Plumas County

Negative Declaration Number 679

For

Sierra Valley Preserve

Feather River Land Trust

Special Use Permit for Public Access and Recreational facilities in Agricultural Preserve (AP) and Rural (R-10) zones funded through Recreational Trails and Greenways Grant Program-Proposition 68

Beckwourth, Plumas County, CA

Filed:

Review Period:

From: through

APPROVED/CERTIFIED:

NEGATIVE DECLARATION

It is found, based on this Initial Study, that this project as mitigated would not have a significant impact on the environment.

An attached copy of the Initial Study documents reasons supporting the finding.

Determination by: Rebecca Herrin

Title: Assistant Planning Director

Date: February 22, 2021

Prepared by: Rebecca Herrin

Title: Assistant Planning Director

Date: February 22, 2021

Initial Study

1. **Project Title:** Sierra Valley Preserve Special Use Permit U 2-19/20-04

2. **Date of Initial Study Preparation:** January 2021

3. **Lead Agency Name and Address:** Plumas County Planning and Building Services
   555 Main Street
   Quincy, CA 95971

4. **Prepared By:** Rebecca Herrin, Assistant Planning Director
   (530) 283-6213
   beckyherrin@countyofplumas.com

5. **Project Location:**
   Assessor's Parcel Numbers 025-220-024-000 (331.03 acres), 025-060-021-000 (76.24 acres), 025-060-022-000 (640 acres), 025-080-045-000 (328.64 acres), 025-080-044-000 (500.78 acres), 025-080-043-000 (84.67 acres), 010-030-004-000 (442.35 acres), 140-070-024-000 (29.37 acres), 140-070-025-000 (92.91 acres), 025-220-025-000 (32.20 acres), 025-220-006-000 (0.84 acres) for a total of 2,558.68 acres; 181 Austin Road, off County Road A-23, Beckwourth; unincorporated Plumas County; T23N/R14E/Secs. 26,25,26,31,35,36; T22N/R14E/Secs. 1,2,6,11,12; T25N/R15E/Sec.30, MDM; Latitude: 39.810448, Longitude: -120.385040

6. **Project Sponsor:** Feather River Land Trust

7. **General Plan Designation:** Agricultural Preserve, Rural Residential, Scenic Road

8. **Zoning:** Agricultural Preserve (AP), Rural (R-10, Special Plan Scenic Road (SP-ScR), Flood Plain (FP)

9. **Project Description:** Feather River Land Trust, applicant, seeks grant funding under the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grant Program (Proposition 68) under authority of the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018.

   The grant funds are to be used for non-motorized recreational infrastructure development and enhancements that promote new or alternate access to parks, waterways, outdoor recreational pursuits, and forested or other natural environments to encourage health-related active transportation and opportunities for Californians to reconnect with nature as referenced in the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grant Program Application Guidelines and Agreement (not included in this document).

   The proposed project seeks to improve public access and enjoyment of the Preserve through construction of limited trails, wildlife viewing blinds, picnic areas, signage, improved parking and infrastructure, renovations to existing buildings and construction of new facilities. At the east and west entrances, proposed facilities include permanent restrooms. At the proposed Preserve headquarters entrance, improvements include removal of a dilapidated barn and large metal storage building to erect a new multi-purpose building,

which will include permanent exhibits (the "Barn"), a building providing space for meetings and events (the "Shed"), and a shop/maintenance building (the "Shop").

The Barn will include space for an office and for permanent exhibits highlighting the history, culture, geology, flora and fauna of Sierra Valley, as well as rotating exhibits. The Shed will be used for events, lectures and for hosting school groups. The Shop will include a woodshop, as well as storage for the equipment and supplies used to maintain the Preserve. A fire-damaged residence will be replaced and will provide a caretaker residence on site. A detached guest house or additional quarters located within the residence will provide housing for seasonal staff and visiting researchers.

The Sierra Valley Preserve Headquarters entrance is located in the Rural (R-10) zone, which allows existing residential and wildlife management uses by right. Uses permitted subject to the issuance of a special use permit include place of assembly (PCC 9-2.268) and recreation facilities (9-2.278). The proposed recreational access and supporting uses fit under these two definitions.

Agricultural Preserve (AP) zoning permits recreational uses subject to the issuance of a special use permit. The East and West entrances are located within areas zoned Agricultural Preserve (AP). Recreational uses "but not limited to walking, hiking, picnicking, camping, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, or other outdoor games or sports for which facilities are provided for public participation" are permitted subject to the issuance of a special use permit. Wildlife management (PCC 9-2.299.7) is also a use permitted subject to the issuance of a special use permit, although not necessarily part of this application.

10. **Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:** The land uses surrounding the property include mostly Agricultural Preserve (AP) zoned lands. Nearby uses include agriculture, agricultural sales, hard rock mine quarry, outdoor recreation and low density residential use. The Preserve headquarters is located on property zoned Rural (R-10). The Middle Fork Feather River crosses the center of the Preserve and is located approximately 1,500 feet east of the Headquarters site. Tracks associated with the Western Pacific Railroad border the subject parcel to the north. A-23 (Beckwourth-Calpine Road) borders the southwest edge of the parcel. An access road, Austin Road, extends off A-23 and currently provides access to the Headquarters site.

11. **Relationship to Other Projects:** None

12. **Other public agencies whose approval is required**: California Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water (approval of creation of a new Public Water System) Plumas County Environmental Health (permits relating to new public water system and commercial on-site wastewater disposal), Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District (approval of new water well), Plumas County Department of Public Works (encroachment permits), Plumas County Planning and Building Services (special use permit, sign permits and building permits for any new structures, alterations to existing structures, including demolitions and any accessibility elements).

13. **Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, is there a plan for consultation that includes, for example, the determination of significance of impacts to tribal cultural resources, procedures regarding confidentiality, etc.?** California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area have been notified pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1. Response was received from the Matthew Hatcher of the Mooretown Rancheria indicating that the Rancheria is not aware of any known cultural resources on the site. If new information or human remains are found, the Rancheria requests contact be made (Exhibit 21).

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" and subject to mitigation as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☐ **Aesthetics**	☐ **Agriculture and Forestry Resources**	☐ **Air Quality**
☐ **Biological Resources**	☐ **Cultural Resources**	☐ **Energy**
☐ **Geology/Soils**	☐ **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**	☐ **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**
☐ **Hydrology/Water Quality**	☐ **Land Use/Planning**	☐ **Mineral Resources**
☐ **Noise**	☐ **Population/Housing**	☐ **Public Services**
☐ **Recreation**	☐ **Transportation**	☐ **Tribal Cultural Resources**
☐ **Utilities/Service Systems**	☐ **Wildfire**	☐ **Mandatory Findings of Significance**

DETERMINATION:
On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☒ I find that, based on the initial study and the county and state regulations that govern the project approval, there will not be a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.

Rebecca K. Herrin

Rebecca Herrin
Assistant Planning Director
March 1, 2021

INITIAL STUDY AND CHECKLIST

Purpose of Initial Study:

An initial study, after a project is determined not exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is to be prepared and completed according to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063 to determine if the project will have a significant effect on the environment. All phases of project planning, implementation, and operation will be considered within this Initial Study. The information, analysis, and conclusions contained in this Initial Study will be utilized to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Negative Declaration. If the Initial Study reveals that an EIR should be prepared, the information contained in the Initial Study will be used to focus the EIR on the effects determined to be potentially significant.

1. AESTHETICS.

Environmental Setting: Plumas County is located within the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The County consists of a variety of aesthetic characteristics; rural, natural, and historic characteristics are predominant throughout the County. The rural, natural, and historic character is due to the County's many valleys, ridgelines, varying types of vegetation, watercourses, travel routes, and historic residential neighborhoods. Scenic resources within the County include mountains, hills, geologic features and formations, rivers, streams, and natural vegetation. Historic and cultural resources also contribute to the aesthetics of the County. Historical and cultural resources are sites, structures, features, objects, and properties being of nationwide, statewide, or local significance and having architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, cultural, or other values. Examples of historical and cultural resources are ranch home sites, barns, historic residential neighborhoods, ceremonial and/or sacred sites, quarries, mills, and cemeteries.

The aesthetic character of the county is most often viewed from the County's roads and highways. There are no state-designated scenic highways in Plumas County. However, the Plumas County 2035 General Plan designates scenic roads, including some state highways, and applies design standards to those county-designated scenic roads.

Beckwourth-Calpine Road (A-23) is designated as a Scenic Road in the Plumas County 2035 General Plan. The Scenic Road policy applies standards for development, which includes maintaining the natural vegetation within the scenic corridors.

Scenic areas throughout the County play a major role in the rural, natural character of the County. The Plumas County 2035 General Plan specifically identifies scenic areas. The scenic areas identified by the General Plan are designed to maintain the natural, rural characteristics, preserve historic lifestyles, and attract tourists. In addition, the Plumas County 2035 General Plan also sets forth requirements to protect and preserve cultural and historic resources. The Preserve is not located within any designated scenic area.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: The proposed project site headquartered at 181 Austin Road, Beckwourth is located within the Sierra Valley. The footprint will be enlarged slightly from existing once buildings are constructed. The headquarters buildings and trails will not impact any scenic vista, nor degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. The Sierra Valley is comprised of a large valley surrounded by mountains providing for scenic vistas throughout the entire valley. There are scenic vistas that are able to be viewed from all locations on the Preserve.

The project does not propose removal of any scenic resources, including trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings. The Noble-Bulson house has been stabilized so that visitors can visit the outside of the historic building in its original setting.

Plumas County does not contain any designated state scenic highways however, Plumas County does have scenic roads with design standards designated in the General Plan. The purpose of the

design standards is to maintain and preserve the rural character, representative qualities of historic lifestyles, qualities that attract tourists, and to provide standards for scenic highways.

