State Clearinghouse Number:
Permit Sonoma File Number: **UPE23-0014**
Prepared by: Jen Chard at
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Pursuant to Section 15071 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this proposed Negative Declaration and the attached Initial Study, constitute the environmental review conducted by the County of Sonoma as lead agency for the proposed project described below:

Project Name: Oliver Ranch

Project Applicant/Operator: Demae Rubins and Oliver & Company, Inc.

Project Location/Address: 22205 River Road, Geyserville

APN: 141-190-088 and 141-190-089

General Plan Land Use Designation: Land Intensive Agriculture, 60 acre density

Zoning Designation: Land Intensive Agriculture (LIA), 60 acre density (B6 60) with combining districts for Oak Woodland (OAK), Riparian Corridor 50 ft setback (RC50/50) and Scenic Landscape Unit (SR)

Decision Making Body: Planning Commission (PC). Action by PC is appealable within 10 calendar days.

Appeal Body: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Project Description: See Item III, below

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" or "Less than Significant with Mitigation" as indicated in the attached Initial Study and in the summary table below.

Table 1. Summary of Topic Areas

Topic Area	Abbreviation*	Yes	No
Aesthetics	VIS		X
Agriculture & Forestry Resources	AG		X
Air Quality	AIR	X	
Biological Resources	BIO	X	
Cultural Resources	CUL		X
Energy	ENERGY		X
Geology and Soils	GEO		X
Greenhouse Gas Emission	GHG		X
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	HAZ		X
Hydrology and Water Quality	HYDRO		X
Land Use and Planning	LU		X
Mineral Resources	MIN		X
Noise	NOISE		X
Population and Housing	POP		X
Public Services	PS		X
Recreation	REC		X
Transportation	TRANS		X
Tribal Cultural Resources	TCR		X
Utilities and Service Systems	UTL		X
Wildfire	FIRE		X
Mandatory Findings of Significance	MFS		X

RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

The following lists other public agencies whose approval is required for the project, or who have jurisdiction over resources potentially affected by the project.

Table 2. Agency	Activity	Authorization
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers	Wetland dredge or fill	Clean Water Act, Section 401
	Work in navigable waters	Rivers and Harbors Act, Section 106
Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast or San Francisco Bay)	Discharge or potential discharge to waters of the state	California Clean Water Act (Porter Cologne) – Waste Discharge requirements, general permit or waiver
	Wetland dredge or fill	Clean Water Act, Section 404

Table 2. Agency	Activity	Authorization
State Water Resources Control Board	Generating stormwater (construction, industrial, or municipal)	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requires submittal of NOI
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Lake or streambed alteration	Fish and Game Code, Section 1600
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	Impacts to natural resources, ground disturbance, vegetation removal, etc.	Protection of natural resources held in trust for the people of California; CA Fish & Game Code § 1802 (2024)
Bay Area Air District (BAAD)	Stationary air emissions	BAAQMD Rules and Regulations (Regulation 2, Rule 1 – General Requirements; Regulation 2, Rule 2 – New Source Review; Regulation 9 – Rule 8 – NOx and CO from Stationary Internal Combustion Engines; and other BAAQMD administered Statewide Air Toxics Control Measures (ATCM) for stationary diesel engines
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)	Incidental take permit for listed plant and animal species	Endangered Species Act

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDING:

Based on the evaluation in the attached Expanded Initial Study, I find that the project described above will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment, provided that the mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study are included as conditions of approval for the project and a Mitigated Negative Declaration is proposed. The applicant has agreed in writing to incorporate identified mitigation measure into the project plans.



County of Sonoma
Permit & Resource Management Department

I. INTRODUCTION:

Demae Rubins and Oliver Ranch, LLC propose a new Use Permit for Oliver Ranch including daily tours of existing art installations for up to 50 visitors, 7 days a week, May-October by invite only, educational uses for up to 95 visitors, 5 days a week and 36 events per year for up to 150 people. Tours and educational uses will occur between the hours of 8:00am and 9:00pm and events will occur between the hours of 11:00am and 9:00pm. Number of employees for tour days will be 4, educational uses will be 10 and for the larger events will be 15. Proposed development is new ADA compliant pathways to access the art installations, new ADA compliant parking and a new 165 sq ft ADA compliant restroom building.

This report is the Initial Study required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The report was prepared by Jen Chard, Project Review Planner with the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department, Project Review Division. Information on the project was provided by Demae Rubins. Technical studies were provided by qualified consultants to support the conclusions in this Initial Study. Technical studies, other reports, documents, and maps referred to in this document are available for review through the Project Planner, or Permit Sonoma Records Section.

Please contact Jen Chard, Planner, at (707) 565-2336, for more information.

II. EXISTING FACILITY

The subject site is located 5.76 miles north of the City of Healdsburg and 5.63 miles southeast of the City of Cloverdale in unincorporated Sonoma County (Figure 1).

The proposed project will utilize two legal parcels of 12.1 acres and 58.1 acres in size accessed off River Road approximately 0.93 mile northwest of the River Road and Hwy 128 intersection. The site includes twenty-seven existing structures, including a single-family residence on each parcel, an art studio, a barn and 23 art installations. Additionally, the site contains an existing well, two existing septic systems for domestic wastewater disposal. The site is composed primarily of undeveloped oak woodland and oak savanna and has periodically been used for sheep grazing in the past. There is also a 2 acre pond used for irrigation and fire suppression.. Access to the site is currently provided by a driveway off of River Road.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

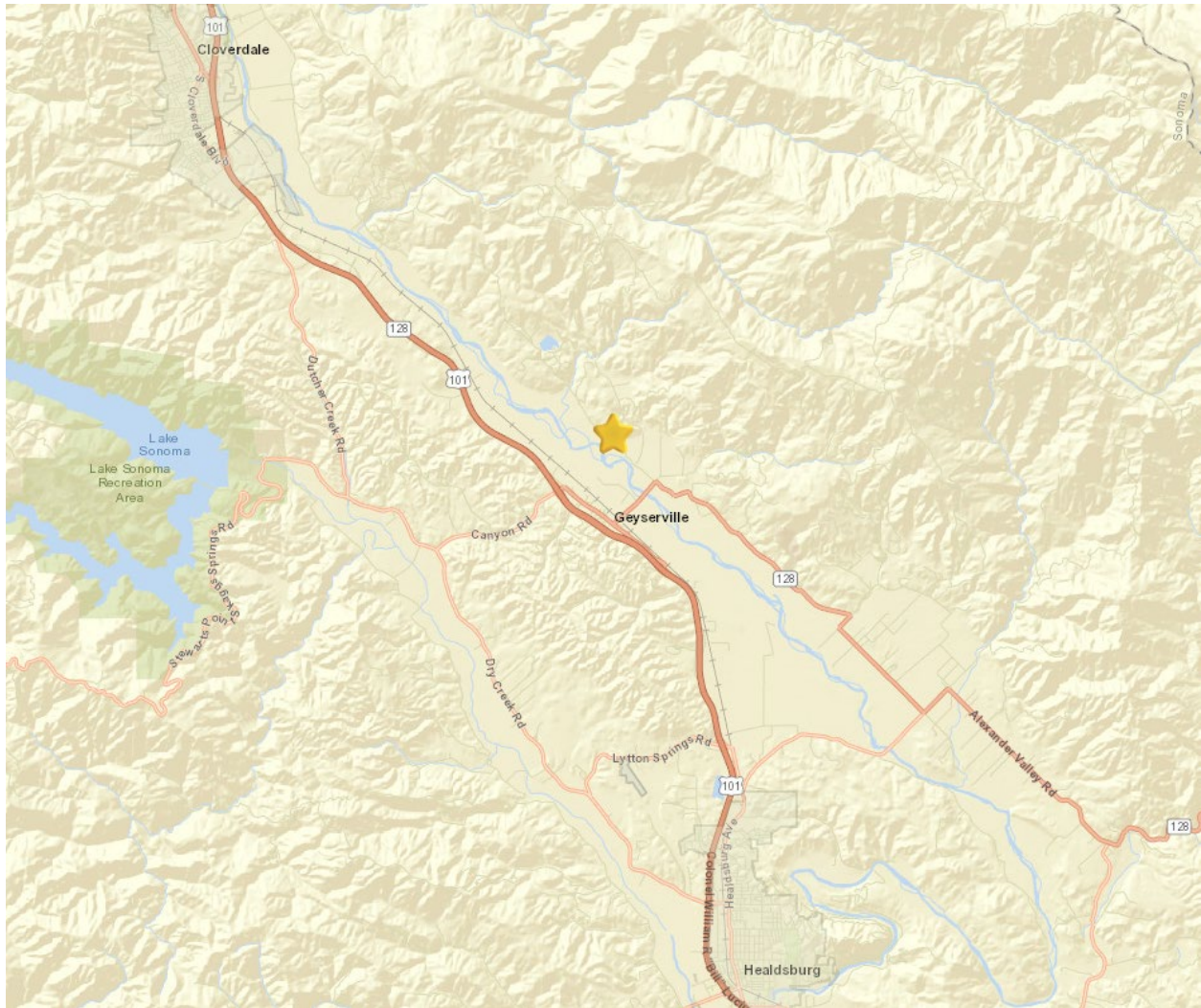


Figure 2: Subject Property and Surrounding Areas



III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project is a request for: a new Use Permit for visitor serving uses including daily tours of existing art installations for up to 50 visitors, 7 days a week, May-October by invite only, educational uses for up to 95 visitors, 5 days a week and 36 events per year for up to 150 people on two legal parcels 12.1 and 58.1 acres. The project includes minimal new construction consisting of a standalone 165-sq-ft restroom building and minor parking and access improvements.

Figure 3: Proposed Site Plan for Oliver Ranch (See Attachment 1)



Use Permit for Oliver Ranch:

The Oliver Ranch proposes a new driveways, ADA compliant pathways, parking areas (Figures 4-7) and a new 165 sq ft ADA compliant public restroom (Figure 8). The new improvements are expected to accommodate 50-95 visitors per day, by appt only.