The scenic corridor for Beckwourth-Calpine Road (A-23) is 100-feet in width from the edge of the highway easement. The development standards for the scenic road are as follows:

1. No off-premise advertising signs.

2. Signs, on-premise only, shall not exceed 6 square feet maximum for residential uses, and 100 square feet maximum area for commercial uses. Signs will not exceed the height of any on-site building roof line. No pennants or flashing lights shall be permitted.

3. Locate transmission and utility lines where they may be concealed by vegetation or topographical features.

4. Establish building exclusion areas within 50 feet from perennial streams or irrigation ditches, measured from the top of the bank.

5. Maintain natural topographical features within public road rights-of-way where it is not a clear and present danger to public health, safety, and welfare.

6. Maintain natural vegetation within scenic corridor areas.

Additionally, within the Conservation and Open Space element of the Plumas County 2035 General Plan is policy COS 7.6.3, *Scenic Roadway Protection*, which states:

> The County shall protect the scenic quality of roadways for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources, landmarks, or points of historic and cultural interest. The Scenic Road standards applied to the development of the property and will apply to any future development.

The proposed project conforms to the requirements set forth by the County's Scenic Road requirements and Plumas County 2035 General Plan Policy COS 7.6.3. The proposed project, as designed, will protect the scenic quality of roadways for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources, landmarks, and points of historic and cultural interest.

It is anticipated that the project would not have any impact on Scenic Resources. Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Aesthetic Resources**.

2. AGRICULTURE/FOREST RESOURCES.

Environmental Setting: Agriculture and forest resource lands comprise a major portion of Plumas County. The total acreage dedicated to agriculture and forest lands are approximately 159,200 acres and 1.4 million acres, respectively. Agriculture has been and is a significant part of the economy in Plumas County. Livestock-raising, hay production, and pasture uses comprise a majority of the agricultural land uses, with the remaining land being used for nurseries, apiary, seed, fruit, potatoes, and grains. Of the approximate 159,200 acres used for agriculture, approximately 109,658 acres are under Williamson Act contracts and Important Agriculture Areas. Agricultural areas throughout the state, and those in Plumas County, may be studied by the California Department of Conservation to determine the land classification under the

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Currently, Plumas County is not mapped under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring program, with the exception of the Sierra Valley.

The project site, with the exception of Assessor Parcel Numbers 025-220-025-000 and 025-220-006-000 are designated Agricultural Preserve and zoned Agricultural Preserve (AP) zoning. Four of these nine parcels are additionally subject to Williamson Act Contracts (Assessor Parcel Numbers 010-030-004-000, 025-220-024-000, 140-070-024-000 and 140-070-025-000).

All lands designated Agricultural Preserve are indicated as Farmland of Local Importance on the Plumas County map prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency.

Agricultural lands are the second largest land use in the county, with forest resources being the first. The 1.4 million acres of forest lands in the county are comprised of private, State, and federal lands. Of those 1.4 million acres of forest land, approximately 1.0 million acres are National Forest System lands. Timber production is the primary forest product generated on private and public lands. Public lands include the National Forests, such as Plumas, Lassen, Toiyabe, and Tahoe.

	Potentially Significant Impact	**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
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 Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement				

methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Conflict with existing zoning for , or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: The project site located at 181 Austin Road, Beckwourth, is located on the western side of the Sierra Valley. As mentioned earlier, the Sierra Valley is mapped under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. However, per the 2018 mapping available from the California Resources Agency, most of the property is defined as "Farmland of Local Importance" and is not "Prime Farmland," "Unique Farmland," or "Farmland of Statewide Importance." Therefore, the project would not involve changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

The project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract. Recreational uses, "but not limited to walking, hiking, picnicking, camping, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, or other outdoor games or sports for which facilities are provided for public participation" is listed as a compatible use under the Plumas County Uniform Rules Governing the Establishment and Administration of Agricultural Preserves, Including Compatible Uses, established by resolution of the Board of Supervisors. These recreational uses are also permitted under the Agricultural Preserve (AP) zoning, subject to the issuance of a special use permit and findings of compatibility by the Plumas County Zoning Administrator.

In addition, there are conservation easements existing or in the works for much of the site. These easements with the Natural Resource Conservation Service will protect the more sensitive areas, such as qualifying wetlands, while allowing continued controlled agricultural use of the properties.

The project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land as defined by Public Resources Code 12220(g). Tree removal for construction would undergo the regulatory processes of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) due to state laws governing tree removal being under the jurisdiction of CAL FIRE. However, the property does not contain any forest land. Therefore, the project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

Feather River Land Trust (applicant) intends to continue to use most of the portion of the Preserve east of the main channel of the Middle Fork Feather River for grazing. As the agricultural use will be continued and mandatory reporting regarding the Williamson Act contracts will be submitted to Plumas County, it is unlikely there will be other changes in the existing environment that could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

COS

7.1.4 Conservation Easements

> The County shall encourage private and public conservation easement programs that protect natural resource and open space lands that generate economic returns to the landowners along with continued resource production, in exchange for permanent protection of natural resource and open space values.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Agriculture and Forest Resources.**

3. AIR QUALITY.

Environmental Setting: Plumas County's topography greatly influences its climate, which results in disproportionate levels of precipitation throughout the County. More commonly known as the rain shadow effect, this condition is created by the Sierra Nevada Crest which acts as a barrier to storm systems between the western and eastern portions of the County. Consequently, while the western side of the Sierra Nevada Range receives over 90 inches of rain annually, areas east of the Sierra Crest receive only 11 inches, with the majority occurring from October to April. Throughout the year, average temperatures, as measured at Portola, can range over 80 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) during the summer months to 18 °F during the winter months.

Plumas County is located within the Mountain Counties Air Basin, which is a relatively large air basin located entirely within the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) regulates air quality conditions within the Mountain Counties Air Basin. Plumas County is in attainment or unclassified for all federal Ambient Air Quality Standards (AAQS). However, the Greater Portola Area has been designated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a federal "non-attainment" area for $PM_{2.5}$, which consists of dust/particulate matter 2.5 microns in diameter or smaller. This means that air pollution exceeds National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$). As a result, the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District issues both outdoor and indoor wood burning prohibitions, which includes wood stoves, fireplaces, fire pits and cookstoves. EPA certified wood burning devices are exempt from this prohibition. The City of Portola also has an ordinance prohibiting open burning of yard waste within the city limits.

Plumas County is currently designated as non-attainment for $PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10} based on state standards administered by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Recorded trends are likely to continue because the primary causes of PM_{10}, such as road dust and wildfires, are not expected to decrease. These designations are based on annually collected data from three air quality monitoring stations located in the County; in Chester, Quincy and Portola. The County's largest sources of particulate matter are unpaved road dust, prescribed burning and residential fuel. Primary activities contributing to these pollutant emissions include wildfires, use of woodstoves, forestry management burns, residential open burning, vehicle traffic, and windblown dust. The varying topography of the air basin also contributes to localized air quality issues within the valley areas.

The NSAQMD has adopted various rules to control air pollution. A requirement for a dust control plan will be made a condition of approval for the special use permit.

Sensitive receptors are locations where individuals are more sensitive to the adverse effects of pollutants. The sensitivity to air pollution can be caused by health problems, prolonged exposure to air pollutants, or an increased susceptibility due to factors such as age. Sensitive receptors are considered residences, day care providers, hospitals, schools, elderly housing, and convalescent facilities.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: The project would not obstruct or conflict with the implementation of any known applicable air quality plan. Emissions would be indirectly affected from an increase in vehicle traffic during facility construction and maintenance and from visitors accessing the Preserve site.

The dry, windy climate throughout the County during the summer months creates a potential generation of dust when soil is disturbed. Dust caused by soil disturbance during construction would potentially contribute to the levels of $PM_{2.5}$ for which Plumas County is non-attainment, based on state standards administered by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and federal standards administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Emissions due to construction would be temporary and minimal, and long-term impacts caused by vehicles accessing the Preserve property would also be minimal. In addition, the NSAQMD requires compliance for all public and private construction with Rule 226: *Dust Control* to minimize and control fugitive dust. The NSAQMD also requires a dust control plan for any

project disturbing more than one (1) acre of natural surface area. This will be made a condition of approval of the special use permit.

An email was received from Sam Longmire, APCS, Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District on January 22, 2021 (see Exhibit 6). The District mentions three potential compliance issues:

"1. If any open burning is proposed for vegetation management or disposal, it must be done under the authority of an Air Pollution Permit issued by NSAQMD. The applicant may contact Julie Ruiz of our Portola office (julier@myairdistrict.com or 530-832-0102) for a permit or with questions about open burning.

"2. A Dust Control Plan is required for the disturbance of more than 1 acre of surface. I am attaching a standard template that may be modified to fit the project.

"3. If any diesel generator engine greater than 49 bhp is proposed, the applicant should contact Joe Fish of the NSAQMD regarding the likely need for an operating permit (joef@myairdistrict.com or 530-274-9360x503)."

Plumas County is also designated non-attainment for PM_{10} by the CARB. However, the NSAQMD has not adopted an attainment plan for PM_{10}.

Pollutant concentrations would minimally and temporarily increase during the construction and occasional maintenance of the facility. Increase in vehicle trips may increase emissions slightly from current usage. The recreational facility would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Air Quality**.

4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES.

Environmental Setting: Plumas County encompasses a range of habitat types, many of which influence the water quality and quantity of the Feather River Watershed. These habitats, or vegetation communities, provide food, shelter, movement corridors, and breeding opportunities for a variety of wildlife species, many unique to the Feather River Watershed and the larger Sierra Mountain region. Conifer, including Mixed Conifer, habitat types comprise approximately 72% of land coverage in the County and are habitats commonly found at higher elevations. Plants characteristic of this habitat include a variety of pines and firs. The common pines and firs begin to disappear as distance is increased from the higher elevation Sierra region. The greater distances from the higher elevation Sierra region gives rise to sagebrush, annual grasslands, and the freshwater emergent wetland habitat types more common at lower elevations.

Plumas County and the larger Feather River Watershed area contain aquatic habitats such as small alpine streams, natural ponds, lakes, reservoirs, and rivers. Two types of fisheries found within the County are cold water river/stream species and warm water lake/reservoir species.

Special-status species are plants or animals that are legally protected under the State and/or federal Endangered Species Acts (ESAs) or other regulations, and species that are considered by the scientific community to be sufficiently rare to qualify for such listing. The California Department

of Fish and Game has documented habitat for over 90 different species of special concern in the County. These include several amphibians, such as the red-legged frog, bald eagles, osprey, several mammals, and plant/wildlife species associated with the wetland habitats.

The Plumas Audubon Society conducted wildlife surveys on the Sierra Valley Preserve, consisting of the properties known as the Maddelena, Smith, Noble from 2013-2017. Wildlife surveys conducted in May and June of 2017 consisted of avian point-counts along transects in wetland and upland areas as well as surveys for Virginia Rail and Sora (secretive marsh birds), nest searching, and documenting other wildlife and plant species. The 2017 survey data augments prior years' wildlife diversity and distribution research (see Exhibit 7).

The Sierra Valley Preserve supports a high diversity of wildlife. A total of 98 bird species, 17 mammal species, and 9 species of amphibians, reptiles, and fish have been detected between 2013-2017. Three new species of waterfowl were observed in the Preserve wetlands in 2017 including a pair of Blue-winged Teal, one Clark's Grebe seen throughout the season, and a Common Goldeneye. Of the birds, twenty-six (26) species have been confirmed as breeding on the Preserve and at least an additional thirteen (13) species are probable breeders, with a high likelihood of breeding on the Preserve, not yet directly confirmed.

While surveying for birds on the Preserve in 2017, a number of other wildlife species were noted including Pronghorn antelope, mule deer, coyote, and jackrabbit, as well as ten (10) species of butterfly.

Wildlife habitats were classified based on plant groupings identified during a botanical survey and include: Wet meadow, Wetland, Sagebrush, Grassland, and Alkali.

Based on the survey results, stewardship recommendations were provided to help conserve wildlife populations and their habitats that are compatible with the Feather River Land Trust's management priorities for the Preserve. Stewardship recommendations in past year's reports, as continued into the existing report, include expanding and enhancing the riparian-wetland area, preserving historic features "as-is", developing resource-compatible public access, and interpretation of the wildlife diversity and habitats found on the Preserve. Recommendations include habitat enhancements including cottonwood planting, raptor perches, nest boxes, owl burrows and grazing management that leads to improved vegetation structure and ground cover diversity.

While not mitigations, these recommendations will be incorporated into the project, resulting in protection and enhancement of Biological Resources.

The impact discussion is taken directly from the Survey report.

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

Impact Discussion:
The following Plumas County 2035 General Plan policies apply to the project:

COS
7.2.1 Habitat Protection

The County shall protect areas that have significant habitat and wetland values, including riparian corridors, wetlands, grasslands, and creeks and rivers, from incompatible rural development. The County shall also support their protection as a method to provide carbon sequestration for GHG emissions under applicable State programs.

COS
7.2.2 Species and Habitat Avoidance

The County shall require new development projects to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to threatened, rare, or endangered species and critical, sensitive habitat, as defined by appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, through proper project location and design. In the event that avoidance is not feasible, the County shall require a "no-net-loss" of these sensitive natural plant or habitat communities. Wildlife habitat will be preserved and managed in a manner that will not lead to the listing of additional species as threatened and endangered or negatively impact listed threatened or endangered species.

COS
7.2.6 No Net-Loss of Wetland Habitats

The County shall require new development that is subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act to achieve a "no-net-loss" of wetland habitat through avoidance or appropriate mitigation in consultation with the appropriate resource protection agencies.

COS
7.2.12 Habitat Protection and Monitoring

The County shall continue to cooperate with land trusts, organizations, and local, State, and Federal agencies to ensure that adequate on-going protection and monitoring occurs within or adjacent to sensitive habitat areas.

COS
7.2.17 Private Land Management

The County shall support private land owners or organizations that acquire land in order to provide habitat protection for the maintenance of sensitive habitats and/or rare, threatened, or endangered plant/wildlife species.

The project would not have a substantial adverse impact, directly or indirectly, on any species, habitat, or community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The project is not anticipated to have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands.

The project is not expected to interfere substantially with any migratory fish or wildlife species, wildlife migration corridors, or native wildlife nursery sites due to the location and nature of the project.

The project is not expected to conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, or with any provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan due to none of those plans existing on or near the project site.

The following Stewardship recommendations are incorporated into the management strategies for the Preserve. While not mitigations, these recommendations will be incorporated into the project, resulting in protection and enhancement of Biological Resources.

Species designated as "Threatened" by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are protected under the California Endangered Species Act. These species have been determined to be threatened with extinction and/or experiencing a significant decline in the state. Sandhill crane *(Antigone canadensis),* Swainson's Hawk *(Buteo swainsoni),* and Bank Swallow *(Riparia riparia)* are classified as Threatened in California and have been found in the Preserve.

Recommended management strategy for Sandhill crane:
Survey vegetation around all wetland channels for presence of native marsh grasses needed for nesting materials and foraging with young. Consider marsh and shore habitat restoration initiatives to promote more viable habitat for Sandhill cranes.

Recommended management strategy for Swainson's hawk:
Install raptor perches and restore cottonwood stands to the Preserve to provide nesting habitat for Swainson's hawk.

Avian disturbances were recorded during avian count surveys. Repeated disturbances were observed near the boat launch on the Noble property, which is currently not open to the public. A man-made irrigation or drainage ditch created a narrow channel that allows access to the open wetland waters. This channelized area was subject to repeated flooding and in turn created a zone of mudflats along the northern edge that appeared to be supporting a large number of species. The mudflats were observed to have constant activity, similar to the northern end of the Smith channel, beyond the dam. Many birds, sometimes dozens, were observed on every occasion when kayaking into this channel.

Mudflats are extremely productive areas for invertebrates and provide rich foraging grounds for shorebirds or wading birds. Resident species including Black-necked stilts, Willets, and White-faced Ibis did not appear as easily disturbed or willing to leave the area when kayaks move through. Waterfowl on the other hand, such as pairs of ducks including Northern Pintails, Mallards, and Cinnamon Teals were readily disturbed, and flew off as soon as an intruder was sighted. However, the same species, possibly even the same pairs, were found repeatedly in the area, indicating site fidelity as they continued to stay even after being flushed by kayak multiple times during the nesting season.

The anticipated increased recreational use of the Preserve, particularly canoeing and kayaking, should be balanced with potential impacts to wildlife by limiting access to specific trails and waterways.

Public Access strategies:

1. Limit boating tour size (number of boats, participants) and frequency. No more than one tour per week with fewer than approximately five kayaks at one time in order to limit number of disturbances on a site, nest or nester is recommended.
2. If the Noble boat launch is to be open to the public or used for donor tours, it is recommended that multi-day use or repeated access in the same day to the same area is not allowed as this access channel is very busy with birds. It can, however, sustain light use for research or for recreational purposes.
3. It is recommended that use be switched between the Maddelena access and the Noble launch when conducting tours. Switching authorized boating access between these east and west side launch areas may allow two weeks between boating disturbances in one area. If planning to allow public access on the Noble side, it is recommended to open this access on weekdays only, early in the breeding season, as to be less intrusive during the early nesting period.

Restoring native wetland habitat involves restoring the area's hydrology with the establishment of micro- and macro-topography across the wetland landscape. The topographic complexity creates a diversity of water regimes, or hydro-periods, which can help to establish more diverse vegetation, increase water quality, and provide flood storage-creating a variety of habitats. The most activity or avian observations during point-count surveys in the Preserve were recorded within shallow ponds, channel edges, and mudflats. Shallow ephemeral wetlands house an abundance of aquatic invertebrates, which provide a critical food source for shorebirds or wading birds. Shorebirds will utilize wetland habitats with water depths from 0-3 inches and will rarely forage in water depths greater than 6 inches. These same shallow basins provide important invertebrate forage for waterfowl, therefore supporting a large number of species found within the Preserve.

Restoration strategy for alkali/mudflats:

Healthy shorebird and waterfowl habitat in the Preserve includes areas of receding water with large area-to-depth ratio, or flat side slopes, creating seasonally flooded mudflats. In a wetland restoration plan that enhances variety in topography, maximize areas which provide conditions from mudflats through 3 inches deep during spring and late summer.

The Sierra Valley Preserve provides a significant opportunity for conserving and enhancing an intact sagebrush ecosystem that is less common than generally perceived. Healthy sagebrush habitat is declining across the region due to history of development, over-grazing, introduction of invasive species, and wildfire.

The survival of shrublands and native grasses is at risk while being rapidly replaced by exotic annual grasses and other invasive species after disturbances such as over-grazing. Aggressive invasive non-native grasses including bulbous bluegrass and cheatgrass were found in the Preserve.

Invasive species strategies, grasses:

1. Disturbance promotes bulbous bluegrass, so avoid overgrazing and other disturbances that reduce vigor of native vegetation on Preserve uplands.
2. Consider targeted removal of bulbous bluegrass, and others, with non-chemical control methods before further encroachment across the Preserve. Weeding by hand-removal provides an opportunity for a community engagement program with volunteer stewardship and environmental education components.
3. Cheatgrass was not observed in ubiquitous swaths across the uplands and can be targeted for manual removal. According to the California Invasive Plant Council, cheatgrass is not competitive with well-established perennials, particularly grasses. Biological control by restoring native perennials is a cost-effective and ecologically safe method that can be employed after cheatgrass is removed by other control methods.