Figure 4: Road, Parking and Pathway Improvements on APN 141-190-088

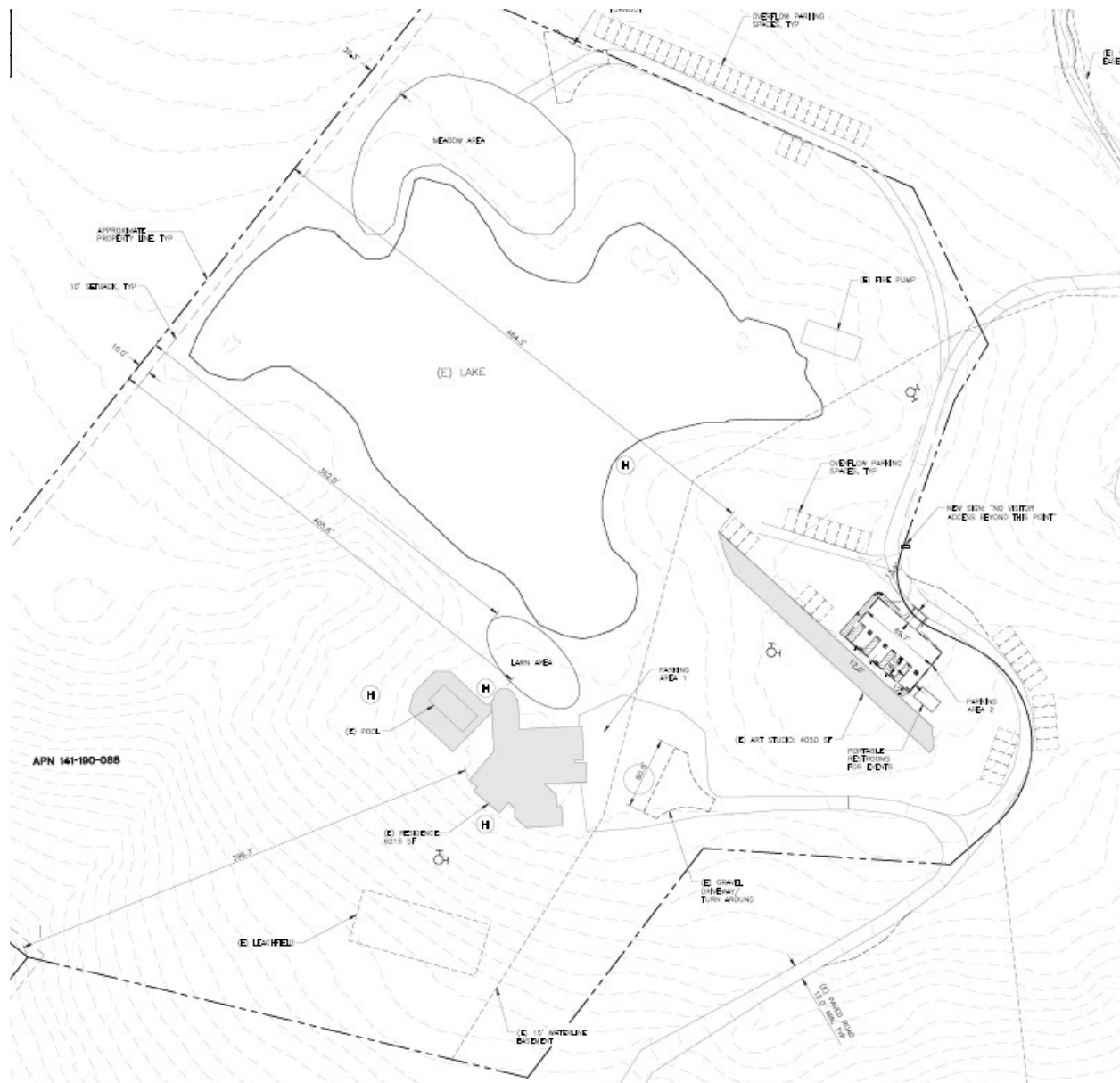


Figure 5: New ADA Compliant Path

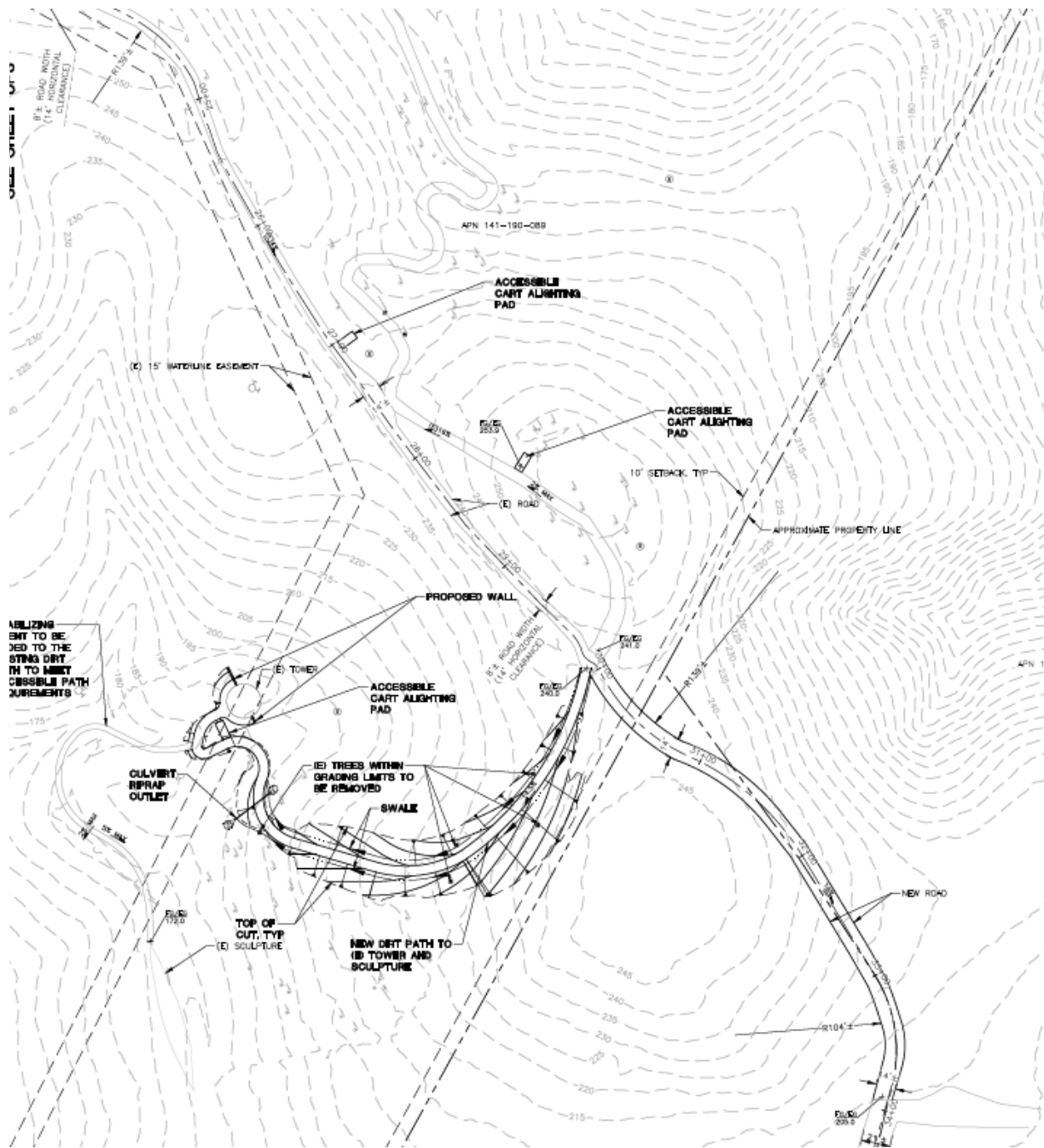
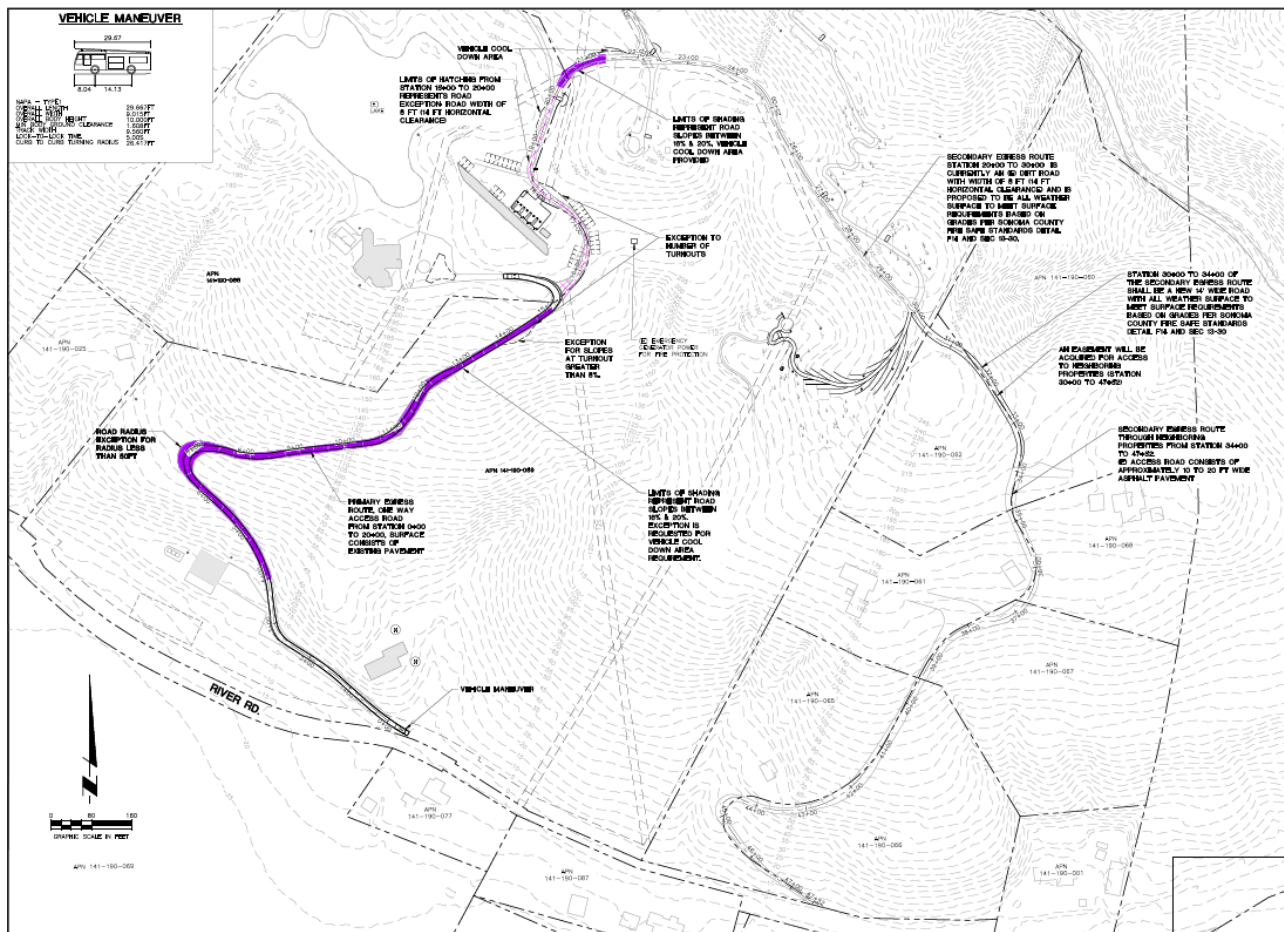


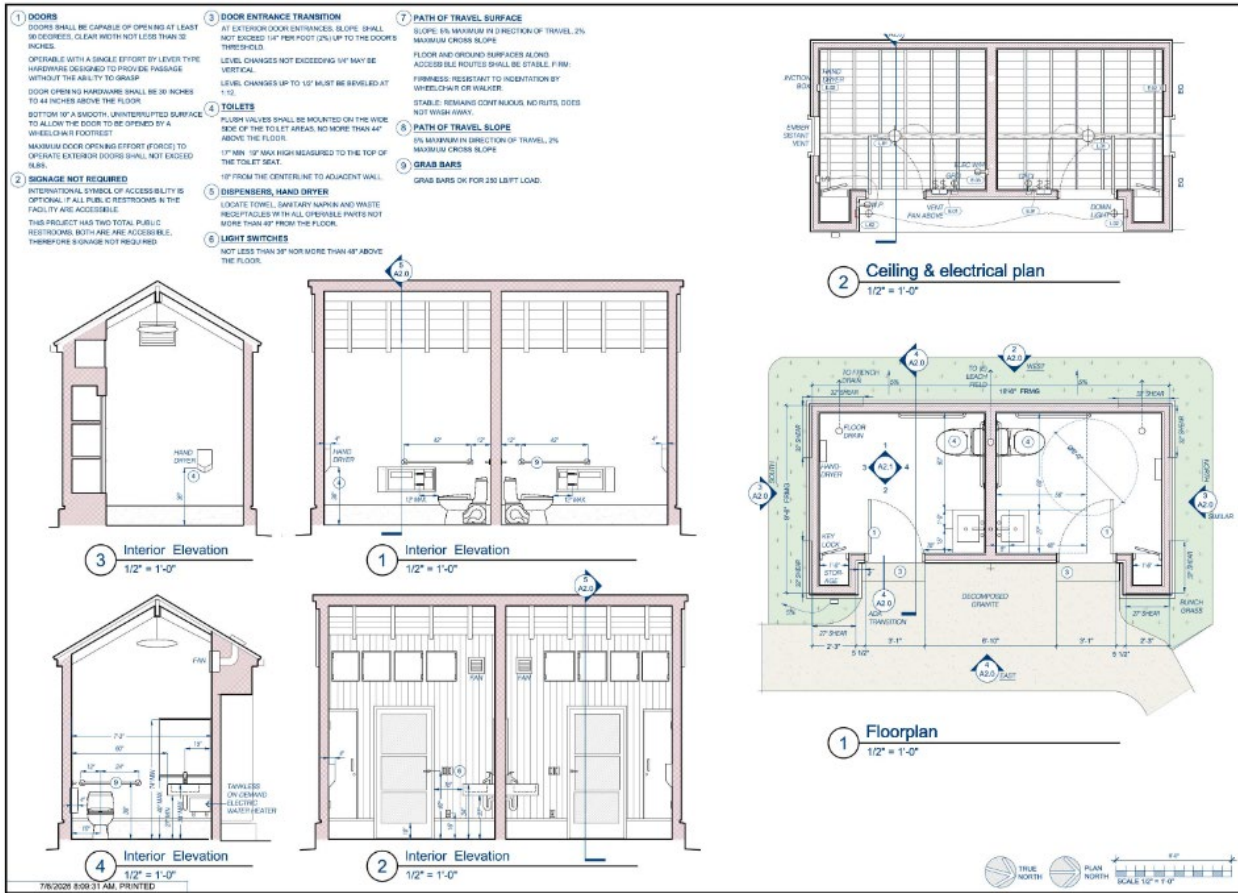
Figure 6: New Accessibility Paths and New Restroom Location

Figure 7: New Driveway Improvements



Figures 8-9: New Restroom





Proposed Hours of Operation:

- Daily tour operation hours - 8:00 am to 9:00 pm, 7 days a week, May-October, by appt
- Daily educational uses operation hours - 8:00 am to 9:00 pm, 5 days a week, by appt
- Event hours - 11:00 am to 9:00 pm; cleanup by 10:00 pm

Proposed Events:

Event Type	Number of Events per year	Maximum Attendees	Time of Day	Food Service	Amplified Music
Performances	12	150	Daylight Hours	Catered	Yes
Events	24	150	Daytime/Evening	Catered	Yes

Proposed Employees:

- Tours: 4 full-time employees
- Educational Uses: 10 full-time employees
- Events: 15 full-time employees

Access and Parking:

Vehicular and emergency access to the site will be established via existing driveway off of River Road. Two ADA and two non-ADA paved parking spaces for guests will be located near the existing art studio. Guests who are able will be shuttled to the property from two local park and ride locations. Unimproved gravel parking for shuttle buses and employees will be

provided on site and are identified in figure 4 above. Enforcement of on-street parking restrictions are a condition of approval for the project.

Water, Wastewater, and Waste Disposal:

The water supply for the property is provided by an existing groundwater well on the adjacent property via three waterline easements. Approximately 1.6 AFY is the current usage for the existing uses, including the two residences and four full-time employees. The total water usage for existing uses plus the proposed visitor serving uses will be approximately 1.78 acre-feet annually, an increase of 0.17 acre-feet.

The septic system for the proposed restroom will be required to meet the needs of the 5th largest event peak sanitary waste. Events exceeding this peak sanitary waste will be conditioned to provide temporary sanitary facilities.

All solid waste disposal will meet county requirements and conditions of approval for the project will enforce requirements.

Energy:

The project will meet the most current requirements for renewable energy use under the California Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6).

Construction:

Construction will occur within two years after project approval. Before commencement of construction activities, the project applicant would be required to obtain construction permit approvals, including grading and building permits. Next, site work including rough grading and infrastructure (utilities and roadways) would be completed. Finally, construction of buildings would be completed. Grading activities are anticipated to generally be balanced on the site.

IV. SETTING

The subject site is located 5.76 miles north of the City of Healdsburg and 5.63 miles southeast of the City of Cloverdale in unincorporated Sonoma County. Most of the surrounding parcels have similar development build outs, single family dwelling units, accessory structures, agricultural structures, vineyards, and wineries. All adjacent parcels share similar Agricultural Land Use designations and base zoning districts. Zoning including Land Intensive Agriculture (LIA) and Resources and Rural Development (RRD). Land Use designations LIA and RRD base zoning districts.

V. ISSUES RAISED BY THE PUBLIC OR AGENCIES

On June 1, 2023, Permit Sonoma circulated a referral packet to inform and solicit comments from selected relevant local, state and federal agencies, local Tribes, neighbors within 1,000 feet of the project site; and to special interest groups that were anticipated to take interest in the revised project. Comments were received from:

- Permit Sonoma Building Division
- Permit Sonoma Fire Prevention
- Permit Sonoma Natural Resources Division
- Permit Sonoma Grading and Stormwater Division
- Sonoma Public Infrastructure formerly Department of Transportation of Public Works
- Sonoma County Health
- Sonoma County Code Enforcement

Referral agency comments included recommended standard conditions of approval for the project.

Assembly Bill 52 Project Notifications were sent to the Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, Mishewal Wappo Tribe of Alexander Valley, Middletown Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, Lytton Rancheria of California, Kashia Pomos Stewarts Point Rancheria and Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. No Tribe requested formal consultation on the proposed project.

Public comment related to wildfire evacuation concerns were received.

VI. EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section analyzes the potential environmental impacts of this project based on the criteria set forth in the State CEQA Guidelines and the County's implementing ordinances and guidelines. For each item, one of four responses is given:

No Impact: The project would not have the impact described. The project may have a beneficial effect, but there is no potential for the project to create or add increment to the impact described.

Less Than Significant Impact: The project would have the impact described, but the impact would not be significant. Mitigation is not required, although the project applicant may choose to modify the project to avoid the impacts.

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: The project would have the impact described, and the impact could be significant. One or more mitigation measures have been identified that will reduce the impact to a less than significant level.

Potentially Significant Impact: The project would have the impact described, and the impact could be significant. The impact cannot be reduced to less than significant by incorporating mitigation measures. An environmental impact report must be prepared for this project.

Each question was answered by evaluating the project as proposed, that is, without considering the effect of any added mitigation measures. The Initial Study includes a discussion of the potential impacts and identifies mitigation measures to substantially reduce those impacts to a level of insignificance where feasible. All references and sources used in this Initial Study are listed in the Reference section at the end of this report and are incorporated herein by reference.

The Steve Oliver has agreed to accept all mitigation measures listed in this Initial Study as conditions of approval for the proposed project, and to obtain all necessary permits, notify all contractors, agents and employees involved in project implementation and any new owners should the property be transferred to ensure compliance with the mitigation measures.

1. AESTHETICS:

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

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

Comment:

The project site is within the Sonoma County's Scenic Resource Combining District for a Scenic Landscape Unit.

All structures located within a Scenic Landscape Unit (SLU) are subject to the standards in Zoning Code Section 26-64-020 and General Plan Policy ORSC-2d, which require that all structures within an SLU use natural landforms and existing vegetation to screen them from view from public roads. If necessary, Zoning Code Section 26-64-020 specifies that new landscaping used for screening should be comprised of native, fire resistant plants and trees.

The proposed development would be screened by existing topography and vegetation of coast live oaks along River Road.

The total square footage of building footprint is approximately 165 square feet. Zoning standards for LIA Zoning provide for a 5% maximum lot (building) coverage; the project will comply with this standard with one percent lot coverage. The project would also meet all zoning setback standards for new buildings from the property lines and the road centerline setbacks do not apply to this project given River Road more than 1,000 feet away.

Staff finds that the proposed design is consistent with the applicable Design Guidelines and design provisions within County Code.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
The parcel is not located on a site visible from a state scenic highway.

Significance Level:
No Impact

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

Comment:
The character of the 70.2-acre site and surrounding lands is agricultural and rural development. Using the County's Visual Assessment Guidelines, staff characterized the project site as having High visual sensitivity because it is located in the Scenic Resources Combining District and classified as a Scenic Landscape Unit. The project's visual dominance can be categorized as Subordinate because the proposed building and existing art installations are designed to be similar in character to other agricultural structures in the area and screened by existing topography and landscaping. Utilizing the Visual Assessment Guidelines' matrix (Attachment 2), the project's visual impact will be less than significant.

	Visual Dominance			
Sensitivity	Dominant	Co-Dominant	Subordinate	Inevident
Maximum	Significant	Significant	Significant	Less than significant
High	Significant	Significant	Less than significant	Less than significant
Moderate	Significant	Less than significant	Less than significant	Less than significant

Low	Less than significant	Less than significant	Less than significant	Less than significant
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Significance Level:
Less than Significant

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

Comment:

The project will add a new structure to the site (the new public restroom) and thus introduce new sources of light and glare. The County's standard development regulations under Article 82 of the Zoning Code (Design Review), minimizes the impact of new development by ensuring that exterior lighting is designed to prevent glare, and preclude the trespass of light on to adjoining properties and into the night sky.

The project will require exterior lighting as necessary to comply with the California Building Code. A standard condition of approval requires "All new exterior lighting to be dark sky compliant, low mounted, downward casting and fully shielded to prevent glare. Lighting shall not wash out structures or any portions of the site. Light fixtures shall not be located at the periphery of the property and shall not spill over onto adjacent properties or into the night sky. Flood lights are not permitted. Lighting shall shut off automatically after closing and security lighting shall be motion sensor activated. Prior to final occupancy, the applicant is required to demonstrate compliance with exterior lighting requirements by providing Permit Sonoma photograph documentation of all exterior light fixtures installed". By incorporating standard conditions of approval, the project will not result in a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

2. 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) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the project:

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?

Comment:

The site currently contains approximately 68 acres of open space and Oak Woodland, approximately 98% of the parcel. According to the Sonoma County Important Farmlands Map, the entire project site is designated as Other Land with areas of Grazing Land on the parcel but outside of the project site. The project proposes a new restroom building and grading improvements totaling less than a half of an acre. It is estimated that zero acres of unique farmlands would be converted to develop the

project. No designated farmland will be converted to non-agricultural use. The project would not convert a significant amount of important farmland to non-agricultural use and therefore potential impacts are less than significant.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or Williamson Act Contract?

Comment:

The project site is zoned LIA (Land Intensive Agriculture) which allows events with a Conditional Use Permit. The site is not under a Williamson Act contract. The proposed events will not conflict with the property's agricultural cultivation potential.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

The project site is not under the TP (Timberland Production) zoning district, therefore the project will not conflict with, or cause the rezoning of, forest land or timberland zoned Timberland Production.

Significance Level:

No Impact

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

Comment:

The project does not result in a loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use as the project site does not contain forest land nor any timber resources.

Significance Level:

No Impact

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?

Comment:

The project does not involve other changes in the environment that could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use. The project site will remain zoned Land Intensive Agriculture, existing olive trees and seasonal sheep grazing will remain.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

3. AIR QUALITY:

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Would the project:

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

Comment:

The project is within the jurisdiction of the Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District (NSCAPCD). The NSCAPCD does not have an adopted air quality plan because it is in attainment for all federal and state criteria pollutants, although the District occasionally exceeds state standards for PM₁₀.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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?

Comment:

The project is located in the NSCAPCD jurisdiction, a region that is in attainment for criteria pollutants under applicable state and federal ambient air quality standards, however, PM₁₀ is a criteria pollutant that is closely monitored in the NSCAPCD. Readings in the district have exceeded state standards on several occasions in the last few years. The high PM₁₀ readings occurred in the winter and are attributed to the seasonal use of wood burning stoves. Since the geographic area under the NSCAPCD jurisdiction is in attainment for all criteria air pollutants, meaning there have been no violations of State or Federal air quality standards, no CEQA thresholds of significance have been set for the NSCAPCD. NSCAPCD does, however, suggest the use of the Bay Area Air District (BAAD) CEQA thresholds and mitigation measures.

The project will have no long-term effect on PM₁₀, because all surfaces will be paved, gravel, landscaped or otherwise treated to stabilize bare soils, and operational dust generation will be insignificant. However, there could be a significant short-term emission of dust (which would include PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) during construction. These emissions could be significant at the project level, and could also contribute to a cumulative impact. This impact would be reduced to less than significant by including dust control measures as described in mitigation measure below.

Although the project will generate some ozone precursors from project trip generation, an average of 109 daily vehicle trips, the project will not have a significant cumulative effect on ozone because it will not generate substantial traffic resulting in significant new emissions of ozone precursors.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation:

Mitigation Measure AIR-1:

The following dust control measures shall be included in the project:

- a. Construction Coordinator shall be designated by the project applicant, and a sign shall be posted on the site including the Contractor's 24-hour phone number for public contact regarding dust, trackout, and air quality complaints. The Contractor shall respond and take corrective action within 48 hours. The Contractor shall report all complaints and their resolutions to Permit Sonoma staff.
- b. Water or alternative dust control method shall be sprayed to control dust on construction areas, soil stockpiles, and staging areas during construction as directed by the County.

- c. Trucks hauling soil, sand, and other loose materials over public roads shall cover the loads, or shall keep the loads at least two feet below the level of the sides of the container, or shall wet the load sufficiently to prevent dust emissions.
- d. Vehicle speeds on unpaved areas shall be limited to 15 miles per hour.
- e. Final surfacing (i.e., pavement or concrete, gravel, landscaping) shall be completed as soon as possible after earthwork is finished, unless seeding or soil binders are used.
- f. Idling time of diesel-powered construction equipment shall be limited to five minutes. Signs shall be posted reminding workers of this idling restriction at all access points and equipment staging areas during construction of the proposed project.
- g. All construction equipment shall be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with manufacturer's specifications and shall have a CARB-certified visible emissions evaluator check equipment prior to use at the site.
- h. Trackout shall not be allowed at any active exit from the project site onto an adjacent paved public roadway or shoulder of a paved public roadway that exceeds cumulative 25 linear feet and creates fugitive dust visible emissions without cleaning up such trackout within 4 hours of when the Construction Coordinator identifies such excessive trackout, and shall not allow more than 1 quart of trackout to remain on the adjacent paved public roadway or the paved shoulder of the paved public roadway at the end of any workday.
- i. Visible emissions of fugitive dust shall not be allowed during cleanup of any trackout that exceeds 20 percent opacity as determined by the Environmental Protection Agency in Method 203B - Opacity Determination for Time Exception Regulations (August 2017).
- j. Trackout is defined by BAAQMD in Regulation 6, Rule 6: Prohibition of Trackout (August 2018) as any sand, soil, dirt, bulk materials or other solid particles from a site that adhere to or agglomerate on the exterior surfaces of vehicles (including tires), and subsequently fall or are dislodged onto a paved public roadway or the paved shoulder of a paved public roadway on the path that vehicles follow at any exit and extending 50 feet out onto the paved public roadway beyond the boundary of the site. Material that has collected on the roadway from erosion is not trackout.

Mitigation Monitoring:

Mitigation Monitoring AIR-1:

Building/grading permits shall not be approved for issuance by Permit Sonoma staff until the applicant submits documentation to Permit Sonoma staff that a Construction Coordinator has been designated and that appropriate signage has been posted including the coordinator's phone number. Documentation may include photographic evidence or a site inspection, at the discretion of Permit Sonoma staff.

c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Comment:

Sensitive receptors include hospitals, schools, convalescent facilities, and residential areas. The nearest sensitive receptor is a residential area located approximately 1,100 feet away from the construction site.

The project itself will not generate odors, so there will be no long term increase in stationary emissions. The project will generate some new vehicle emissions; however, 109 average daily vehicle trips would not generate substantial new emissions. During construction, there could be significant short term dust emissions that would affect nearby residents. Dust emissions can be reduced to less than significant by the mitigation measure described in item 3b above.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation: See Mitigation Measure AIR-1

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

Comment:

The BAAQMD's CEQA Air Quality Guidelines (2022) identifies land uses associated with odor complaints to include, but are not limited to, wastewater treatment plants, landfills, confined animal facilities, composting stations, food manufacturing plants, refineries, and chemical plants.

Construction equipment may generate odors during project construction. The impact would be less than significant as it would be a short-term impact that ceases upon completion of the project.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

Regulatory Framework

The following discussion identifies federal, state and local environmental regulations that serve to protect sensitive biological resources relevant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process.

Federal

Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA)

FESA establishes a broad public and federal interest in identifying, protecting, and providing for the recovery of threatened or endangered species. The Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Commerce are designated in FESA as responsible for identifying endangered and threatened species and their critical habitat, carrying out programs for the conservation of these species, and rendering opinions regarding the impact of proposed federal actions on listed species. The USFWS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) are charged with implementing and enforcing the FESA. USFWS has authority over terrestrial and continental aquatic species, and NOAA Fisheries has authority over species that spend all or part of their life cycle at sea, such as salmonids.

Section 9 of FESA prohibits the unlawful "take" of any listed fish or wildlife species. Take, as defined by FESA, means "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such action." USFWS's regulations define harm to mean "an act which actually kills or injures wildlife." Such an act "may include "significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding or sheltering" (50 CFR § 17.3). Take can be permitted under FESA pursuant to sections 7 and 10.

Section 7 provides a process for take permits for federal projects or projects subject to a federal permit, and Section 10 provides a process for incidental take permits for projects without a federal nexus. FESA does not extend the take prohibition to federally listed plants on private land, other than prohibiting the removal, damage, or destruction of such species in violation of state law.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)

The U.S. MBTA (16 USC §§ 703 et seq., Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 10) states it is "unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill; attempt to take, capture or kill; possess, offer for sale, sell, offer to barter, barter, offer to purchase, purchase, deliver for shipment, ship, export, import, cause to be shipped, exported, or imported, deliver for transportation,

transport or cause to be transported, carry or cause to be carried, or receive for shipment, transportation, carriage, or export any migratory bird, any part, nest, or egg of any such bird, or any product, whether or not manufactured, which consists, or is composed in whole or in part, of any such bird or any part, nest or egg thereof..." In short, under MBTA it is illegal to disturb a nest that is in active use, since this could result in killing a bird, destroying a nest, or destroying an egg. The USFWS enforces MBTA. The MBTA does not protect some birds that are non-native or human-introduced or that belong to families that are not covered by any of the conventions implemented by MBTA. In 2017, the USFWS issued a memorandum stating that the MBTA does not prohibit incidental take; therefore, the MBTA is currently limited to purposeful actions, such as directly and knowingly removing a nest to construct a project, hunting, and poaching.

The Clean Water Act (CWA)

The CWA is the primary federal law regulating water quality. The implementation of the CWA is the responsibility of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, the EPA depends on other agencies, such as the individual states and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), to assist in implementing the CWA. The objective of the CWA is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." Section 404 and 401 of the CWA apply to activities that would impact waters of the U.S. The USACE enforces Section 404 of the CWA and the California State Water Resources Control Board enforces Section 401.

Section 404.

As part of its mandate under Section 404 of the CWA, the EPA regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into "waters of the U.S.". "Waters of the U.S. include territorial seas, tidal waters, and non-tidal waters in addition to wetlands and drainages that support wetland vegetation, exhibit ponding or scouring, show obvious signs of channeling, or have discernible banks and high-water marks. Wetlands are defined as those areas "that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions" (33 CFR 328.3(b)). The discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. is prohibited under the CWA except when it is in compliance with Section 404 of the CWA. Enforcement authority for Section 404 was given to the USACE, which it accomplishes under its regulatory branch. The EPA has veto authority over the USACE's administration of the Section 404 program and may override a USACE decision with respect to permitting. Substantial impacts to waters of the U.S. may require an Individual Permit's Projects that only minimally affect waters of the U.S. may meet the conditions of one of the existing Nationwide Permits, provided that such permit's other respective conditions are satisfied. A Water Quality Certification or waiver pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA is required for Section 404 permit actions (see below).

Section 401.

Any applicant for a federal permit to impact waters of the U.S. under Section 404 of the CWA, including Nationwide Permits where pre-construction notification is required, must also provide to the USACE a certification or waiver from the State of California. The "401 Certification" is provided by the State Water Resources Control Board through the local Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The RWQCB issues and enforces permits for discharge of treated water, landfills, storm-water runoff, filling of any surface waters or wetlands, dredging, agricultural activities and wastewater recycling. The RWQCB recommends the "401 Certification" application be made at the same time that any applications are provided to other agencies, such as the USACE, USFWS, or NOAA Fisheries. The application is not final until completion of environmental review under the CEQA. The application to the RWQCB is similar to the pre-construction notification that is required by the USACE. It must include a description of the habitat that is being impacted, a description of how the impact is proposed to be minimized and proposed mitigation measures with goals, schedules, and performance standards. Mitigation must include a replacement of functions and values, and replacement of wetland at a minimum ratio of 2:1, or twice as many acres of wetlands provided as are removed. The RWQCB looks for mitigation that is on site and in-kind, with functions and values as good as or better than the water-based habitat that is being removed.

State

California Endangered Species Act (CESA)

Provisions of CESA protect state-listed threatened and endangered species. The CDFW is charged with establishing a list of endangered and threatened species. CDFW regulates activities that may result in “take” of individuals (i.e., “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill”). Habitat degradation or modification is not expressly included in the definition of “take” under the California Fish and Game Code (CFGF), but CDFW has interpreted “take” to include the killing of a member of a species which is the proximate result of habitat modification.

Fish and Game Code 1600-1602

Sections 1600-1607 of the CFGF require that a Notification of Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSAA) application be submitted to CDFW for “any activity that may substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow or substantially change the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake.” CDFW reviews the proposed actions in the application and, if necessary, prepares a LSAA that includes measures to protect affected fish and wildlife resources, including mitigation for impacts to bats and bat habitat.

Nesting Birds

Nesting birds, including raptors, are protected under CFGF Section 3503, which reads, “It is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation made pursuant thereto.” In addition, under CFGF Section 3503.5, “it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto”. Passerines and non-passerine land birds are further protected under CFGF 3513. As such, CDFW typically recommends surveys for nesting birds that could potentially be directly (e.g., actual removal of trees/vegetation) or indirectly (e.g., noise disturbance) impacted by project-related activities. Disturbance during the breeding season could result in the incidental loss of fertile eggs or nestlings, or otherwise lead to nest abandonment. Disturbance that causes nest abandonment and/or loss of reproductive effort is considered “take” by CDFW.

Non-Game Mammals

Sections 4150-4155 of the CFGF protects non-game mammals, including bats. Section 4150 states “A mammal occurring naturally in California that is not a game mammal, fully protected mammal, or fur-bearing mammal is a nongame mammal. A non-game mammal may not be taken or possessed except as provided in this code or in accordance with regulations adopted by the commission”. The non-game mammals that may be taken or possessed are primarily those that cause crop or property damage. Bats are classified as a non-game mammal and are protected under the CFGF.