European Starlings *(Sturnus vulgaris)* were seen nesting in the historic Bulson house, carrying nesting materials and later carrying food to their nestlings into multiple holes on the house in May. On June 14, 2017, 35 to 40 starlings were seen on or flying around the house. Localized starling populations can quickly outcompete native species for food sources. Starlings utilize cavities for nesting, and compete with native cavity-nesting birds such as kestrels, bluebirds, and swallows for these nesting opportunities. The Sierra Valley Preserve has few existing cavities to support this nesting strategy.

Invasive species strategy, European Starlings:
Consider manual removal and termination of starling eggs or nestlings. Nest-box traps may be used near the Bulson house to remove nesting starlings before they successfully propagate, although traps must be closely monitored for capture and release of native species also using the area such as kestrels.

The Plumas Audubon Society report on Sierra Valley Preserve Avian Surveys and Stewardship Recommendations 2017 (Exhibit 7) also contains numerous long-term recommendations regarding impacts from Climate Change which are not discussed in this document.

Although there may be potential impacts from the increased public use of the Preserve, no substantial adverse impacts were identified. Protection strategies and access strategies are incorporated into the project. In addition, site specific biological and botanical surveys will take place before any disturbance or construction of public access trails and facilities takes place. Wildlife and Habitat Assessments for the proposed Bluff Trail extension, Jenner Memorial, and Marshall Parcel projects on Sierra Valley Preserve, prepared by Hardy Conservation, Paul Hardy, M.S., Wildlife Biologist is included as Exhibit 22. Site specific recommendations have been incorporated into the siting of various components of the project. Monitoring will take place as a component of the site specific studies.

Monitoring of the effectiveness of these strategies will be undertaken by the Feather River Land Trust as part of the Project. Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Biological Resources**.

5. CULTURAL RESOURCES.

Environmental Setting: The cultural resources located throughout Plumas County can be attributed to the rich history of the county. The history of Plumas County begins from the time that the glaciers began to recede from the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountain ranges. Due to the glacial recession, for thousands of years, humans have been utilizing the Sierra and Cascade ranges.

The primary inhabitants of the county prior to European settlement were the Mountain Maidu. The Mountain Maidu people have lived in Plumas County from hundreds to thousands of years ago, and still live here. Other tribes, such as the Washoe and the Paiute most likely utilized the area while not settling permanently. It is likely that the Mountain Maidu people existed in small, scattered, familial groups in the valleys of Plumas County. While maintaining permanent villages in the lower elevations of the glacial valleys, during spring and fall, smaller groups traveled to the higher elevations, such as the to the ridge tops and valleys of the Sierras, setting up open brush shelters. During the winter months, villages remained occupied and relied mostly on stored and preserved food.

In the spring of 1850, gold-seeking miners poured into the region in search of the fabled "Gold" Lake. Mining camps throughout the County were quickly established. Rivers were turned from their beds, ditches were dug to bring water from distant sources to the diggings, and the land was turned upside down.

The Mountain Maidu adapted to the changing environment by living on portions of ranch properties. In some cases the Mountain Maidu adopted the name of the ranching family associated with the ranch on which they resided. European settlers brought illnesses the Maidu had never been exposed to, causing a significant decline of the Maidu population.

One of the larger groups to settle in Plumas County during the Gold Rush years were the Chinese. After the decline of the mining industry in Plumas County around the 1900s, most of the Chinese population left the area.

The North, Middle, and South forks of the Feather River were named in 1821 by Captain Luis Arguello as the Rio de las Plumas ("River of Feathers") after the Spanish explorer saw what looked like bird feathers floating in the water. "Plumas", the Spanish word for "feathers", later became the name for the county. The river and its forks were the primary sites of early mining activity, with many smaller camps located on their tributaries. Over the next five decades, gold mining remained the main industry of the county.

Ranching operations in the area also began during the Gold Rush years, with several large ranches established in the valleys of Plumas County. Dairies provided milk, butter, and cheese to the gold fields and later provided dairy products to the silver mining operations in northern Nevada. Many of the Swiss and Italian families who settled and worked the local meadows and valleys have third and fourth generations living and ranching their agricultural lands in the county today.

In 1850, the famous mountain man James P. Beckwourth, discovered the lowest pass across the Sierra Nevada and the following year navigated a wagon trail for California-bound emigrants from western Nevada, through Plumas County, to the Sacramento Valley.

In March of 1854, Plumas County was formed from the eastern portion of Butte County. After a heated election, the town of Quincy was selected as the county seat. In 1864, a large part of northern Plumas County was split off to form Lassen County. Shortly after, a portion of Sierra County was annexed to Plumas County, which included the mining town of La Porte.

After the construction of the Western Pacific Railroad in 1910, the timber industry emerged as the primary economic force in the county. Before the railroad, lumber was milled for local use. The completion of the railroad gave the ability for local mills to distribute their lumber nationwide. In March, 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt established the Plumas National Forest, with boundaries roughly encompassing the branches of the Feather River.

Along with the railroad's construction, up the Feather River Canyon came some of the earliest tourists to the county. Resorts and lodges popped up at intervals along the "Feather River Route" to accommodate fishermen, hikers, and sightseers. The last passenger train ran in 1970, and the line is now devoted to freight traffic only. In 1937, the Feather River Highway, touted as an "all weather route," was completed through the Feather River Canyon from Oroville to Quincy, linking Plumas County year-round to the Sacramento Valley. The railroads that were once utilized as a main source of transportation in the county have left a legacy of notable bridges and other railway features throughout the county.

DZC Archaeology and Cultural Resource Management (DZC) conducted a Phase I survey on June 11, 17, and 18, 2019 at two prescribed locations: the Noble-Bulson ranch property and the Marshall ranch property. The survey area for the Noble-Bulson property consisted of the proposed route for a new ADA trail, outlook and trail extension.

	Potentially Significant Impact	**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☒	☐

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

Impact Discussion:
DZC Archaeology and Cultural Resource Management (DZC) conducted a Phase I survey on June 11, 17, and 18, 2019 at two prescribed locations: the Noble-Bulson ranch property and the Marshall ranch property. The survey area for the Noble-Bulson property consisted of the proposed route for a new ADA trail, outlook and trail extension. The ADA trail will include the construction of an ADA compliant parking lot and loop south to an outlook. The ADA trail will include the construction of an ADA compliant parking lot located immediately southwest of the Bulson farmhouse. The ADA trail will extend east from the parking lot and loop south to an outlook. The ADA trail will utilize an existing historical berm and involve minimal restoration and mechanical sagebrush vegetation removal in order to construct the trail. The extension will loop west from the ADA compliant trail and traverse a dirt path that will loop back towards the Noble-Bulson House primarily following the natural topography of the area. The trail extension will require minimal mechanical sagebrush vegetation removal and will be constructed within a corridor that will be approximately 5 to 7 feet wide. In order to provide flexibility in the trail design, DZC archaeologists surveyed a 30-meter wide corridor in 10-meter transects along the proposed trail centerline.

The survey area for the Marshall property consisted of approximately 33 acres that encompassed the house, the work yard, and the western and northern fields. The Feather River Land Trust Preserve headquarters is proposed to be located in this area. In order to provide flexibility for the Preserve headquarters buildings and facilities, DZC surveyed the entire 33 acres in 10-meter transects.

The Archaeological survey results are confidential, but the Management Recommendations are included here. Site specific cultural resource surveys will again take place along trail alignments. Prior to construction of the facilities, monitoring by qualified individuals will occur during brush removal up until construction.

Management recommendations
Several new resources were identified as part of the survey efforts completed on June 11th, 17th and 18th, 2019. Management recommendations include realignment of the proposed trail corridor on the Noble-Bulson property to the south and downslope. Management recommendations for one of the newly identified resources on the Marshall property includes avoidance if possible. Another newly identified site on the Marshall property is located within the boundaries of the ranching complex. The prehistoric component of this site has been highly disturbed, with the majority of the prehistoric constituents no longer being in their original context. However, it is possible that an intact subsurface deposit exists at the site. As a result, additional testing is also recommended at this site prior to any ground disturbance.

In general, it is best to avoid cultural resources whenever possible. In cases of inadvertent (unplanned) discovery of cultural resources during construction, it is recommended that work stop in that area until a qualified archaeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the find.

The project area is not known to contain any human remains and the disturbance of human remains is unlikely as it is unlikely that human remains are located within the proposed project area. However, in the unlikely event that project construction reveals human remains, per Health and Safety Code 7050.5, no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code 5097.98. The Coroner must be notified within 24 hours. If the Coroner determines that the remains are not historic, but are pre-historic, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) must be contacted to determine the most likely descendent for this area. Once the most likely descendent is determined, treatment of the Native American human remains will proceed pursuant to Public Resources Code 5097.98. The Native American Heritage Commission may become involved with decisions concerning the disposition of the remains.

The Management Recommendations have been submitted as part of the Project and will be implemented through the special use permit Conditions of Approval. Site specific cultural resources surveys are anticipated to occur prior to construction. Therefore, there would be ***less than significant impact*** to **Cultural Resources.**

6. ENERGY

Environmental Setting: The main source of energy production and use in Plumas County is for electricity. Depending upon the location in Plumas County, electricity may be provided by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative, Liberty Utilities, or Sierra-Pacific Power.

Located within Plumas County are 13 power plants, which produce about 666 megawatts (MW) of electricity as of September 2009. The facilities include one biomass plant, one oil/gas plant, and eleven hydroelectric plants. Energy consumption in Plumas County is almost entirely electricity use because there are no natural gas service lines within the County, although some residents and businesses use propane tank services. In 2007, the total non-residential consumption was 109 megawatt-hours (MWh) and residential consumption equaled 105 MWh for a total of 214 MWhs. This is a decrease from 2006 when the total electricity consumption in the County was 224 MWhs. The lower consumption in 2007 was driven by a fall in nonresidential consumption. Therefore, in Plumas County the total supply of electricity produced in the County exceeds the demand for electricity. Potential for additional hydroelectric power generation in Plumas County may be limited because of the 30 megawatt capacity limit for "small" hydroelectric plants and the requirement that the water travel through existing man-made conduits. The County does have potential for additional solar energy production. According to the California Energy Commission staff paper California Solar Resources, the photovoltaic potential of Plumas County is estimated to be 71,626 megawatts.