California Fully Protected Species and Species of Special Concern

The classification of “fully protected” was the CDFW’s initial effort to identify and provide additional protection to those animals that were rare or faced possible extinction. Lists were created for fish, amphibians and reptiles, birds, and mammals. Most of the species on these lists have subsequently been listed under CESA and/or FESA. The Fish and Game Code sections (fish at §5515, amphibians and reptiles at §5050, birds at §3503 and §3511, and mammals at §4150 and §4700) dealing with “fully protected” species state that these species “...may not be taken or possessed at any time and no provision of this code or any other law shall be construed to authorize the issuance of permits or licenses to take any fully protected species,” although take may be authorized for necessary scientific research. This language makes the “fully protected” designation the strongest and most restrictive regarding the “take” of these species. In 2003, the code sections dealing with “fully protected” species were amended to allow the CDFW to authorize take resulting from recovery activities for state-listed species.

California Species of Special Concern (CSC) are broadly defined as animals not listed under the FESA or CESA, but which are nonetheless of concern to the CDFW because they are declining at a rate that could result in listing or because they historically occurred in low numbers and known threats to their persistence currently exist. This designation is intended to result in special consideration for these animals by the CDFW, land managers, consulting biologists, and others, and is intended to focus attention on the species to help avert the need for costly listing under FESA and CESA and cumbersome recovery efforts that might ultimately be required. This designation also is intended to stimulate collection of additional information on the biology, distribution, and status of poorly known at-risk species, and focus research and management attention on them. Although these species generally have no special legal status, they are given special consideration under the CEQA during project review.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The intent of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne) is to protect water quality and the beneficial uses of water, and it applies to both surface and ground water. Under this law, the State Water Resources Control Board develops statewide water quality plans, and the RWQCBs develop basin plans that identify beneficial uses, water quality objectives, and implementation plans. The RWQCBs have the primary responsibility to implement the provisions of both statewide and basin plans. Waters regulated under Porter-Cologne, referred to as “waters of the State,” include isolated waters that are not regulated by the USACE. Projects that require a USACE permit, or fall under other federal jurisdiction, and have the potential to impact waters of the State are required to comply with the terms of the Water Quality Certification Program. If a proposed project does not require a federal license or permit, any person discharging, or proposing to discharge, waste (e.g., dirt) to waters of the State must file a Report of Waste Discharge and receive either waste discharge requirements (WDRs) or a waiver to WDRs before beginning the discharge.

Local

Sonoma County General Plan

The *Sonoma County General Plan 2020* Land Use Element and Open Space & Resource Conservation Element both contain policies to protect natural resource lands including, but not limited to, watershed, fish and wildlife habitat, biotic areas, and habitat connectivity corridors.

Riparian Corridor Ordinance

The RC combining zone is established to protect biotic resource communities, including critical habitat areas within and along riparian corridors, for their habitat and environmental value, and to implement the provisions of the General Plan Open Space and Resource Conservation and Water Resources Elements. These provisions are intended to protect and enhance riparian corridors and functions along designated streams, balancing the need for agricultural production, urban development, timber and mining operations and other land uses with the preservation of riparian vegetation, protection of water resources, floodplain management, wildlife habitat and movement, stream shade, fisheries, water quality, channel stability, groundwater recharge, opportunities for recreation, education and aesthetic appreciation and other riparian functions and values.

Oak Woodland (OAK) and Valley Oak Habitat (VOH) Combining Districts

The OAK and VOH combining districts are established to protect, preserve, and enhance oak trees and oak woodlands in Sonoma County for the benefit of present and future generations and to implement Sonoma County General Plan Policies OSRC-7I, related to oak woodlands, and OSRC-7m, related to valley oak habitat. Where proposed valley oak or oak woodland removal is subject to a discretionary permit process, mitigation measures to address loss of trees would apply, such as measures to ensure no net loss of oak woodlands or, for the highest quality woodlands, would provide a unique public benefit equal to or greater than the value associated with removed oaks.

Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance

The Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance (Sonoma County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 26, Article 88, Sec. 26-88-015) establishes policies for protected tree species in Sonoma County. Protected trees are defined (Chapter 26, Article 04, Sec. 26- 04-020) as the following species:

- 1) Hardwoods: Big Leaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), Black Oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasii*), Boxelder (*Acer negundo*), California Black Walnut (*Juglans californica*), California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), Canyon Live Oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*), Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), Cottonwood species (*Populus fremontii*, *P. trichocarpa*), Interior Live Oak (*Quercus wislizenii*), Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), Oregon Ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), Oregon Oak (*Quercus garryana*), Red or White Alder (*Alnus rubra*, *A. rhombifolia*), Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*), Willow species (*Salix laevigata*, *S. lucida*)
- 2) Softwoods: Cypress species (*Hesperocyparis macrocarpa*, *H. macnabiana*), Grand Fir (*Abies grandis*), Pine species (*Pinus attenuata*, *P. contorta*, *P. lambertiana*, *P. muricata*, *P. ponderosa*, *P. sabiniana*), Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)

Project Analysis

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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?**

Comment:

Special-Status Species

Special-status species include those plant and wildlife species that have been formally listed, are proposed as endangered or threatened, or are candidates for such listing under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) or California Endangered Species Act (CESA). These acts afford protection to both listed and proposed species. In addition, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Species of Special Concern, which are species that face extirpation in California if current population and habitat trends continue, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service) Birds of Conservation Concern, and CDFW special-status invertebrates, are all considered special-status species. Although CDFW Species of Special Concern generally have no special legal status, they are given special consideration under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In addition to regulations for special-status species, most birds in the United States, including non-status species, are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Plant species on California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants with California Rare Plant Ranks (Rank) of 1 and 2 are also considered special-status plant species and must be considered under CEQA. Bat species designated as "High Priority" by the Western Bat Working Group (WBWG) qualify for legal protection under Section 15380(d) of the CEQA Guidelines. Species designated High Priority" are defined as "imperiled or are at high risk of imperilment based on available information on distribution, status, ecology and known threats.

Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 USC 1531 *et seq.*) was enacted to provide a means to identify and protect endangered and threatened species. Under the Section 9 of the ESA, it is unlawful to take any listed species. "Take" is defined as harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, or collecting a listed species. "Harass" is defined as an intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include,

but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering. "Harm" is defined as an act which actually kills or injures fish or wildlife and may include significant habitat modification or degradation which actually kills or injures fish or wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, spawning, rearing, migrating, feeding, or sheltering. Actions that may result in "take" of a federal-listed species are subject to The Service or National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) permit issuance and monitoring. Section 7 of ESA requires federal agencies to ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat for such species. Any action authorized, funded, or carried out by a federal agency or designated proxy (e.g., Army Corps of Engineers) which has potential to affect listed species requires consultation with The Service or NOAA Fisheries under Section 7 of the ESA.

Critical Habitat

Critical habitat is a term defined in the ESA as a specific geographic area that contains features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and that may require special management and protection. The ESA requires federal agencies to consult with the USFWS to conserve listed species on their lands and to ensure that any activities or projects they fund, authorize, or carry out will not jeopardize the survival of a threatened or endangered species. In consultation for those species with critical habitat, federal agencies must also ensure that their activities or projects do not adversely modify critical habitat to the point that it will no longer aid in the species' recovery. In many cases, this level of protection is similar to that already provided to species by the ESA jeopardy standard. However, areas that are currently unoccupied by the species but which are needed for the species' recovery are protected by the prohibition against adverse modification of critical habitat.

Essential Fish Habitat

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) is regulated through the NMFS, a division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Protection of Essential Fish Habitat is mandated through changes implemented in 1996 to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) to protect the loss of habitat necessary to maintain sustainable fisheries in the United States. The Magnuson-Stevens Act defines Essential Fish Habitat as "those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity" [16 USC 1802(10)]. NMFS further defines essential fish habitat as areas that "contain habitat essential to the long-term survival and health of our nation's fisheries" Essential Fish Habitat can include the water column, certain bottom types such as sandy or rocky bottoms, vegetation such as eelgrass or kelp, or structurally complex coral or oyster reefs. Under regulatory guidelines issued by NMFS, any federal agency that authorizes, funds, or undertakes action that may affect EFH is required to consult with NMFS (50 CFR 600.920).

Staff Analysis:

A Biological Resource Assessment (Attachment 3) was prepared by Kjeldsen Biological Consulting in 2026 for the proposed project. The study finds potential impacts to native trees, nesting birds and bats as discussed further below.

Special Status Plant Species:

Protocol-level special-status plant surveys were conducted on November 30, 2023, June 26 and July 16, 2025 and March 22, 2026, and a plant inventory was compiled. No special status plant species were observed during surveys. The focused survey area did not encompass the entire parcel and instead focused on areas where project improvements would occur. The study determined that the project area is composed of non-native grassland and oak woodland/savanna consisting predominantly of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*). The proposed restroom and leach field are located in an open non-native grassland area, which is not considered a sensitive habitat by the CDFW or Sonoma County. Trail improvements would occur in narrow

corridors through both grassland and woodland habitats. The study concluded that there was no potential for special status plant species within the project footprint and that no impacts would occur to special status plant individuals or their potential habitat.

The proposed project would result in the loss of 7 oak trees that are designated as protected trees under the Sonoma County Oak Woodland Ordinance at the construction site. No trees over 34" DBH are proposed to be removed; the removal area constitutes less than 0.5 acre of Oak Woodland habitat conversion.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1 would reduce any potential impacts to protected trees to a less-than-significant level by requiring replacement planting consistent with the Oak Woodland Ordinance and by establishing a protected perimeter around all retained protected trees, with the protected perimeter having a radius at least 1.5 times the distance from the trunk to the outermost extent of canopy.

Special Status Wildlife Species

Foothill Yellow-legged Frog and Western Pond Turtle

The Foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylei*)- North Coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS) range extends north of San Francisco Bay through the Coast Range and Klamath Mountains. Foothill yellow-legged frog requires partly shaded, shallow streams and riffles with rocky substrate in a variety of habitats. The frogs need at least some cobble-sized substrate for egg-laying. Larvae require at least 15 weeks to attain metamorphosis. Yellow-legged frogs are usually found on stream banks, especially near riffles. There were no drainages or streams adjacent to the project activities that contain potential habitat for this species.

Western pond turtles (*Actinemys marmorata*) are aquatic, inhabiting ponds, marshes, streams, and irrigation ditches with aquatic vegetation. They require basking sites such as partially submerged logs, vegetation mats, or open mud banks, and suitable upland habitat (sandy banks or grassy open fields) for egg laying.

The reservoir on the property has potential habitat for western pond turtles; however, none were observed. The area proposed for a new trail adjacent to the reservoir is currently irrigated lawn and landscaped. It is unlikely that pond turtles would be present or would be negatively impacted by the construction of a new trail in this area.

Nesting Raptors, Special-Status Birds, and Birds

Habitat for nesting raptors, special-status birds, and common birds is present in and around the project site. Tree removal and ground disturbing activities, including grading, trenching, or vegetation removal on the project site, could result in disturbance or loss of nesting raptors and other birds if present on the project site. Additionally, presence of heavy machinery or construction crews could result in indirect disturbance to nesting birds if present, and potentially result in nest abandonment, nest failure, or mortality of chicks or eggs.

Implementation Mitigation Measure BIO-2 would reduce impacts on nesting raptors, special-status birds, and common birds because preconstruction surveys would be conducted, and active raptor and other bird nests would be protected from construction activities.

Special-Status Bat Species

All special-status bat species, including several bat species which do not have special status, have potential to occur in habitats at the site. All bat species have state protection during nesting and roosting seasons. The following bat species were specifically identified as having potential roosting

habitat on or near the project footprint: Pallid Bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) and Western red bat (*Lasiurus blossevillii*).

Bats are known to utilize a vast variety of habitat types for foraging and several types of structures for nesting and roosting including trees, cliffs, rock outcrops, buildings, bridges, caves and mines. The habitats at the site provides suitable foraging habitat for bats. Several of the larger trees at the site within the oak woodland provide potentially suitable habitat for roosting as they exhibit cavities, fissures or exfoliating bark. There is some likelihood that bat species roost in the larger trees that exhibit these habitat features at the site, especially the large oak trees.

Bat species were not observed at the site. The larger trees at the site exhibited suitable roosting habitat in the form of cavities and flaking bark.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-3 would reduce impacts on special-status bats to a less-than-significant level because preconstruction surveys would be conducted, and active bat roosts would be protected from construction activities.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation Measure BIO-1:

Replacement tree planting consistent with the County Oak Woodland Ordinance will be required to compensate for the loss of 7 protected trees and less than half acre habitat. Oak Woodland Conservation Plan: A plan for the reestablishment of woodland on-site or within Sonoma County consistent with the minimum replacement ratios specified below will be submitted by a qualified professional for review and approval by Project Review Division staff. The plan shall include replanting of associated vegetative strata of the converted area including canopy, subcanopy, shrub, herb and bryophyte. Replanting shall have a planning horizon for the establishment of the woodland within twenty-five (25) years, or other timeline if recommended by the qualified professional and approved by the applicable decision-maker. An annual report shall be prepared and submitted by the applicant to Project Review Division staff for a minimum of five years, or until the qualified professional determines that replanting has been successful, and plants are likely to survive. Any mortality that occurs during the reporting period shall be replaced.

Oak Woodland Ecological Category	Mitigation Ratio (in acres)
Class I (Superior Oak Habitat)	3:1
Class II (Oak Habitat)	2:1
Class III (Limited Quality Oak Habitat)	1:1

A protected perimeter will be established around all retained protected trees, with the protected perimeter having a radius at least 1.5 times the distance from the trunk to the outermost extent of canopy. Before the start of any clearing, excavation, construction, or other work on the project site, every tree designated for protection shall be clearly delineated with a substantial barrier (e.g., chain link fencing, orange construction fencing), at the protected perimeter or limits established during the permit process. No storage or dumping of oil, gasoline, chemicals, or other potentially harmful substances shall occur within the protected perimeter of any tree. Where development or other work must encroach upon the protected perimeter of a protected tree, special measures shall be incorporated to allow the roots to obtain oxygen, water, and nutrients. No changes in existing ground level shall occur within the protected perimeter unless a drainage and aeration scheme approved by a certified biologist. No burning or use of equipment with an open flame shall occur near or within the protected perimeter, excluding authorized controlled burns.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-1:

Prior to issuance of any building or grading permit(s), the applicant shall submit an oak

woodland conservation plan for review and approval by Project Review Division staff, including mitigation at ratios consistent with the determined oak woodland ecological category and planting plan to offset the impacts identified. Prior to building permit final or operation of the use, the Project Review Division shall verify that planting consistent with the approved plan has been completed, either through photographic documentation or a site visit, at the discretion of staff. The applicant shall also submit documentation to staff that a qualified professional has been retained to conduct long-term monitoring of the conservation site.

Prior to issuance of any building or grading permit(s), the Project Review Division shall confirm all measures to protect retained trees shall be noted on the final project construction plans. Prior to issuance of building or grading permits, the Project Review Division shall verify that tree protection measures are in place, either through photographic documentation or a site visit, at the discretion of staff.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2:

To minimize the potential for impacts on nesting raptors and other birds, the applicant shall implement the following pre-construction measures before, and during, construction:

- a. To minimize the potential for impacts on nesting raptors and other birds, project activities, including vegetation removal, ground disturbance, and use of heavy equipment shall only occur during the nonbreeding season (September 1 through January 31), if feasible. If all nesting habitat is removed during the nonbreeding season, no further mitigation shall be required.
- b. If conducting project activities during the nonbreeding season is not feasible, then prior to removal of vegetation, ground disturbing activities, or use of heavy equipment between February 1 and August 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct preconstruction surveys for nesting raptors and other birds and shall identify active nests within the project site and accessible areas adjacent to the project site. The survey buffers shall be 0.25 miles for white-tailed kites and 500 feet for other raptors and special-status birds, and 100 feet for common, non-raptor birds. Inaccessible areas adjacent to the project site (e.g., private property) shall be surveyed using binoculars or spotting scopes.
- c. Impacts on nesting birds shall be avoided by establishing appropriate buffers around active nest sites identified during preconstruction surveys to prevent disturbance to the nest. Activity shall not commence within the buffer areas until a qualified biologist has determined that the young have fledged, the nest is no longer active, or reducing the buffer will not likely result in nest abandonment. No-disturbance buffers shall be 0.25 miles for white-tailed kites, 500 feet for raptors, at least 100 feet for other special-status birds.
- d. The size of buffers for common native birds shall be determined by a qualified biologist and shall be of sufficient size to avoid disturbance to the nest based on the species, project activity, nest height, existing disturbance level, and other relevant factors. The buffer may be adjusted if a qualified biologist determines that such an adjustment would not be likely to adversely affect the nest. For white-tailed kite and other special-status birds, this determination shall be made in consultation with CDFW. Monitoring of the nest by a qualified biologist during and after construction activities shall be required if the activity has potential to adversely affect the nest.
- e. Trees shall not be removed during the breeding season for nesting raptors unless a survey by a qualified biologist verifies that there is not an active nest in the tree.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-2:

Permit Sonoma staff will not issue permits for ground disturbing activities between February 1st and August 31st until the site has been surveyed by a qualified biologist to ensure proper fencing and buffers are in place prior to issuance. If pre-construction surveys determine protective

buffers are necessary, ground-disturbing activities shall not be initiated until the applicant provides evidence that nest protection buffers are flagged and fenced off and active nest monitoring has been initiated. A final monitoring report shall be submitted to the County within 30 days of the completion of ground-disturbing activities.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3:

To minimize the potential for impacts on bats, the applicant shall implement the following pre-construction measures before, and during, construction:

Within 14 days before any tree removal or removal of abandoned buildings, a qualified biologist familiar with bats and bat ecology, and experienced in conducting bat surveys, shall conduct surveys for bat roosts in suitable habitat (e.g., large trees, crevices, cavities, exfoliating bark, foliage, buildings) on and adjacent to the project site.

If no evidence of bat roosts is found, the qualified biologist shall submit a report summarizing the results of the survey to the applicant and Sonoma County, and no further study shall be required.

If evidence of bat maternity roosts or hibernacula is observed, the species and number of bats using the roost shall be determined by a qualified biologist using noninvasive methods. Bat detectors (i.e., acoustic monitoring) or evening emergence surveys shall be used if deemed necessary to supplement survey efforts by the qualified biologist.

A no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet shall be established around active pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, or western red bat maternity roosts or hibernacula, as well as substantial maternity roosts or hibernacula of other bat species considered to be a wildlife nursery by the qualified biologist, and project activities shall not occur within this buffer until after the roosts are unoccupied as determined by a qualified biologist.

If roosts of pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, or western red bat are determined to be present and must be removed, the bats shall be excluded from the roosting site before the tree is removed. A program addressing compensation, exclusion methods, and roost removal procedures shall be developed in coordination with CDFW before implementation. Exclusion methods may include use of one-way doors at roost entrances (bats may leave but not reenter) or sealing roost entrances when the site can be confirmed to contain no bats. Exclusion efforts may be restricted during periods of sensitive activity (e.g., during hibernation or while females in maternity colonies are nursing young). The loss of each roost (if any) resulting from the project shall be replaced in coordination with CDFW and may require construction and installation of bat boxes suitable to the bat species and colony size excluded from the original roosting site. If determined necessary during coordination with CDFW, replacement roosts shall be implemented before bats are excluded from the original roost sites. After the replacement roosts are constructed and it is confirmed that bats are not present in the original roost site by a qualified biologist, the roost tree or building may be removed. For roost trees, a two-step tree removal process supervised by a qualified biologist shall be implemented, including removal of all branches that do not provide roosting habitat on the first day, and removal of the remaining portion of the tree on the following day.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-3:

Prior to issuance of any building or grading permit(s), the Project Review Division shall review the results of the recommendations submitted by a qualified biologist and ensure that measures recommended by the biologist or CDFW to avoid sensitive habitat or species are followed. All protection measures shall be noted on the final project construction plans. If pre-construction surveys determine protective buffers are necessary, ground-disturbing activities shall not be initiated until the applicant provides evidence that roost protection buffers are flagged and fenced off and active roost monitoring has been initiated. A final monitoring report shall be submitted to the County within 30 days of the completion of building demolition and ground-disturbing activities.

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

Comment:

All blue-line streams shown on the USGS maps are designated for protection in the Sonoma County General Plan. Streamside Conservation Areas have been established in the riparian corridor overlay zone to protect riparian habitat. Removal of vegetation must comply with General Plan and Riparian Corridor Ordinance policies that govern riparian corridors for a distance of 50 ft. from the top of the highest bank.

The RC Combining Zone includes the applicable stream setback distance for development and as shown in the Table 1, below.

Table 1. Riparian Corridor (RC) Setback Distances	
Riparian Corridor Category	RC Development Zoning Setbacks (in feet)
Russian River and some Area Plan streams	RC-200
Designated Flatland	RC-100
Other Flatland	RC-50
Upland	RC-50
Urban Areas	RC-50

The property includes a portion of an unnamed perennial stream and its surrounding Riparian Corridor. The small seasonal drainage runs northeast of the parcel and has a designated 50-foot setback. The project location is more than 1,000 feet from the channel.

Impacts and mitigation associated with oak woodland are described in section 4(a) above. The project site does not contain and would not impact any additional sensitive natural communities identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Significance Level:

No Impact

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?

Regulatory Framework

The Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) regulates "Waters of the United States", including adjacent wetlands, under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act. Waters of the United States include navigable waters, interstate waters, territorial seas and other waters that may be used in interstate or foreign commerce. Potential wetland areas are identified by the presence of (1) hydrophytic vegetation, (2) hydric soils, and (3) wetland hydrology. All three parameters must be present, under normal circumstances, for an area to be designated as a jurisdictional wetland under the Clean Water Act. Areas that are inundated for sufficient duration and depth to exclude growth of hydrophytic vegetation are subject to Section 404 jurisdiction as "other waters" and are often characterized by an ordinary high water mark (OHWM). The discharge of dredged or fill material into a Waters of the U.S. (including wetlands) generally requires a permit from the Corps under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

"Waters of the State" are regulated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) under the State Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. Waters of the State are defined by the Porter-Cologne Act as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the State. RWQCB jurisdiction includes "isolated" wetlands and waters that may not be regulated by the ACOE under Section 404 (such as roadside ditches). Section 401 of the Clean Water Act specifies that any activity subject to a permit issued by a federal agency must also obtain State Water Quality Certification (401 Certification) that the proposed activity will comply with state water quality standards. If a proposed project does not require a federal permit, but does involve dredge or fill activities that may result in a discharge to Waters of the State, the Water Board has the option to regulate the dredge and fill activities under its state authority through its Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) program.

Comment:

The proposed new construction and grading are outside state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.). The small drainage channel is more than 1,000 feet from the proposed construction area, and no secondary impacts are anticipated. Although no impact is expected, Conditions of Approval requiring Best Management Practices during ground disturbance associated with the proposed project improvements will provide further protection.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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?

Comment:

The property is located within a much larger tract of agricultural/viticultural and lightly developed land north of urban development in Healdsburg. The property includes an unnamed stream and the surrounding Riparian Corridor presumably serves as a movement and habitat corridor for an array of wildlife, and provides a linkage between the baylands of Sonoma and Napa Counties and other rural areas to the north.

While a (very small) component of this greater landscape setting, the property itself does not provide corridor functions beyond connecting similar agricultural/viticultural land parcels to the south, east, west and north. Within this context limited development on the property is in and of itself unlikely to result in any significant impacts to local wildlife movement or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

Ephemeral streams (even when dry) and associated vegetation within the property presumably provide very localized movement and shelter habitat for common wildlife species. The small drainage channel is more than 1,000 feet from the proposed construction area. The proposed project does not include tree removal in these designated areas and is designed to avoid streams and wetlands on the property and therefore is not anticipated to interfere with the movement of wildlife.

The previous Mitigation Measures BIO-1, BIO-2 and BIO-3 will reduce impacts to a level that would be less than significant.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation

See Mitigation Measures BIO-1, BIO-2 and BIO-3

Mitigation Monitoring

See Mitigation Monitoring BIO-1, BIO-2 and BIO-3

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

Comment:

The project parcel does not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as the Riparian Corridor Ordinance, Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance, or the Sonoma County Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance. Project construction is 1,000 feet from onsite riparian areas. Seven trees and less than a half acre of oak woodland habitat protected by the Oak Woodland Ordinance located around the construction area will be removed to accommodate the new construction and will be mitigated by new plantings as described in 4(a). Mitigation Measure BIO-1 and standard Condition of Approval requiring compliance with the County Oak Woodland Ordinance will further reduce the impact.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation

See Mitigation Measures BIO-1

Mitigation Monitoring

See Mitigation Monitoring BIO-1

- 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?**

Comment:

Habitat Conservation Plans and natural community conservation plans are site-specific plans to address effects on sensitive species of plants and animals. The project site is not located in an area subject to a habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

Significance Level:

No Impact

5. CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Would the project:

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

Comments:

A Cultural Resource Study was conducted for the project site in 2024 and revised in 2026 by Tom Origer and Associates, which did not identify any historical resources and determined no resource-specific recommendations were warranted.

Significance Level:

No Impact

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

Comment:

A Cultural Resource Study was conducted for the project site in 2024 and revised in 2026 by Tom Origer and Associates, which did not identify any cultural resources and determined no resource-specific recommendations were warranted.

Although the project has a low possibility of containing unrecorded archaeological sites and no impacts to archaeological resources are anticipated, the County has a standard “accidental discovery” condition of approval that work be halted if unanticipated buried cultural resources are encountered during construction. The condition is applied to all permits that involve ground disturbance, and requires that the following notes be printed on all grading and building permit plans involving ground disturbing activities:

“If prehistoric or historic archaeological resources, paleontological resources, or tribal cultural resources are encountered during ground-disturbing work, all work in the immediate vicinity shall be halted and the operator must immediately notify the Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) – Project Review staff of the find. The applicant shall be responsible for the cost to have a qualified paleontologist, archaeologist or tribal cultural resource specialist under contract to evaluate the find and make recommendations to protect the resource in a report to PRMD. Paleontological resources include fossils of animals, plants or other organisms. Prehistoric resources include humanly modified stone, shell, or bones, hearths, firepits, obsidian and chert flaked-stone tools (e.g., projectile points, knives, choppers), midden (culturally darkened soil containing heat-affected rock, artifacts, animal bone, or shellfish remains), stone milling equipment, such as mortars and pestles, and certain sites features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe. Historic resources include all by-products of human use greater than fifty (50) years of age including, backfilled privies, wells, and refuse pits; concrete, stone, or wood structural elements or foundations; and concentrations of metal, glass, and ceramic refuse.

If human remains are encountered, work in the immediate vicinity shall be halted and the operator shall notify PRMD and the Sonoma County Coroner immediately. At the same time, the operator shall be responsible for the cost to have a qualified archaeologist under contract to evaluate the discovery. If the human remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the Coroner must notify the Native American Heritage Commission within 24 hours of this identification so that a Most Likely Descendant can be designated and the appropriate measures implemented in compliance with the California Government Code and Public Resources Code.”

Therefore, the proposed project would not result in substantial adverse change in the change in the significance of archaeological resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Comment:

No burial sites are known in the vicinity of the project, and most of the project site has already been disturbed by past construction. Although no impact is anticipated, implementation of the accidental discovery standard condition above would ensure a less than significant impact.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

6. 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?

Comment:

The project will not result in significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation. Standard construction practices will be used.

Construction:

Energy would be required to operate and maintain construction equipment and transport construction materials. The one-time energy expenditure required to construct the infrastructure associated with the projects would be nonrecoverable. Most energy consumption would result from operation of off-road construction equipment and on-road vehicle trips associated with commutes by construction workers and haul trucks trips. The energy needs for project construction would be temporary and are not anticipated to require additional capacity or substantially increase peak or base period demands for electricity and other forms of energy. Associated energy consumption would be typical of that associated with projects of this size in a rural setting. Although the one-time energy expenditure required to construct the project would be nonrecoverable, it would not be consumed in a wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary manner.

Operational:

Operation of the project would require energy consumption in the form of electricity for building and facility operations and fuel for vehicle-based visitation to the project. The project would be built according to the latest Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards. The project would meet State and local building code requirements for energy efficiency. Operation of the project would be typical of these types of projects, requiring electricity for lighting. Transportation energy demand from the implementation of the project would be reduced by federal and State regulations including the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, Clean Car Standards, and Low Emission Vehicle Program. Any additional energy use would be supplied by Sonoma Clean Power, which provides increased levels of renewable energy sourced energy from typical energy supplied by an investor-owned utility. Furthermore, the project would not use natural gas or propane as an energy source.

Thus, the projects' energy consumption from construction, building operation, and transportation would not be considered wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

As noted above, the projects' facilities and buildings would comply with the latest Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which are intended to increase the energy efficiency of new development projects in the state and move the State closer to its zero-net energy goals. The project would be automatically enrolled as a member of the SCP, which serves as the Community Choice Aggregate (CCA) for the County. SCP works in partnership with PG&E to deliver GHG-efficient electricity to customers within its member jurisdictions. The project would also be all electric facilities consistent with state efforts (e.g., 2022 Scoping Plan Update) for energy efficiency and fossil fuel use reduction. Implementation of the projects would not conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impacts

7. 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 Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.**

Existing geologic conditions that could affect new development are considered in this analysis. Impacts of the environment on the project are analyzed as a matter of County policy and not because such analysis is required by CEQA.

Comment:

The site is not located in an Alquist-Priolo fault zone or on a known fault based on the Safety Maps in the Sonoma County General Plan. The Uniform Building Code has been developed to address seismic events in California and development which complies with the Code will result in buildings which should withstand the most severe reasonably anticipated seismic event.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?

Comment:

All of Sonoma County is subject to seismic shaking that would result from earthquakes along the San Andreas, Rodgers Creek, and other faults. Predicting seismic events is not possible, nor is providing mitigation that can entirely reduce the potential for injury and damage that could occur during a seismic event. However, by applying geotechnical evaluation techniques and appropriate engineering practices, potential injury and damage from seismic activity can be diminished, thereby exposing fewer people and less property to the effects of a major damaging earthquake.