A report from the Center for Economic Development indicates that Plumas County has very little potential for large scale geothermal production. Plumas County's greatest asset for renewable energy production lies in the County's forests, where bio-fuels proliferate and where vegetation management for forest fire hazard reduction has potential to create an ongoing source of fuel for power generation plants.

Other types of energy consumption in Plumas County are through the use of propane, heating oils, and other petroleum fuels. Propane and heating oils are used as a significant source of heat and are

provided by companies such as Suburban Propane, High Sierra Propane, and Hunt & Sons, Inc. Other petroleum fuels include gasoline and diesel used for the operation of equipment and vehicles.

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

Impact Discussion: The project consists of the establishment of the public recreational component of the Sierra Valley Preserve. Minimal construction and development is proposed. Therefore, there would be ***no impact*** to **Energy.**

7. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Environmental Setting: Geologic hazards pose a potential danger to property and human safety and are present due to the risk of naturally occurring geologic events and processes affecting human development. The Lake Almanor Fault, Butt Creek Fault Zone, Indian Valley Fault, and the Mohawk Valley Fault are four of the several faults mapped by the California Geologic Survey in Plumas County. In addition, the County is surrounded by faults; two of the closer, more active faults are the Honey Lake and Fort Sage Faults. Although the County is surrounded by and contains faults, the County is not located within a delineated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. Although the faults located within and around the county have the potential to result in seismic activity causing an impact on County residents and property, seismic hazard mapping indicates a low seismic hazard potential for Plumas County.

While Plumas County contains varying soils types, the majority of the County consists of denser granular soils and bedrock at shallow depths, therefore, liquefaction potential is considered low.

The County is located in an area with varying topography and slopes. Areas with steep slopes in the County could be prone to landslides, mud slides, and avalanches. Landslides are dependent on slope, geology, rainfall, excavation, or seismic activity. Mud slides are often caused by heavy

rainfall. Areas that have recently been subject to wildfire are susceptible to mudslides. Avalanches consist of a rapid flow of snow down a slope. They often reoccur in the same areas and can be triggered by varying weather patterns and human activity. The volcanic soils in the eastern portion of the Plumas National Forest and the areas along the North and Middle Forks of the Feather River are susceptible to landslides.

The rate of erosion is influenced by a myriad of variables, such as rainfall, runoff, slope gradient, vegetation, physical soil characteristics, and human activity. Human activities, such as timber harvesting, water diversion, irrigation practices, road and railroad construction, grazing, and mining have all contributed to in-stream water quality issues, such as sediment transport, that impact aquatic life and riparian vegetation. Approximately 70% of the County is considered as having a moderate potential for soil erosion, while less than 1% is considered a high potential for soil erosion. The remaining portion of the county is either considered low erosion potential or is not mapped. High erosion potential occurs at higher elevations in the County.

Expansive soils change due to the moisture content within the soil. Expansive soils shrink when dry and expand or swell when wet. The swelling and shrinking can cause damage to homes, foundations, roads, utilities, and other structures. The California Building Code and Uniform Building Code (1994) Table 18-1-B both set forth the classifications of expansive soils. The expansion index ranges from 0 to 130, with 0-20 being a very low potential expansion, 91-130 being a high expansion potential, and greater than 130 being a very high expansion potential. Highly expansive soils are undesirable for use as engineered fill or subgrade directly underneath foundations or pavement and must be replaced with non-expansive engineered fill or require treatment to mitigate their expansion potential.

A "Geotechnical Engineering Report, Sierra Valley Preserve Visitor Center, 181 Austin Road, APN 025-220-025, Beckwourth, Plumas County, California, February 13, 2020" prepared by NV5 was submitted for the project (Exhibit 8).

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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.	☐	☐	☐	☒
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☐	☒
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☐	☒
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	☐	☐	☐	☒

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: A "Geotechnical Engineering Report, Sierra Valley Preserve Visitor Center, 181 Austin Road, APN 025-220-025, Beckwourth, Plumas County, California, February 13, 2020" prepared by NV5 was submitted for the project (Exhibit 8).

The project consists of the establishment of the public recreational component of the Sierra Valley Preserve. Minimal construction and development is proposed at the public access locations and Preserve Headquarters.

Groundwater was encountered in a test pit at 10 feet below ground surface. The Geotechnical Engineering Report contains recommendations to reduce the potential for perched groundwater to collect in crawlspaces, cause moisture migration through concrete slabs on-grade, cause degradation of asphalt concrete pavements, and contribute to frost heave and other adverse conditions. The site otherwise is suitable for proposed development using conventional earthwork grading and foundation construction techniques. No highly compressible or potentially expansive soil conditions were encountered.

The Geotechnical Engineering Report indicates that the project is located in a potentially active seismic area. The potential risk of fault rupture is based on the concept of recency and recurrence. The more recently a particular fault has ruptured, the more likely it will rupture again. The California State Mining and Geology Board defines an "active fault" as one that has had surface displacement within the past 11,000 (Holocene). Potentially active faults are defined as those that have ruptured between 11,000 and 1.6 million years before the present (Quaternary). Faults are generally considered inactive if there is no evidence of displacement during the Quaternary period.

According to the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, the project is not located near active faults.

However, geologic maps referenced in the Report show several active and potentially active faults located near the project site, including the Mohawk Valley Fault Zone (active, approximately 11 miles southwest), the Last Chance Fault Zone (potentially active, approximately 17 miles east), the Honey Lake Fault Zone (active, approximately 20 miles northeast), the Polaris Fault (active, approximately 22.5 miles south-southeast), the Dog Valley Fault (active, approximately 27 miles southeast), and the Grizzly Valley and Hot Springs Fault Zone (pre-Quaternary, on or near the site). Earthquakes associated with these faults may cause strong ground shaking at the project site.

Primary hazards associated with earthquake faults include strong ground motion and surface rupture. No faults are mapped as crossing or trending towards the site; therefore, the potential for surface rupture is considered low, according to the Geotechnical Engineering Report.

"Secondary seismic hazards include liquefaction, lateral spreading, and seismically induced slope instability.

"Liquefaction is a phenomenon where loose, saturated, granular soil deposits lose a significant portion of their shear strength due to excess pore water pressure buildup. Cyclic loading, such as that caused by an earthquake, typically causes an increase in pore water pressure and subsequent liquefaction. Based on the results of our subsurface investigation, near-surface soil at the site consists of medium dense to very dense granular soil and hard fine-grained soil types. This soil profile will have a low potential for liquefaction."

"Lateral spreading is the lateral movement of soil resulting from liquefaction of subadjacent materials. Since we anticipate that there is a low potential for liquefaction of soil at the site, the potential for lateral spreading to occur is also considered low."

"Slope instability includes landslides, debris flows, and rockfall. No landslides, debris flows or rockfall hazards were observed in the project area. Due to the gentle topography of the site and general surrounding area the potential for slope instability is considered low."
Therefore, no impacts resulting from landslides are anticipated.

Although Plumas County is considered to have a low seismic and liquefaction hazard potential, which renders geologic impacts a less than significant risk to people and structures, the proposed project Headquarters buildings will be constructed under building permits issued by Plumas County and will be subject to the California Building Code, including seismic standards.

There is a possibility that site preparation and grading would expose bare soil to the elements causing erosion and stormwater runoff. However, the proposed facility would be built under a building permit and in compliance with all applicable California building codes. Construction buffers and appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) would serve to address possible impacts. Any on-site sewage disposal systems will be constructed to applicable standards for separation from groundwater taking into consideration such factors as permeability of underlying soils, etc. Therefore, the project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality.

As previously mentioned, the proposed project will be located on a parcel that is not on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable or would become unstable as a result of the project and

potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse.

The project would not be located on expansive soil as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code. Although it is not anticipated that the project would be located on expansive soils, the proposed facilities will be installed under building permits and required to meet all the applicable requirements of the California Building Code as adopted by Plumas County.

There are known paleontological resources on the site however, as discussed above under **Cultural Resources**, the Project features have been designed to avoid impacts. There are no unique geologic features located on the property.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no significant impacts*** to **Geology and Soils**.

8. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS.

Environmental Setting: Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are comprised of a variety of gases. Greenhouse gases are: carbon dioxide (CO_2), Methane (CH_4), Nitrous Oxide (N_2O), and fluorinated gases. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the greenhouse gases emitted are approximately 81% carbon dioxide, 10% methane, 6% nitrous oxide, and 3% fluorinated gases. Greenhouse gases, along with other naturally occurring processes, have been shown to have a significant impact on the warming of the Earth. The rise in temperature is due to the greenhouse gases being similar to an adiabatic process or blanket around the Earth. Some of the solar radiation reflected from Earth's surface is absorbed by the gases causing the rate at which radiation is emitted from Earth to decrease.

Greenhouse gases are expelled from a variety of sources. The three largest sources are electricity generation, transportation, and industrial processes. The main emissions that electricity generation, transportation, and industrial processes emit are greenhouse gases, such as CO_2, through the combustion of fossil fuels. According to the EPA, CO_2 emissions, which are the largest portion of greenhouse gases, is emitted by transportation processes and contributes approximately 34% of the carbon dioxide emissions.