The design and construction of new structures are subject to engineering standards of the California Building Code (CBC), which takes into account soil properties, seismic shaking, and foundation type. Project conditions of approval require that building permits be obtained for all construction and that the project meet all standard seismic and soil test/compaction requirements. The project would, therefore, not expose people to substantial risk of injury from seismic shaking.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant

iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Comment:

Strong ground shaking can result in liquefaction, the sudden loss of shear strength in saturated sandy material, resulting ground failure. Areas of Sonoma County most at risk of liquefaction are along San Pablo Bay and in alluvial valleys. The subject site is not identified on the map in Safety Element (PS-1c) as Very High, High, or Medium Liquefaction Hazard Area.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

iv. Landslides?

Comment:

There are no landslides on or adjacent to the project site. The site is mapped in an area of greatest relative stability due to low slope inclination. The risk of landsliding at the site is low.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant

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

Comment:

The project includes grading, cuts and fills which require the issuance of a grading permit. Unregulated grading, both during and post construction, has the potential to increase the volume of runoff from a site which could have adverse downstream flooding and further erosion impacts, and increase soil erosion on and off site which could adversely impact downstream water quality.

County grading ordinance design requirements, adopted County grading standards and best management practices (such as silt fencing, straw wattles, construction entrances to control soil discharges, primary and secondary containment areas for petroleum products, paints, lime and other materials of concern, etc.), mandated limitations on work in wet weather, and standard grading inspection requirements, will be applied to the project, and are specifically designed to prevent soil erosion and loss of topsoil.

The County adopted grading ordinances and standards and related conditions of approval which enforce them are specific, and also require compliance with all standards and regulations adopted by the State and Regional Water Quality Control Board, such as the Standard Urban Stormwater Mitigation Plan (SUSMP) requirements, Low Impact Development (LID) and any other adopted best management practices. Therefore, no significant adverse soil erosion or related soil erosion water quality impacts are expected given the mandated conditions and standards that need to be met.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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?

Comment:

The project site is subject to seismic shaking and other geologic hazards as described in item 6.a.ii, iii, and iv, above.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant

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

Comment:

Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code is an index of the relative expansive characteristics of soil as determined through laboratory testing. For the proposed project, soils at the site have not been tested for their expansive characteristics. However, compliance with standard Building Code requirements would ensure that potential soil expansion at the project site would be mediated through professional engineering design and practice. Therefore, risks from expansive soils would be less

than significant.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant 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?**

Comment:

The project site is not in an area served by public sewer. Preliminary documentation provided by the applicant and reviewed by a Permit Sonoma Environmental Health Specialist indicates that the soils on site could support a replacement septic system and the required expansion area.

Significance Level:

No Impact

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

Comment:

Required ground disturbance is mostly contained within already disturbed areas on site. There have been no unique geologic features identified on site. In addition, the County standard "Accidental Discovery" Condition of Approval applies to all projects with ground disturbance (see Section 5b), which would further reduce any potential impact to less than significant.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

8. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS:

Would the project:

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

Comment:

Section 15064.4 of the State CEQA Guidelines assists lead agencies in determining the significance of the impacts of GHG emissions. Section 15064.4 gives lead agencies the discretion to assess emissions quantitatively or qualitatively. The CEQA Guidelines do not establish a threshold of significance. Lead agencies are granted discretion to establish significance thresholds for their respective jurisdictions, including looking to thresholds developed by other public agencies or other experts, so long as any threshold chosen is supported by substantial evidence.

The Bay Area Air District's (BAAD) 2022 Justification Report: CEQA Thresholds for Evaluating the Significance of Climate Impacts from Land Use Projects acknowledges that evaluating climate impacts under CEQA can be challenging because global climate change is inherently a cumulative problem, rather than the result of a single source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. With that in mind, the BAAD has recommended thresholds of significance as to whether a proposed project would have a "cumulatively considerable" contribution to the significant cumulative impact on climate change.

For land use development projects, the BAAD recommends using an approach which evaluates a project based on its effect on California's efforts to meet the State's long-term climate goals. Using this approach, a project that is consistent with and would contribute its "fair share" towards achieving

those long-term climate goals can be found to have a less-than-significant impact on climate change under CEQA because the project would, in effect, help to solve the problem of global climate change. Applying this approach, the Air District has analyzed what will be required of new land use development projects to achieve California's long-term climate goal of carbon neutrality by 2045.

Because GHG emissions from the land use sector come primarily from building energy use and from transportation, these are the areas that the BAAD evaluated to ensure that a project can and will do its fair share to achieve carbon neutrality. With respect to building energy use, the BAAD recommends replacing natural gas with electric power and eliminating inefficient or wasteful energy usage. This will support California's transition away from fossil fuel-based energy sources and will bring a project's GHG emissions associated with building energy use down to zero as the state's electric supply becomes 100 percent carbon free. With respect to transportation, the BAAD recommends that projects be designed to reduce project-generated Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and to provide sufficient electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure to support a shift to EVs over time.

The BAAB has found, based on this analysis, that a new land use development project being built today either must be consistent with a local GHG reduction strategy that meets the criteria under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5(b), or must incorporate the following design elements to achieve its "fair share" of implementing the goal of carbon neutrality by 2045:

- A. Projects must include, at a minimum, the following project design elements:
 - 1. Buildings
 - a. The project will not include natural gas appliances or natural gas plumbing (in both residential and nonresidential development).
 - b. The project will not result in any wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary energy usage as determined by the analysis required under CEQA Section 21100(b)(3) and Section 15126.2(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines.
 - 2. Transportation
 - a. Achieve a reduction in project-generated vehicle miles traveled (VMT) below the regional average consistent with the current version of the California Climate Change Scoping Plan (currently 15 percent) or meet a locally adopted Senate Bill 743 VMT target, reflecting the recommendations provided in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research's (OPR) 2018 Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA:
 - i. Residential projects: 15 percent below the existing VMT per capita
 - ii. Office projects: 15 percent below the existing VMT per employee
 - iii. Retail projects: no net increase in existing VMT
 - b. Achieve compliance with off-street electric vehicle requirements in the most recently adopted version of CALGreen Tier 2.

There is currently no applicable local GHG reduction strategy, such as an adopted Climate Action Plan, for Sonoma County. Therefore, the applicants provided a detailed project description and the project was analyzed under criterion A above and discussed below.

Buildings: As discussed in the Energy Section 6a, the project does include new construction. Plans for the building do not include the use of natural gas appliances or natural gas plumbing. The new 165 sq ft restroom building will require compliance with the latest Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards. The project also proposes the use of Sonoma Clean Power as their utility provider. Therefore, impacts due to energy consumption would be less than significant.

Transportation: The visitor serving uses does not include new residences, office buildings, or commercial retail, and therefore, does not contribute any VMT to these three land use categories of concern. (Note that "commercial retail" refers to commercial retail spaces, not to a small ancillary retail space associated with another land use). The project would include commercial use of the 165 square foot restroom and ADA compliant footpaths, and would conservatively generate a maximum of 109 average daily vehicle trips (when assuming that the maximum number of attendees proposed was achieved every day, year-round).

As discussed in the Transportation Section 17b, VMT refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project. The County of Sonoma has not yet adopted specific VMT policies or thresholds of significance. However, the OPR Technical Advisory includes a screening threshold for small projects that generate or attract fewer than 110 trips per day, stating this level of vehicle activity may generally be assumed to result in a less than significant transportation impact. The project proposes a maximum of 109 average daily trips^j. The project also proposes to implement a local hiring plan (at least 50% of employees from local area), so although distance travelled for employee trips has not been estimated, it is reasonable to assume that employees would primarily be hired from the local area and would generate relatively few travel miles associated with in-county commuter trips.

The maximum average daily trip number of 109 is below the OPR threshold of 110, and is based on the site obtaining maximum visitor attendance for all activities and events every day, year-round, which is not likely to occur, indicating that the actual ADT would likely be even lower than 109. Distance-related vehicle miles for employees are also anticipated to be low due to the proposed plan to hire from the local workforce. Therefore, the project is expected to have a less than significant VMT impact.

The latest California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) was published in 2022 and went into effect on January 1, 2023. The 2022 CALGreen Tier 2 requirements for EV charging stations apply to new non-residential buildings and require that off-street EV capable spaces be provided for a new non-residential development project with 10 or more parking spaces (note there are separate EV requirements for residential projects). Per the provided GHG analysis the applicant is committed to complying with measures for providing electrical vehicle charging stations.

The BAAD 2022 guidance does not propose construction-related climate impact thresholds, stating that GHG emissions from construction represent a very small portion of a project's lifetime GHG emissions, and that land use project thresholds are better focused on addressing operational GHG emissions, which represent the vast majority of project GHG emissions. Therefore, construction related GHG would not exceed established thresholds.

Because the project does not propose the use of natural gas, would use minimal energy, does not include new residential, office, or retail uses, would generate low VMT, and meets 2022 CALGreen requirements for EV charging stations, the project would contribute its "fair share" towards achieving the State's long-term climate goals, and therefore, would have a less-than-significant impact on climate change.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

The County does not have an adopted Climate Action Plan but has adopted a Climate Change Action Resolution (May 8, 2018) which resolved to reduce GHG emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, and noted twenty strategies for reducing GHG emissions, including increasing carbon sequestration, increasing renewable energy use, and reducing emissions from the consumption of good and services. The project has proposed to incorporate many GHG reduction strategies, including:

1. Increase building energy efficiency.
 - a. The project is compliant as it would meet any appropriate State and local building code requirement for energy efficiency.
 - b. LED lighting systems would be installed.
 - c. Lighting timers and dimmers will be utilized.
2. Increase renewable energy use.
 - a. Sonoma Clean Power will be the electrical utility provider for the site, which has a greater reliance on renewable power sources.

3. Electrical energy usage.
 - a. EV charging stations will be installed at the parking lots, in accordance with County guidelines.
4. Reduce travel demand through focused growth.
 - a. The project is anticipated to generate traffic below 110 trips daily and would be below screening thresholds for vehicle miles travelled impacts.
5. Increase solid waste diversion.
 - a. The project is compliant as it would meet the County and local recycling goals
6. Reduce water consumption.
 - a. The project would include low flow water fixtures and water efficient irrigation systems.
 - b. Any new landscape would be drought tolerant.
 - c. The landscaping plan will meet the County's WELO requirements.
7. Increase carbon sequestration.
 - a. The current site has a sufficient amount of vegetation that sequesters carbon.

By incorporating these GHG reduction strategies, the project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

Significance Level:

No Impact

9. 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?**

Comment:

Small amounts of potentially hazardous materials will be used on this project such as fuel, lubricants, and cleaning materials. Proper use of materials in accordance with local, state, and federal requirements, and as required in the construction documents, will minimize the potential for accidental releases or emissions from hazardous materials. This will assure that the risks of the project uses impacting the human or biological environment will be reduced to a less than significant level.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

The project proposes construction for the new 165 square foot bathroom facility, driveway improvements and ADA pathway improvements. The project would not generate or produce substantial quantities of hazardous material or unsafe conditions. During construction activities there could be spills of hazardous materials. To address this possibility, the project is required to comply with all applicable hazardous materials handling and storage requirements and would use qualified contractors for construction. See Item 9.a. above.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

The project does not involve hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials. There is not an existing or proposed school within 0.25 miles of the site.

Significance Level:

No Impact

- 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?**

Comment:

The project site was not identified on, or in the vicinity of, any parcels on lists compiled by the California Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the CalRecycle Waste Management Board Solid Development Waste Information System (SWIS). The project area is not included on the list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

Significance Level:

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 or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?**

Comment:

The site is not within the Airport Referral Area as designated by the Sonoma County Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plan (ALUC).

Significance Level:

No Impact

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

Comment:

The project would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with the County's adopted emergency operations plan. There is no separate emergency evacuation plan for the County. In any case, the project would not change existing circulation patterns significantly, and would have no effect on emergency response routes.

Significance Level:

No Impact

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

Comment:

Prior to operation, the applicant and/or operator must comply with all fire safety laws, including the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 14 California Code of Regulations §1270 et seq., the California Fire Code as adopted with local amendments in the Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, and defensible space requirements as set forth in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13A. All construction projects must comply with these fire safety laws, including but not limited to, installing fire sprinklers in buildings, providing emergency vehicle access, and maintaining a dedicated fire-

fighting water supply on-site. As part of the County's planning referral process, the Sonoma County Fire Prevention required the applicants to apply for a Same Practical Effect Exemption to standards pursuant to 14 California Code Regulations §1270.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 14 California Code of Regulations § 1273.00, require developments in the State Responsibility Area to provide for safe access for emergency wildfire equipment and civilian evacuation concurrently. The applicant requested an Exceptions to Standards to provide the same practical effect pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations §1270.01 and §1270.06 due to environmental conditions and physical site limitations based on the following:

In-lieu of widening the one way road, road radius, and turnouts, the alternative methods below are proposed to mitigate the potential for adverse impacts associated with a portion of the road less than 22' wide. These measures are proposed consistent with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Fire Safe Regulations, 14 California Code of Regulations, §1273.00, as adopted in the Sonoma County Fire Safety Ordinance Sonoma County Code Chapter 13 (Sonoma County Code).

1. Vegetation Management Plan
 - a. A Fire Safe and Vegetation Management Plan is enclosed in accordance with County guidelines.
 - b. On a periodic basis, applicant has and will continue to perform weed abatement, reduction of ladder fuels, and clearing of vegetation around existing buildings and the proposed new restroom building and roads a to a minimum of 50'.
 - c. The water tanks, the pond/reservoir, and irrigation will continue to be maintained for firefighting purposes.
2. Water Storage and Fire Suppression
 - a. 10,400 gallon water storage tank to be maintained
 - b. Total estimated water storage from the existing lake is approximately 2,000,000 gallons, which is used for irrigation and fire protection.
 - c. An emergency generator supports the fire protection system.
3. Emergency Vehicle Access
 - a. Wider than standard road widths are provided along much of the roadway
 - b. Traffic along this road is infrequent and therefore emergency vehicle access would not be hindered by frequently encountering oncoming traffic.
 - c. The road is well maintained and kept in good condition based on the operational use of the property
 - d. Multiple access and evacuation routes are provided into the site including: Primary access road, neighbor's access road to be extended as secondary egress and Ridge Oaks Road
4. Safe Civilian Evacuation
 - a. On days designated as "red flag warning" days by the National Weather Service, no public use will take place at the property.
 - b. The primary egress road is from 0+00 to 20+00. The secondary egress road is from 20+00 to 47+52 and connects to River Road.
5. Signage
 - a. Signage will be installed at crossroads to indicate emergency vehicle and evacuation routes. Signage will be evaluated by Sonoma County permit and resource management department.

Sonoma County Fire Prevention included several conditions of approval that the applicant would need to comply with, addressing the following areas:

- Compliance with pertinent codes, regulations, and ordinances related to building design and fire prevention.
- Fire protection planning, including prohibition on holding visitor-serving activities or events on Red Flag Warning days.

- Fire access roads, including gates with Knox Box to ensure access.
- Water supplies and hydrants
- Location of hazardous materials
- Employee training for proper use of regulated materials as required in the California Fire Code adopted with local amendments in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13.

As a standard condition of approval, construction on the project site would be required to comply with the California Fire Code with local amendments as adopted in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, including but not limited to fire sprinklers, emergency vehicle access, and water supply making the impact from risk of wildfire less than significant. County Code Section 26-88-254(f)(16) also requires that the applicant prepare and implement a fire prevention plan for construction and ongoing operations, including provision for emergency vehicle access and turnouts, vegetation management, and fire break maintenance around all structures.