To combat greater increases in greenhouse gases, various forms of legislation have been implemented. Some of the major legislative changes were Executive Orders S-3-05 and B-30-15, Assembly Bill (AB) 32, and Senate Bill (SB) 32. The first major piece of legislation that set emissions reduction targets was Executive Order (EO) S-3-05 signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. EO S-3-05 established the target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to below 2000 levels by 2010, 1990 levels by 2020, and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. On September 27, 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law AB 32, also known as the California Global Warming Solutions Act. AB 32 gave authority to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to implement and enforce the targets set forth in EO S-3-05. More recently, in 2015, Governor Brown signed EO B-30-15, which was an expansion of AB 32. The expansion set the goal to have a 40% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030. On September 8, 2016, to further empower CARB to institute regulations to meet the aggressive target set by EO B-30-15, SB 32, also known as the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, was signed into law. To ensure the goals of EO S-3-05 and EO B-30-15 are met, AB 32 established mandatory greenhouse

gas emissions reporting, verification, and other requirements for operators of certain facilities that directly emit greenhouse gases.

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

Impact Discussion: Plumas County is under the jurisdiction of the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD). As discussed in the Air Quality section of this Initial Study, the purpose of the district is to monitor air quality levels and set rules and regulations to limit air pollution. Implementation of the applicable rules and regulations set forth by NSAQMD would limit air pollution to below levels of significance. The proposed project would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, nor does it conflict with any General Plan policy or goal designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**.

9. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS.

Environmental Setting: Throughout Plumas County, a variety of hazardous wastes may exist and can be transported in a variety of ways. Hazardous wastes can be liquids, solids, or gases. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines hazardous wastes as hazardous materials that are discarded, abandoned, or recycled. The EPA groups hazardous wastes in three categories: Listed Wastes, Characteristic Wastes, and Mixed Radiological and Hazardous Wastes. Examples of the most common types of hazardous materials that are routinely transported and used throughout the County are diesel, gasoline, oils, cleaning materials, and propane.

Transportation-related public health and safety issues have the potential to occur along the major thoroughfares of the County. The highest potential for transportation-related incidents exists along the County's main east-west thoroughfare, State Route 70, and along State Routes 36 and 89. The majority of hazardous materials shipped through and within the County consists primarily of petroleum products, such as heating fuels, gasoline, diesel, and propane. The County's railroad corridors, both Union Pacific Railroad and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, are an

additional public safety concern since freight trains also carry bulk containers of hazardous materials such as petroleum.

Locally, the Plumas County Environmental Health Division (EHD) manages the County's hazardous materials management program. The EHD maintains the Hazardous Materials Business Plan and Inventory Program. The program enforces the State "right-to-know" laws passed in 1984 and requires local businesses to provide public access to information about the types and amounts of chemicals being used on their property. Businesses must plan and prepare for a chemical emergency through the preparation of a Hazardous Materials Inventory that is certified annually and an inventory of hazardous updates annually. EHD also regulates the use, storage, and treatment of hazardous wastes and above-ground storage tanks.

Wildland fires are a major hazard in Plumas County. Wind, steepness of terrain, and naturally volatile or hot-burning vegetation contribute to wildland fire hazard potential. The principal ingredients of wildland fires - fuel, topography, and weather - combine to make highly hazardous fire conditions throughout much of the county. Fire protection is categorized in three ways, Local Responsibility Areas (LRA), State Responsibility Areas (SRA), or Wildland Urban Interface Fire Areas (WUIFA). Applicable building standards serve to address potential health and safety impacts within the LRA. Wildland Urban Interface Building Standards (WUIBS) serve to address potential health and safety impacts within a SRA, Local Agency Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, or WUIFA.

Located within Plumas County are three public-use airports: Nervino Airport in Beckwourth, Rogers Field Airport in Chester, and Gansner Airport in Quincy. The airports serve approximately 44,000 operations (takeoffs plus landings) annually. Potential safety issues associated with airports include aircraft accidents and noise impacts to surrounding land uses. Airport operation hazards include the development of incompatible land uses, power transmission lines, wildlife hazards, such as bird strikes, existing obstructions such as timbered hillsides, and tall structures in the vicinity of these airports. Airport safety zones are established to minimize the number of people subjected to noise and potential aircraft accidents through limitations on the type of development allowed around airports. Local Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan zoning regulations provide specific details for the established airport safety zones.

In addition to the airports, the Plumas District Hospital in Quincy, the Indian Valley Health Care District in Greenville, and the Eastern Plumas Hospital in Portola have heliports.

The closest commercial airport is Reno/Tahoe International Airport in Reno, Nevada.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two (2) miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing	☐	☐	☐	☒

	or working in the project area?				
f)	Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g)	Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: Due to the nature of construction and operation of the facility, the routine transport, disposal, or use of hazardous materials is not expected, nor is the facility expected to cause a reasonable foreseeable upset or accident releasing hazardous materials.

However, a memo was received from Plumas County Environmental Health on September 24, 2020 (Exhibit 9) conditionally approving the proposal in regards to drinking water, sewage disposal, and hazardous materials.
"Within 30-days of hazardous materials above reportable quantities being present at the facility, the facility shall submit a Hazardous Materials Business Plan and declare all additional applicable business activities through CERS. Prior to issuing a Hazardous Materials Registration for the facility a CERS submittal must be received by Plumas County Environmental Health, at which time a site inspection will be scheduled to verify submittal actuary and the facility will be invoiced the applicable permit fees. Upon receipt of payment a Registration will be issued to the facility."

There are no schools, existing or proposed, within one-quarter mile of the proposed project site.

Plumas County has a minimal amount of sites considered to be hazardous materials sites pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. The Preserve is not on a site considered to be a hazardous materials site pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

The closest airport to the project site is Beckwourth-Nervino Airport. The Sierra Valley Preserve Headquarters is approximately 1.5 miles from the end of the runway at the airport. The West entrance is approximately 2.5 miles from the runway and the East entrance is approximately 2 miles from the runway. None of the access sites are located within any identified Airport Land Use Compatibility areas as per the Airport Land Use Plan. Therefore, the project would not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area.

Due to the nature and location of the project, the project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. All public access areas are served by adequate roadways that connect with the State highway.

The West entrance and the Sierra Valley Preserve Headquarters are located within the Beckwourth Fire Protection District, which provides structural fire protection. The East entrance does not

appear to be within the boundaries of any District providing structural fire protection. The entire project site is designated as a Local Responsibility Area (LRA) for wildland fire protection.

The project would be subject to all applicable building and electrical standards, which would help protect the public's health, safety, and welfare.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**.

10. <u>HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY.</u>

Environmental Setting: Water quality may be impacted by a variety of factors; one factor is erosion of the earth's soil by natural, physical forces. Erosion is due to, and may be accelerated by, precipitation, running water, and wind. The rate of erosion is influenced by a myriad of variables, such as rainfall, runoff, slope gradient, vegetation, physical soil characteristics, and human activity. Human activities, such as timber harvesting, water diversion, irrigation practices, road and railroad construction, grazing, and mining have all contributed to in-stream water quality issues, such as sediment transport, that impact aquatic life and riparian vegetation. Approximately 70% of the County is considered as having a moderate potential for soil erosion, while less than 1% is considered a high potential for soil erosion. The remaining portion of the county is either considered low erosion potential or is not mapped. High erosion potential occurs at higher elevations in the County.

Flooding can occur in two fashions, the first being naturally due to excessive amounts of water in flood zones and the second is due to inundation by water due to dam or levee failure. Plumas County has been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to determine the locations of the Special Flood Hazard Areas, such as the 100-year flood hazard area. FEMA has identified the seven areas located in, or in the vicinity of, Chester, Greenville, Crescent Mills, Taylorsville, Quincy, Vinton, and the City of Portola as being in the 100-year flood hazard area.

The second means of flooding can occur due to a partial or complete failure of a levee or dam, causing an inundation of water to flood the adjoining regions. There are approximately 28 dams with the smallest being 50 acre-feet and the largest being 1,208,000 acre feet. The dams located within Plumas County that FEMA has identified as having inundation areas are along the North and Middle Forks of the Feather River, Indian Creek between Taylorsville and Antelope Lake, Sierra Valley, and Indian Valley. The inundation areas also closely coincide with the flood zones identified by FEMA.

Most of the property, per the FEMA flood map (source: Plumas County GIS) is located within Zone A, which corresponds with the 100-year flood plain.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
i. Result in substantial 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 off-site;	☐	☐	☐	☒
iii. create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned	☐	☐	☐	☒

	stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or				
iv.	impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d)	In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: There is a possibility that site preparation and grading would expose bare soil to the elements causing erosion and stormwater runoff. However, the proposed facility would be built under a building permit and in compliance with all applicable California building codes. Construction buffers and appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) would serve to address possible impacts. If the project disturbs more than one acre, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be required to be prepared. The project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality. A letter outlining these requirements was received from the California Water Board, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Exhibit 4).

The facility would not deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater due to not utilizing substantial amounts of groundwater.

A "Drainage Narrative" was submitted as part of the project application (Exhibit 11), which evaluated existing conditions, proposed conditions, including storm water runoff and conveyance and design storm flow rates. The Conclusion section reads as follows:
"The proposed project will reduce impervious surfacing and restore disturbed soil areas within the project area resulting in in a roughly 25 percent reduction in runoff from impervious surfaces. Furthermore, the installation of permanent water quality improvements tactics and low impact development strategies will retain and infiltration runoff from the first-flush storm events offering a significant improvement to water quality. While not specifically addressed in this narrative, project proponents anticipate the use of permeable materials in portions of the vehicular and pedestrian areas, which will further reduce runoff and improve water quality. Such improvements where included, will be expanded on in later iterations of the project and will be discussed in detail in a preliminary and/or final drainage report to be prepared concurrent with construction documents."

Upon review, the Plumas County Department of Public Works responded to the Drainage Narrative (Exhibit 12):
"The Department of Public Works requests a submittal of a complete Drainage Plan and Calculations that incorporates the requirements...Once submitted, Public Works staff will conduct an appropriate review and comment. The Department of Public Works does not object to conditionally approving the submittal and approval of a complete Drainage Plan and Calculations provided that the review and approval by the Department of Public Works is completed prior to initiation of grading activities or the issuance of a building permit for new construction."