Project compliance with standard County and State requirements as well as the limited visitors, the measures proposed and significant additional water storage would ensure that risks from wildland fires on people and structures would be less than significant.

Employee training for proper use of regulated materials as required in the California Fire Code adopted with local amendments in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13. As a standard condition of approval, construction on the project site would be required to comply with the California Fire Code with local amendments as adopted in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, including but not limited to fire sprinklers, emergency vehicle access, and water supply making the impact from risk of wildfire less than significant. County Code Section 26-88-254(f)(16) also requires that the applicant prepare and implement a fire prevention plan for construction and ongoing operations, including provision for emergency vehicle access and turnouts, vegetation management, and fire break maintenance around all structures. See section 20 for further discussion of wildfire impacts.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

10. 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?**

Comment:

With regard to wastewater discharge requirements, the project site is not located in an area served by public sewer. Existing septic systems and leachfields would be installed to treat domestic wastewater for the proposed restroom facility. These systems comply with the Building Regulations listed in Chapter 7 of the Sonoma County Code of Ordinances which would require that approval be obtained from the well and septic section of Permit Sonoma for any onsite disposal system. The septic systems and leachfields would be subject to the provisions of the County of Sonoma OWTs Manual which provides the regulations, procedural and technical details governing septic tanks, including soil capability. The site would be evaluated for soil depth, depth to groundwater, soil percolation rates, and other soil properties related to septic systems. In addition, the septic systems would also be subject to the County's Sewers and Sewage Disposal Ordinance, Chapter 24 of the Sonoma County Code of Ordinances. The ordinance requires that the septic tank meet the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials PS-1 design standard and would require a permit for maintenance and

cleaning of the system. These requirements have been developed to ensure protection of groundwater resources, human health, and the environment.

Project conditions require that an application for additional wastewater discharge requirements be filed by the applicant with the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. Documentation of acceptance of a complete application with no initial objections or concerns by the Regional Water Quality Control Board must be submitted to the Project Review Health Specialist prior to building permit issuance.

With regard to water quality, standard permitting procedures require a Grading Permit and associated Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control Plan for the proposed improvements and other movement of soils, to which all applicable standards and provisions of the Sonoma County Grading and Drainage Ordinance would apply.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
The project is located in the Alexander Valley-Cloverdale Area groundwater basin that is managed by the Sonoma Water Agency in collaboration with Sonoma Resource District in accordance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. This ground water basin is outside of the approved Groundwater Sustainability Plans that provide a regulatory framework for managing groundwater use. Additionally, the site is within a Groundwater Class 1 – Major Groundwater Basin. The water supply for the restrooms will be met via an existing off-site groundwater well on the adjacent property. The total water usage for the project will be approximately 0.17-acre feet annually.

On December 13, 2024 Permit Sonoma's staff geologist reviewed the 2024 Water Supply Use and Conservation Assessment prepared by Summit Engineering and determined the project would not result in a significant impact to groundwater resources.

The project is conditioned to require groundwater monitoring for new or expanded discretionary commercial and industrial uses using wells in accordance with General Plan Policy WR-2d.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant 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 erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

- i. would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?
- ii. substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;
- iii. create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or
- iv. Impede or redirect flood flows?

Comment:

Construction activities associated with the proposed project are not anticipated to alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a way that would result in downstream erosion and/or sedimentation. The project site is not within any classified flood hazard zone. All ground disturbance and construction activities require a grading and building permit prior to commencement of these activities. Standard conditions of approval for the project require prior to grading permit issuance, the applicant submit a drainage report prepared by a civil engineer and demonstrate drainage improvements are designed in accordance with the Sonoma County Water Agency Flood Management Design Manual. Drainage improvements are required to maintain off-site natural drainage patterns, limit post-development storm water quantities and pollutant discharges in compliance with Permit Sonoma's best management practices guide and all other applicable regulations. Existing drainage patterns must be maintained, to the maximum extent practicable, to not adversely impact adjacent properties or drainage systems. Proposed drainage improvements shall not adversely impact adjacent properties or drainage systems.

Additionally, the project would comply with Sonoma County LID standards requiring 100 percent onsite infiltration of the design storm (1 inch of rain over 24 hours). The infiltration features incorporated in the site designs would capture the stormwater runoff for most small to moderate precipitation events throughout the year as shown in Appendix A. In accordance with Sonoma County Code (Section 36.16.030) the projects drainage systems would be designed to maintain pre-project drainage patterns and to convey the 25-year design storm without causing on or offsite flooding. The drainage systems would be engineered to the specification of the Sonoma County Flood Management Design Manual (SCWA 2019a) and would undergo a comprehensive review by the Sonoma County Water Agency before permit approval. This review would ensure that the hydrologic analysis for the project considers the prescribed design storm, local precipitation rates, rainfall intensity, and runoff coefficients, and that the applicant has used an appropriate hydrologic baseline. The proposed drainage improvements must also demonstrate that the projects would not cause adverse flooding or drainage effects to existing or proposed structures or to adjacent properties. Because the Sonoma County permitting process includes protections through the drainage system design and review, the potential for the projects to result in on or offsite flooding would be less than significant.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

The County used FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps to map flood hazard areas in General Plan 2020 in order to guide the placement of housing outside of flood and other natural hazard areas. According to Figure PS-1e of the General Plan, the proposed project site is outside of the 100-year Flood Hazard Area.

Existing flood hazards that could affect new development are considered in this analysis. Impacts of the environment on the proposed project are analyzed as a matter of County policy, not because such analysis is required by CEQA.

The proposed project creates approx. 1,165 sf of new impervious surface, which could affect the quantity and/or quality of storm water run-off. However, the proposed project has been designed and/or conditioned to prevent and/or minimize the discharge of pollutants and waste after the proposed project is constructed (post-construction). There are numerous post-construction storm water best management practices that can be utilized to accomplish this goal. These range from project designs and/or Low Impact Development best management practices that minimize new impervious surfaces, disperse development over larger areas, and/or that create areas that allow storm water to be detained, infiltrated, or retained for later use. Other post-construction storm water best management practices include storm water treatment devices based on filtering,

settling or removing pollutants.

Low Impact Development is a site design strategy that seeks to mimic the pre-development site hydrology through infiltration, interception, reuse, and evapotranspiration. Low Impact Development techniques include the use of small scale landscape-based Best Management Practices such as vegetated natural filters and bioretention areas (e.g. vegetated swales and raingardens) to treat and infiltrate storm water runoff. Low Impact Development also requires preservation and protection of environmentally sensitive site features such as riparian buffers, wetlands, steep slopes, valuable trees, flood plains, woodlands, native vegetation, and permeable soils.

The proposed project has been designed to address water quality through storm water treatment Best Management Practices and to also address water quantity through storm water flow control best management practices. Storm water treatment best management practices shall be designed to treat storm events and associated runoff to the 85 percentile storm event. Storm water flow control best management practices shall be designed to treat storm events and associated runoff to the channel forming discharge storm event which is commonly referred to as the two year 24 hour storm event.

Storm water treatment best management practices and storm water flow control best management practices are subsets of post-construction storm water best management practices. However, there is overlap between the two subsets. Post-construction storm water best management practices should utilize Low Impact Development techniques as the first priority.

The County has identified the preliminary location, type and approximate size of post-construction storm water treatment and flow control best management practices necessary for the proposed project. The location of the storm water best management practices are site specific and predicated by the development. The type and approximate size of the selected storm water best management practices are in accordance with the adopted Sonoma County Storm Water Low Impact Development Guide.

Proper operation and maintenance of post-construction storm water best management practices is needed to achieve the goal of preventing and/or minimizing the discharge of pollutants. The following mitigations will ensure the proper maintenance and operation of post-construction storm water best management practices.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant

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

Comment:

As discussed in (a) and (b) above this project is expected to be consistent with the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan and Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

11. LAND USE AND PLANNING:

Would the project:

a) Physically divide an established community?

Comment:

The project would not physically divide a community. It does not involve construction of a physical structure (such as a major transportation facility) or removal of a primary access route (such as a road or bridge) that would impair mobility within an established community or between a community and outlying areas.

Significance Level:

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?

The General Plan Land Use Designation on the project parcel is Land Intensive Agriculture. This land use designation is intended to enhance and protect lands best suited for permanent agricultural use and capable of relatively high production per acre of land. The proposed project will not conflict with the property's agricultural production capability.

No conflicts with Development Criteria or Operating Standards have been identified and no exceptions or reductions to standards would be necessary to approve the project. Therefore, the project would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

12. 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?

Comment:

The project site is not located within a known mineral resource deposit area (Sonoma County Aggregate Resources Management Plan, as amended 2010). Sonoma County has adopted the Aggregate Resources Management Plan that identifies aggregate resources of statewide or regional significance (areas classified as MRZ-2 by the State Geologist). Consult California Geologic Survey Special Report 205, Update of Mineral Land Classification: Aggregate Materials in the North San Francisco Bay Production-consumption region, Sonoma, Napa, Marin, and Southwestern Solano Counties, California (California Geological Survey, 2013).

Significance Level:

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?

Comment:

The project site is not located within an area of locally-important mineral resource recovery site and the site is not zoned MR (Mineral Resources) (Sonoma County Aggregate Resources Management Plan, as amended 2010 and Sonoma County Zoning Code). No locally-important mineral resources are known to occur at the site.

Significance Level:
No Impact

13. NOISE:

Determine if a Noise Study is needed by using Table 1 in the Noise Guidelines. If yes, give the applicant a copy of the Guidelines, found at (ADD LINK WHEN GUIDELINES FINALIZED).

If a Noise Study is prepared, per the Guidelines, it must answer the following questions. Use the noise study to prepare the analysis that addressed the following questions:

Would the project:

- 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?**

Comment:

A noise monitoring survey was performed at the site in February 2024, conducted for the applicant by Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc. (Attachment 5). The study included on-site noise monitoring and modeling for projected noise conditions based on the proposed project. The study specifically measured noise levels at nine sensitive receptors (existing single-family dwellings) at the shared property lines. The nine single-family dwellings are ranging from 390 ft to 1,765 feet from the 4 different noise producing sites including 2 parking areas and 2 potential outdoor event spaces.

The study found that the existing noise environment at the site results primarily from ambient noises related to vehicular traffic on River Road. Art tours have occurred on the site for the past 25 years by invitation, with tour groups typically meeting at the Geyserville or Cloverdale Park and Ride locations to be shuttled to the property. The project proposes an expansion of visitor-serving activities, but the baseline noise environment also includes this existing use.

The future noise environment at the project site would include parking and onsite visitor traffic, indoor event activities at the existing residence and barn and outdoor event noise.

Key findings of the noise study in consideration of the proposed project determined the following:

- Parking lot noise levels during daytime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Outdoor event noise levels during daytime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Indoor event noise levels during daytime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.

Noise-related impacts associated with the implementation of the project are expected to be less-than-significant. Therefore, mitigation measures to mitigate noise-related impacts are not necessary.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

The project includes construction activities that may generate minor ground borne vibration and

noise. These levels would not be significant because they would be short-term and temporary, and would be limited to daytime hours. There are no other activities or uses associated with the project that would expose persons to or generate excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

- 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?**

Comment:
The site is not within an airport land use plan as designated by Sonoma County.

Significance Level:
No Impact

14. POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Would the project:

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

Comment:
The proposed project does not include the construction of new housing, nor would it generate significant new demand for housing in the area (approximately 10 full-time employees year-round with up to 15 employees during large events and performances are proposed). This increase in employment opportunities is not anticipated to result in an indirect increase in population as it is anticipated that employees would be existing residents of the area. Therefore, the project would not induce substantial population growth in the area.

Significance Level:
No Impact

- b) **Displace substantial numbers of existing housing necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?**

Comment:
No housing will be displaced by the project and no replacement housing is proposed to be constructed.

Significance Level:
No Impact

15. PUBLIC SERVICES:

Would the project:

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

Comment:

Construction of the project would not involve substantial adverse physical impacts associated with provision of public facilities or services. The proposed project does not propose new housing, nor would it generate significant new demand for housing in the area (approximately 10 full-time employees year-round with up to 15 employees during events are proposed). This small increase in employment opportunities is not anticipated to result in an indirect increase in population requiring construction of new or altered government facilities. Therefore, the project would not necessitate or facilitate construction of new public facilities.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

i. Fire protection?

Comment:

Sonoma County Code requires that all new development meet Fire Safe Standards (Chapter 13). The County Fire Marshal reviewed the project description and requires that the expansion comply with Fire Safe Standards, including fire protection methods such as sprinklers in buildings, alarm systems, extinguishers, vegetation management, hazardous materials management and management of flammable or combustible liquids and gases. This is a standard condition of approval and required by county code and impacts would be less than significant. Fire protection services will continue to be provided by the Fire Department.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

ii. Police?

Comment:

The Sonoma County Sheriff will continue to serve this area. There will be no increased need for police protection resulting from this project.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

iii. Schools?

Comment:

The project itself would not contribute to an increase in the need for expanded or additional schools.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

iv. Parks?

Comment:

The project itself would not contribute to an increase in the need for expanded or additional parks.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

v. Other public facilities?

Comment:

The project itself would not contribute to an increase in the need for expanded or additional public facilities.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

16. RECREATION:

Would the project:

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

Comment:

The proposed project would not involve activities that would cause or accelerate substantial physical deterioration of parks or recreational facilities. The project will have no impact on the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities.

Significance Level:

No Impact

- b) **Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?**

Comment:

The project does not include a recreational facility and is of a project-type that does not require the construction or expansion of a recreational facility.

Significance Level:

No Impact

17. TRANSPORTATION:

Would the project:

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

Comment:

Three transportation-related plans have been adopted in Sonoma County: the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Circulation Element, the Sonoma County Transportation Authority Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2009), and the Sonoma County Bikeways Plan. The project will not conflict with any of these plans.

The applicant submitted an initial Draft Traffic Study dated March 4, 2024, after peer review by Sonoma County Public Infrastructure, a Final Traffic Study was submitted September 24, 2024. The traffic study findings are as follows:

- The proposed uses would be expected to generate a maximum of 20 daily trips for tour days, including 9 trips during the peak hour of site activity.
- The proposed use would be expected to generate a maximum of 62 trips for any single event, including 24 trips during the peak hour of site activity.
- Average Daily Trip Generation for the visitor trips to the Park and Ride locations combined with the above mentioned shuttle and employee trips is 109 ADT, The project is anticipated to result in a less-than-significant transportation impact on VMT based on the small project screening criteria published by the OPR.
- The lack of facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users is acceptable given the rural setting of the project and the planned shuttle and bus operations.
- Available sight distance at the project driveway is adequate.
- A left-turn lane would not be warranted as most event trips are anticipated to result in right turns into the project driveway.
- Emergency access is adequate.
- The project would not have an adverse operational effect on River Road during event days.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b) (evaluation of transportation impacts of land use projects using vehicle miles traveled)?

Comment:

Sonoma County does not have a congestion management program but LOS standards are established by the Sonoma County General Plan Circulation and Transit Element. See Item 17(a) above for a discussion of traffic resulting from project operation.