In P-R Design and Engineering, Inc. response to the comments from the Department of Public Works (Exhibit 13):
"The applicant will submit the Drainage Plan and Calculations at the time of building/grading permit review. Please condition the Special Use Permit accordingly."

There would be no impacts due to substantial flooding or erosion on or off-site as a result of the alteration of drainage on the property. A Drainage Plan and Calculations will be required to be submitted with any building and grading permits. All buildings will be constructed to the flood standards of Plumas County Code.

No stormwater drainage systems are planned or exist near the project site, therefore, capacities would not be exceeded.

Seiche is a possibility for any body of water; a recreational use facility would not increase the possibility of a seiche.

Due to the location and nature of the project, pollutants are not at risk of release due to inundation of the project and the project is not anticipated to conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. The proposed well will be subject to approval of the Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District, a sustainable groundwater district.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Hydrology and Water Quality**.

11. <u>LAND USE AND PLANNING.</u>
Environmental Setting: The predominate land use within Plumas County consists of open space use with a majority of land, approximately 94% of the total County area, dedicated to timberland or other managed resource uses. Consequently, many of these lands are managed for a combination of resource values, including, but not limited to recreation, mining, timber production, agriculture production, and cultural and historic resources. That leaves approximately 6% of the land area for uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, and public service.

Resources, history, and people have all had a significant role in defining Plumas County. Communities originally developed and evolved on the landscape based on proximity to the resources that provided a livelihood. The Mountain Maidu established villages in the valleys of the County where there was shelter from winter storms and access to good hunting and planting gathering sites. Upon arrival and settlement of Europeans in the mid-1800s, towns first grew up

around mining activities, then log mills and later around transportation such as stagecoach and railroad.

The land use pattern across the County today reflects this historical approach to settlement in a time before the automobile. Today many counties and cities across California and the United States are trying to institute smart growth, transient-oriented design, form-based development, and to re-focus their communities into walkable places. Plumas County has, with a few exceptions, maintained its rural character with its compact and walkable communities.

The Land Use Element of the Plumas County 2035 General Plan defines the goals, policies, and implementation measures that will facilitate appropriate growth and development. Between the years of 1981 and 2012, Plumas County encountered an approximate 13% increase in population. In recent years, between 2000 and 2010, Plumas County experienced a 4% decline in population. Although, the California Department of Finance predicts that Plumas County's population growth will be approximately 1% per decade between 2010 and 2050.

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

Impact Discussion: It is not common or expected to have a recreational use facility physically divide an established community. This project is no exception, it will not be located on a parcel that will physically divide an established community.

The project can be seen as one that is designed to protect natural resources and not cause any 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 purpose of the special use permit is to evaluate if the proposed use will result in any conflicts. In order to be approved, a special use permit must be found to be socially, environmentally and economically compatible with the surrounding area.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Land Use and Planning**.

12. MINERAL RESOURCES.

Environmental Setting: Since the 1800s, mineral resources have been a major part of the economy in Plumas County. Gold, copper, aggregate, and silver are some of the mineral resources that have been mined and exported. Although the significance of the mining industry has been declining over the past several decades, gold and copper mining speculation continues to contribute to the County's economy.

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

Impact Discussion: The proposed project is not located in an area with known mineral resources and it is not anticipated that any mineral resources will be discovered during construction.

The project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resources recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan.

Therefore, there would be ***no impact*** to **Mineral Resources**.

13. NOISE.

Environmental Setting: The dominant sources of noise in Plumas County are mobile, related to vehicle (including truck traffic), aircraft and train transportation, to a lesser extent. Common stationary sources in the county include lumber mills and aggregate mining and processing facilities. To a lesser extent, construction sites are also considered a stationary source of short-term, or temporary, noise in the County. Common noise sources within Plumas County are the main roadways, railroads, some stationary activities, and airports.

Traffic contributes to the noise within the County. The primary factors that determine roadway noise levels are traffic volumes, a percentage of heavy trucks and buses on individual roadways,

average vehicle speed, and presence of natural or human-made noise attenuation features such as sound wall and landscaping. Given the predominantly rural nature of the County, roadway noise impacts are those associated with the larger regional, or Statewide, network.

The traffic volumes on County roadways are fairly low, with most roadways experiencing fewer than 3,000 vehicles per year. The 24 hour average decibel (dB) level associated with a majority of the roadways is typically between 65 dB and 70 dB.

The second contributor to noise within the County is the railroad. Plumas County has two active rail lines used by the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF). While both lines are primarily used for freight and local shipping and receiving, a portion of the UPRR line through the Feather River Canyon is recognized as a scenic route, with occasional chartered passenger trains. Daily traffic on the UPRR and BNSF lines in the County consists of a limited number of trains per day. This volume creates minimal noise impacts in terms of frequency.

Stationary noise sources also contribute to the noise throughout the county. One of the temporary, stationary noise sources is construction. First, construction crew commutes and the transport of construction equipment and materials to construction sites would incrementally increase noise levels on access roads leading to the sites. Second, noise would be generated during excavation, grading, and erection of structures. Construction typically occurs in discrete steps, each of which has a distinctive mix of equipment and, consequently, distinctive noise characteristics. These various sequential phases would change the character of the noise generated on each site and, therefore, the noise levels surrounding these sites as construction progresses.

Three public use airports are located in the County: Nervino Airport in Beckwourth, Rogers Field Airport in Chester, and Gansner Field Airport in Quincy. Airport noise caused by aircraft depends primarily on the type of aircraft and the frequency and direction of flights, with specific noise events caused by aircraft flyovers, takeoffs, and landings. Noise from aircraft warming up early in the morning can also be a significant noise source from airports. In addition, helicopter related noise is common due to helipads being located at Rogers Field Airport, Gansner Field Airport, in Greenville, and at Plumas District Hospital.

	Potentially Significant Impact	**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
Would the project result in:				
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the	☐	☐	☒	☐

	local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?				
b)	Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c)	For a project located within an airport land use plan area or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two (2) 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: The construction noise resulting from construction of the facility would be temporary. Although Plumas County does not have an ordinance in relation to construction noise, the Plumas County 2035 General Plan does contain policies for construction noise and discretionary projects such as a special use permit.

It is not likely or anticipated that the project will generate or expose people to excessive ground borne vibration and noise levels.

The project does not conflict with any of the provisions outlined in the Plumas County 2035 General Plan or applicable standards of other agencies.

The project access sites and Headquarters are located approximately 1.5 to 2.5 miles from the nearest airport, which would be Beckwourth-Nervino Airport. The project is not located within an airport land use area and would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels

Therefore, the impact to **Noise** is considered ***less than significant.***

14. POPULATION AND HOUSING.

Environmental Setting: Plumas County is considered one of the most rural counties in California. The population, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, was 20,007, giving a population per square mile of 7.8. Plumas County's population is expected to grow annually by 0.7 percent through 2050, according to the California Department of Finance. The gradual increase in population would lead to a gradual expansion of home and business developments while maintaining the rural character of the County.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Displace a substantial number of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: The proposed Sierra Valley Preserve public access and recreational facility would not induce population growth or displace any existing housing.

Therefore, there would be ***no impact*** to **Population and Housing**.

15. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES.</u>

Environmental Setting: Public services are provided by a variety of service providers, including the County, special districts, and state and federal agencies. Special districts include the fire protection districts, school districts, County Service Agencies (CSAs), Community Service Districts (CSDs), and Public Utility Districts (PUDs).

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

Impact Discussion: Population growth is the driving force behind an increased demand on fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, and other facilities. The proposed recreational use facility would indirectly (temporarily) induce population growth due to visitors accessing the site(s) which might cause an increased demand on emergency medical and police protection services. This impact would be seasonal and not year-round as most visitors will be accessing the site in the mild weather months and during the school year.

The Sierra Valley Preserve access points located off A-23 (Beckwourth-Calpine Road) are located within the boundaries of the Beckwourth Fire Protection District. The Feather River Land Trust may wish to pursue obtaining a contract to provide service to the other public areas. There would be a less than significant impact associated with the provision of new services via contract for fire protection services in an area located within that district's sphere of influence.

Therefore, there would be ***less than significant impact*** to **Public Services**.

16. RECREATION.

Environmental Setting: People utilize the various areas around Plumas County for recreation. Recreation areas within the County are public parks, trails, forest lands, lakes, waterways, and other open space areas.

The project is located within the boundaries of the Eastern Plumas Recreation District.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: The project involves the expansion of a public access to wildlife areas and construction of recreation and educational facilities. It will not increase the use of existing parks or other recreational facilities in a manner that would cause physical deterioration to those facilities. The proposed construction and expansion of the Sierra Valley Preserve facilities, as designed, will not have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

Therefore, there would be ***no impact*** to **Recreation**.

17. TRANSPORTATION.

Environmental Setting: The state highway system provides the key inter-community roadway links within Plumas County. East-west access across Plumas County is provided by State Route (SR) 36 in the northern portion of the county and by SR 70 in the central/southern portions of the county, while SR 89 provides north-south access across the county. SR 147 serves the east side of Lake Almanor, while SR 49 and SR 284 provide access south towards Loyalton and north to Frenchman Reservoir in the far east portion of the county. County roads (and city roads in Portola) also provide important access, as do Forest Service roads. In total, there are 1,823 miles of public roadway in Plumas County, including 935 miles of US Forest Service roads, 674 miles of county roadways and 182 miles of state highways.

Due to the relatively dispersed nature of development in Plumas County, traffic congestion is not an issue, with the exception of "bell times" at some school areas and some locations around Lake Almanor during the summer months. SR 70 in Quincy is the busiest highway in Plumas County, with a peak-month, typically August, Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volume of 12,200. Other relatively busy locations are on SR 36 in Chester (7,900 ADT) and SR 70 in Portola (7,800 ADT). Overall, peak month volumes on Plumas County state highways have declined by 12 percent over the last 10 years. The decline has been seen in all regions of the County. Caltrans counts of all trucks countywide have declined by 15 percent since 1992. However, the number of the largest trucks (5 axle and above) has climbed by 45 percent over this same period, particularly along State Route 70.