Senate Bill (SB) 743 established the change in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the metric to be applied to determining transportation impacts associated with development projects. As of the date of this analysis, Sonoma County has not yet adopted thresholds of significance related to VMT. As a result, project-related VMT impacts were assessed based on guidance published by the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in the publication Transportation Impacts (SB 743) CEQA Guidelines Update and Technical Advisory, 2018. The OPR guidelines identify several criteria that may be used by jurisdictions to identify certain types of projects that are unlikely to have a significant VMT impact and can be "screened" from further analysis. One of these screening criteria pertains to "small projects," which OPR identifies as generating fewer than 110 new vehicle trips per typical weekday. The trip generation for the project, including employees and visitor- serving activities, were translated to annual average daily trips (ADT). The maximum project ADT was estimated at 109, based on the site obtaining maximum visitor attendance for all activities and events every day, year-round. The project ADT is less than the OPR threshold of 110, and is likely to be even lower than the estimated 109, since it is not likely that each daily activity would be fully booked. Distance-related vehicle miles for employees are anticipated to be low due to the proposed plan to hire from the local workforce. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the project would have a less-than-significant impact on VMT.

Accordingly, the project is expected to have a less-than- significant impact on VMT for both employment and patron-related travel.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

The project would not increase hazards, since it maintains the existing alignment of the roadway.

Significance Level:
No Impact

d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

Comment:
Development on the site must comply with all emergency access requirements of the Sonoma County Fire Safety Code (Sonoma County Code Chapter 13), including emergency vehicle access requirements. Project development plans are required to be reviewed by a Sonoma County Fire Prevention staff during the building permit process to ensure compliance with emergency access issues. Additionally, standard conditions of approval require submittal of a written Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan (as required by Section 403 and 404 of the California Fire Code) to Fire Prevention staff for approval. No impacts to emergency access are anticipated.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

e) Result in inadequate parking capacity?

Comment:
As discussed in the traffic study recommendations and conclusions above in section 17 (a), the proposed parking is adequate.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

18. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES:

State Regulations

CEQA requires that a lead agency determine whether a project could have a significant effect on historical resources and tribal cultural resources (PRC Section 21074 [a][1][A]-[B]). A historical resource is one listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR, PRC Section 21084.1), a resource included in a local register of historical resources (PRC Section 15064.5[a][2]), or any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant (PRC Section 15064.5[a][3]).

If a project can be demonstrated to cause damage to a unique archaeological resource, the lead agency may require reasonable efforts to permit any or all these resources to be preserved in place or left in an undisturbed state. To the extent that resources cannot be left undisturbed, mitigation measures are required (PRC, Section 21083.2[a], [b], and [c]).

Impacts to significant cultural resources that affect the characteristics of any resource that qualify it for the NRHP or adversely alter the significance of a resource listed in or eligible for listing in the CRHR are considered a significant effect on the environment. These impacts could result from physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15064.5 [b][1]). Material impairment is defined as demolition or alteration in an adverse manner [of] those characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion or eligibility for inclusion in the CRHR (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15064.5[b][2][A]).

California Public Resources Code

Section 5097.5 of the California PRC states:

No person shall knowingly and willfully excavate upon, or remove, destroy, injure or deface any historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, archaeological or vertebrate paleontological site, including fossilized footprints, inscriptions made by human agency, or any other archaeological, paleontological or historical feature, situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency having jurisdiction over such lands. Violation of this section is a misdemeanor.

As used in this PRC section, "public lands" means lands owned by or under the jurisdiction of the State or any city, county, district, authority, or public corporation, or any agency thereof. Consequently, local agencies are required to comply with PRC 5097.5 for their own activities, including construction and maintenance, as well as for permit actions (e.g., encroachment permits) undertaken by others.

Codes Governing Human Remains

The disposition of human remains is governed by Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and PRC sections 5097.94 and 5097.98 and falls within the jurisdiction of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). If human remains are discovered, the county coroner must be notified within 48 hours, and there should be no further disturbance to the site where the remains were found. If the coroner determines the remains are Native American, the coroner is responsible to contact the NAHC within 24 hours. Pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98, the NAHC will immediately notify those persons it believes to be most likely descended from the deceased Native Americans so they can inspect the burial site and make recommendations for treatment or disposal.

Would the project:

Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California native American tribe, and that is: i) listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5030.1(k); or ii) a resource determined by the lead agency. In its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

On June 1, 2023, Assembly Bill 52 Project Notifications were sent to the Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, Mishewal Wappo Tribe of Alexander Valley, Middletown Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, Lytton Rancheria of California, Kashia Pomos Stewarts Point Rancheria and Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. These Native American tribes were invited to consult on the project pursuant to Public Resources Code sections 21080.3.1 and 21080.3.2. No requests for consultation were received.

Comment:

Although the project has a low possibility of containing unrecorded archaeological sites and no impacts to archaeological resources are anticipated, the County has a standard "accidental discovery" condition of approval that work be halted if unanticipated buried cultural resources are encountered during construction. The condition is applied to all permits that involve ground disturbance, and requires that the following notes be printed on all grading and building permit plans involving ground disturbing activities:

"If prehistoric or historic archaeological resources, paleontological resources, or tribal cultural resources are encountered during ground-disturbing work, all work in the immediate vicinity shall be halted and the operator must immediately notify the Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) – Project Review staff of the find. The applicant shall be responsible for the cost to have a qualified paleontologist, archaeologist or tribal cultural resource specialist under contract to evaluate the find and make recommendations to protect the resource in a report to PRMD. Paleontological resources include fossils

of animals, plants or other organisms. Prehistoric resources include humanly modified stone, shell, or bones, hearths, firepits, obsidian and chert flaked-stone tools (e.g., projectile points, knives, choppers), midden (culturally darkened soil containing heat-affected rock, artifacts, animal bone, or shellfish remains), stone milling equipment, such as mortars and pestles, and certain sites features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe. Historic resources include all by-products of human use greater than fifty (50) years of age including, backfilled privies, wells, and refuse pits; concrete, stone, or wood structural elements or foundations; and concentrations of metal, glass, and ceramic refuse.

If human remains are encountered, work in the immediate vicinity shall be halted and the operator shall notify PRMD and the Sonoma County Coroner immediately. At the same time, the operator shall be responsible for the cost to have a qualified archaeologist under contract to evaluate the discovery. If the human remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the Coroner must notify the Native American Heritage Commission within 24 hours of this identification so that a Most Likely Descendant can be designated and the appropriate measures implemented in compliance with the California Government Code and Public Resources Code.”

Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. This standard Condition of Approval requiring this note on all plans for ground disturbance associated with the proposed project improvements will reduce the impact to less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

19. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS:

Would the project:

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

Comment:
The project would not contribute to the need for construction of new public water or wastewater treatment facilities. The project will require an expansion to the onsite private septic system.

Significance Level:
No Impact

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

Comment:
The property is served by an existing well. Permit Sonoma staff Geologist has determined the site contains sufficient onsite water supplies available for the project. See section 10 above for a more detailed analysis.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

- c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project’s projected demand in addition to the**

provider's existing commitments?

Comment:

The domestic wastewater systems for the site will be sized in accordance with the County of Sonoma OWTS Manual. The onsite septic would have sufficient capacity to treat the maximum domestic daily demand generated.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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?

Comment:

Sonoma County has a solid waste management program in place that provides solid waste collection and disposal services for the entire County. The program can accommodate the permitted collection and disposal of the waste that would result from the proposed project. Active permitted regional landfills include the Redwood Sanitary Landfill (26 million cubic yards remaining capacity), Potrero Hills Landfill (13.9 million cubic yards remaining capacity), Vasco Road Landfill (7.4 million cubic yards remaining capacity), and Keller Canyon Landfill (63.4 million cubic yards remaining capacity) (CalRecycle 2016). Solid waste generated during construction and operation of the project would represent a small fraction of the daily permitted tonnage of these facilities.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact.

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

Comment:

No applicable federal solid waste regulations would apply to the project. At the State level, the Integrated Waste Management Act mandates a reduction of waste being disposed and establishes an integrated framework for program implementation, solid waste planning, and solid waste facility and landfill compliance. Sonoma County has access to adequate permitted landfill capacity and reduction, reuse, and recycling programs to serve the proposed project. Construction and operational waste generated as a result of the project would require management and disposal in accordance with local and state regulations. The project would not conflict with or impede implementation of such programs.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact.

20. WILDFIRE:

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire severity zones, would the project:

a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Prior to operation, the applicant and/or operator must comply with all fire safety laws, including the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 14 California Code of Regulations §1270 et seq., the California Fire Code as adopted with local amendments in the Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, and defensible space requirements as set forth in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13A. All construction projects must comply with these fire safety laws, including but not limited to, installing fire sprinklers in buildings, providing emergency vehicle access, and maintaining a dedicated fire-fighting water supply on-site. As part of the County's planning referral process, the Sonoma County Fire Prevention required the applicants to apply for a Same Practical Effect Exemption to standards pursuant to 14 California Code Regulations §1270.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 14 California Code of Regulations § 1273.00, require developments in the State Responsibility Area to provide for safe access for emergency wildfire equipment and civilian evacuation concurrently. The applicant requested an Exceptions to Standards to provide the same practical effect pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations §1270.01 and §1270.06 due to environmental conditions and physical site limitations based on the following:

In-lieu of widening the one way road, road radius, and turnouts, the alternative methods below are proposed to mitigate the potential for adverse impacts associated with a portion of the road less than 22' wide. These measures are proposed consistent with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Fire Safe Regulations, 14 California Code of Regulations, §1273.00, as adopted in the Sonoma County Fire Safety Ordinance Sonoma County Code Chapter 13 (Sonoma County Code).

6. Vegetation Management Plan
 - a. A Fire Safe and Vegetation Management Plan is enclosed in accordance with County guidelines.
 - b. On a periodic basis, applicant has and will continue to perform weed abatement, reduction of ladder fuels, and clearing of vegetation around existing buildings and the proposed new restroom building and roads a to a minimum of 50'.
 - c. The water tanks, the pond/reservoir, and irrigation will continue to be maintained for firefighting purposes.
7. Water Storage and Fire Suppression
 - a. 10,400 gallon water storage tank to be maintained
 - b. Total estimated water storage from the existing lake is approximately 2,000,000 gallons, which is used for irrigation and fire protection.
 - c. An emergency generator supports the fire protection system.
8. Emergency Vehicle Access
 - a. Wider than standard road widths are provided along much of the roadway
 - b. Traffic along this road is infrequent and therefore emergency vehicle access would not be hindered by frequently encountering oncoming traffic.
 - c. The road is well maintained and kept in good condition based on the operational use of the property
 - d. Multiple access and evacuation routes are provided into the site including: Primary access road, neighbor's access road to be extended as secondary egress and Ridge Oaks Road
9. Safe Civilian Evacuation
 - a. On days designated as "red flag warning" days by the National Weather Service, no public use will take place at the property.
 - b. The primary egress road is from 0+00 to 20+00. The secondary egress road is from 20+00 to 47+52 and connects to River Road.
10. Signage
 - a. Signage will be installed at crossroads to indicate emergency vehicle and evacuation routes. Signage will be evaluated by Sonoma County permit and resource management department.

Sonoma County Fire Prevention included several conditions of approval that the applicant would

need to comply with, addressing the following areas:

- Compliance with pertinent codes, regulations, and ordinances related to building design and fire prevention.
- Fire protection planning, including prohibition on holding visitor-serving activities or events on Red Flag Warning days.
- Fire access roads, including gates with Knox Box to ensure access.
- Water supplies and hydrants
- Location of hazardous materials
- Employee training for proper use of regulated materials as required in the California Fire Code adopted with local amendments in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13.

As a standard condition of approval, construction on the project site would be required to comply with the California Fire Code with local amendments as adopted in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, including but not limited to fire sprinklers, emergency vehicle access, and water supply making the impact from risk of wildfire less than significant. County Code Section 26-88-254(f)(16) also requires that the applicant prepare and implement a fire prevention plan for construction and ongoing operations, including provision for emergency vehicle access and turnouts, vegetation management, and fire break maintenance around all structures.

Project compliance with standard County and State requirements as well as the limited visitors, the measures proposed and significant additional water storage would ensure that risks from wildland fires on people and structures would be less than significant.

Employee training for proper use of regulated materials as required in the California Fire Code adopted with local amendments in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13. As a standard condition of approval, construction on the project site would be required to comply with the California Fire Code with local amendments as adopted in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, including but not limited to fire sprinklers, emergency vehicle access, and water supply making the impact from risk of wildfire less than significant. County Code Section 26-88-254(f)(16) also requires that the applicant prepare and implement a fire prevention plan for construction and ongoing operations, including provision for emergency vehicle access and turnouts, vegetation management, and fire break maintenance around all structures. See section 20 for further discussion of wildfire impacts.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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?

Comment:

The Project site sits on a hillside surrounded by other hillsides covered in dense forest. For Geyserville and surrounding area, prevailing winds tend to come from the west or north. No aspect of the project will exacerbate the existing level of fire hazard posed to the project site as it is or surrounding areas. As a project condition of approval, new construction, including grading on the project site must conform to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regulations, 14 CCR §§1270 et seq., Sonoma County Code Chapter 13A defensible space requirements as well as the California Fire Code adopted with local amendments in Sonoma County Chapter 13, including but not limited to, emergency vehicle access, and water supply making the impact from risk of wildland fire less than significant. In addition, the project is proposing an emergency access route available to emergency responders through its site and on a private road on the adjoining property to the south. See discussion under section 9.f-g.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

- c) **Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk of that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?**

Comment:

Access to the property will be from River Road via an existing driveway. The project operator will maintain the site to reduce fire hazards and fire risk. The project will comply with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regulations, 14 CCR §§1270 et seq., as well as the California Fire Code adopted with local amendments in Sonoma County Chapter 13 for emergency water supply and storage for fire protection. Applicant will also provide access to water in the onsite water tank and pool for extended fire suppression.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

- 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?**

Comment:

The project development areas are generally level or gently sloping and contain native vegetation. The potential for flooding, slope stability, drainage changes and landslides are less than significant. Any grading required for construction of project improvements, will be constructed with a County issued grading permit that requires design and approval of stormwater improvements that will be required as part of the grading permit.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

21. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

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

Comment:

Potential project impacts on special status plant and fish/wildlife species and habitat are addressed in Section 4. With the implementation of the required mitigation measures BIO-1, BIO-2 and BIO-3, impacts to biological resources, including oak woodland, nesting birds, and roosting bats would be less than significant.

Potential adverse project impacts to cultural resources are addressed in Section 5 and Tribal Cultural Resources in Section 18. No significant impacts have been identified and implementation of the County's standard condition of approval for accidental discovery would further reduce any potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

- 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)?**

Comment:

Section 15355 of the CEQA Guidelines state: Cumulative impacts refers to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. A search was undertaken to identify reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity of the proposed project area that might have over-lapping or cumulative impacts. None were identified.

The project would contribute to cumulative impacts related to aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, and Tribal cultural resources, but County standards, BMPs, and mitigations would ensure that the project’s cumulative contributions would not be considerable.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:

Proposed project operations have the potential to cause substantial adverse impacts on human beings, both directly and indirectly. However, all potential impacts and adverse effects on human beings (resulting from aesthetics, air quality and biological resources) were analyzed and would be less than significant with the mitigations identified in the Initial Study and County standards incorporated into the project.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant Impact

Attachments:

1. Project Materials
2. Visual Assessment Guidelines
3. Biological Resource Assessment
4. Cultural Resource Assessment
5. Noise Analysis
6. Water Supply, Use and Conservation Assessment
7. Traffic Analysis

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