Public transit is also provided in the county through several deviated fixed-routes. The service carries approximately 54,000 passenger-trips annually and is available to everyone.

Plumas County does not have passenger rail service, but there are two active freight rail operations. Union Pacific Railroad operates a line connecting Roseville, CA to the west with Salt Lake City, UT to the east. Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway operates track from Keddie and along Lake Almanor into Lassen County and Oregon.

While there are no commercial airports in Plumas County, there are three publicly owned airports: Gansner Field in Quincy, Rogers Field Airport in Chester, and Nervino Airport in Beckwourth. As a whole, these airports serve approximately 44,000 operations (takeoffs and landings) annually. In addition to the airports, the Plumas District Hospital in Quincy, the Indian Valley Health Care District in Greenville, and the Eastern Plumas Hospital in Portola have heliports.

While there are many hiking trails in Plumas County, bicycle and pedestrian facilities along main travel corridors and in communities are very limited.

Portola is the only incorporated city located in the County and has a population of approximately 2,000. Portola is located approximately 5.5 miles from the Sierra Valley Preserve.

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

Impact Discussion: A "Trip Generation Narrative" (Exhibit 14) and "Sierra Valley Preserve Project Traffic Analysis and Recommendations" (Exhibit 15) have been submitted for the Project. The discussion below is excerpted from those two documents.

The Sierra Valley Preserve will generate new trips as daily visitors and as participants in educational, experiential, and other special events. There is not an anticipated arrival or departure peak-hour for Daily Visitors. For all other events, there will be anticipated arrival and departure times based upon the programming of the event. The proposed project has outlined existing and projected daily activity as follows:

Existing Daily Usage
Peak Daily Individual Visitor: 30-40 people/day
Average Daily Individual Visitor: 5-15 people/day

Existing Special Events
Typical Event: 30-60 people/day (4 events/year)
School Groups: 30-60 people/day (1-2 buses)
Large Events: 60-100 people/day (3 events/year)

Projected Daily Usage
Peak Daily Individual Visitor: 60-80 people/day
Average Daily Individual Visitor: 15-30 people/day

Projected Special Events
Typical Event: 30-60 people/day (4 events/year)
School Groups: 60-90 people/day (1-3 buses)
Large Events: 100-150 people/day (5 events/year)

Trips Per Day
Existing Event Peak: 64 trips/day
Projected Event Peak: 100 trips/day

Given the remote location of the Preserve from local population centers of Auburn, Truckee, Reno/Sparks and Susanville, it is unlikely that significant day trip visitors from those areas will visit the Preserve, rather than individuals and groups attending events or specific seasonal recreation opportunities like bird watching during spring migration in May. The Sierra Valley is generally busier in the summer months when schools are out and during the outdoor recreation season. It is also expected that as the Sierra Valley Preserve becomes known as a destination site that an increase in pass-by trips will occur as people passing by will elect to stop at the Preserve.

The CALTRANS threshold for determining the need for a traffic study would be based upon the generation of 100 new peak-hour trips. The proposed project is anticipated to generate 100 trips/day during Large Events at a frequency of perhaps 5 Large Events occurring per year. Given the current traffic volume on A-23 (Beckwourth-Calpine Road), no existing Level of Service issues, and the infrequency of Large Events it does not appear that a formal Traffic Study is warranted.

The "Sierra Valley Preserve Project Traffic Analysis and Recommendations", prepared by PR Design and Engineering, Inc. (Exhibit 15) was prepared to quantify the expected trip generation at the Sierra Valley Preserve Visitor Center and to address trip generation and to discuss methods for the management of potential traffic impacts.

Based on the analysis, it is expected that 50% of the trips will come from the North via SR 70 (Quincy-Reno via I-395) and 50% of the trips from the South SR 89 and SR 49 (Truckee/Tahoe and Nevada City). The closest intersection of A-23 (Beckwourth-Calpine Road) and SR 70 is approximately 1.1 miles from the project site. Estimated vehicle peak hour trips and turning movements for each Sierra Valley Preserve entrance intersection are presented in the analysis in Exhibit 15.

Forecasting future traffic patterns, of a unique use, in a rural location is inherently difficult. The project applicant recognizes that some form of traffic planning may be required in the future and is open to developing a plan along with the Plumas County Department of Public Works as an adaptive management measure. The intent of the monitoring plan would be the formal assessment of usage patterns over time to determine if further analysis were needed. The monitoring and/or analysis requirements could either be threshold-based (e.g., tied to increase in traffic volumes) or time-based (e.g., every ten years).

Recommendations include the following as developed with the Plumas County Department of Public Works. These recommendations would be developed ongoing throughout the life of the project and may be conducted independently of the special use permit conditions:

- Sierra Valley Preserve will provide a scheduled event calendar to the Department of Public Works on an annual basis.
- Sierra Valley Preserve will procure all Special Events for the calendar year under one permit *(such as the special use permit).*
- Sierra Valley Preserve will avoid scheduling of a Large Event on a summer Friday.
- Sierra Valley Preserve will obtain a no fee permit from Department of Public Works for Sierra Valley Preserve staff to place "Special Event Ahead" signs as required.
- Sierra Valley Preserve will notify California Highway Patrol and the Sheriff's Department prior to Events.
- Sierra Valley Preserve will collect intersection data no later than five years after the project completion or per request of the Department of Public Works.
- Sierra Valley Preserve will prepare a formal traffic analysis when data collection shows more than 60 trip increase in PM peak hour for a summer Friday.
- Sierra Valley Preserve Site Improvements will include Caltrans standards for the egress and site distance requirements.

The project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system. Implementation of the above recommendations will allow for appropriate management as the project becomes more popular over time. Creation of construction documents after project entitlement will allow for additional technical input from Plumas County Department of Public Works, project team, and area stakeholders prior to final construction.

The Trip Generation from the proposed project does not pose a significant environmental impact. The vehicle miles traveled as a result of the project be less than significant as shown in the analysis and the project would not conflict with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3 subdivision (b).

The project does not entail the development of sharp curves or dangerous intersections and would not increase hazards due to a design feature. Sierra Valley Preserve Site Improvements will include Caltrans standards for the egress and for site distance requirements. All access points will be installed under encroachment permits issued by the Department of Public Works. Therefore, the project would not result in inadequate emergency access.

A "Parking Demand Narrative" was submitted with the project application (Exhibit 16). The analysis in the Narrative has determined the parking demand and determined that the parking needed to implement the project will be able to be provided on the project site without causing any significant environmental impacts.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Transportation**.

18. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES.

Environmental Setting: The cultural resources located throughout Plumas County can be attributed to the rich history of the county. The history of Plumas County begins from the time that the glaciers began to recede from the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountain ranges. Due to the glacial recession, for thousands of years, humans have been utilizing the Sierra and Cascade ranges.

The primary inhabitants of the county prior to European settlement were the Mountain Maidu. The Mountain Maidu people have lived in Plumas County from hundreds to thousands of years ago, and still live here. Other tribes, such as the Washoe and the Paiute most likely utilized the area while not settling permanently. It is likely that the Mountain Maidu people existed in small, scattered, familial groups in the valleys of Plumas County. While maintaining permanent villages in the lower elevations of the glacial valleys, during spring and fall, smaller groups traveled to the higher elevations, such as to the ridge tops and valleys of the Sierras, setting up open brush shelters. During the winter months, villages remained occupied and relied mostly on stored and preserved food.

In the spring of 1850, gold-seeking miners poured into the region in search of the fabled "Gold" Lake. Mining camps throughout the County were quickly established. Rivers were turned from their beds, ditches were dug to bring water from distant sources to the diggings, and the land was turned upside down.

The Mountain Maidu adapted to the changing environment by living on portions of ranch properties. In some cases the Mountain Maidu adopted the name of the ranching family associated with the ranch on which they resided. European settlers brought illnesses the Maidu had never been exposed to, causing a significant decline of the Maidu population.

To help preserve the rich Native American history, such as that in Plumas County, on September 25, 2014, Governor Brown signed Assembly Bill No. 52 (AB 52). AB 52 went into effect on July 1, 2015, and added tribal cultural resources to the categories of cultural resources in the California Environmental Quality Act. According to AB 52, a project has an impact on the environment if it has a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource. A tribal cultural resource is considered significant if it is defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, or 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 listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, in a local register of historical resources, or is a resource determined to be significant pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5024.1 subdivision (c).

	Potentially Significant Impact	**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal				

cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
(i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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 Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: On February 8, 2021, Planning staff mailed, faxed and emailed the notifications as required by Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52) to the contacts shown on the Native American Contact List provided by Nancy Gonzalez-Lopez, Cultural Resources Analyst, Native American Heritage Commission.

It is not anticipated that tribal cultural resources, as defined by Public Resources Code Section 21074 and listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or is determined to be significant pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5024.1 subdivision (c), would be impacted as a result of the construction and use of the facility.

Response was received from the Matthew Hatcher of the Mooretown Rancheria indicating that the Rancheria is not aware of any known cultural resources on the site. If new information or human remains are found, the Rancheria requests contact be made (Exhibit 21).

As discussed under **Cultural Resources,** above, the project has been designed to avoid known historic and prehistoric resources as identified in surveys. However, if any construction were to occur, any unanticipated cultural resources (historic or prehistoric) exposed during ground excavation or ground disturbing activities would cause construction to be terminated immediately until a qualified cultural resources specialist evaluates the resource(s). Any discovered resource(s) that merit long-term consideration will be collected and reported in accordance with standard archaeological management requirements.

This condition will be added to the special use permit

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to any known **Tribal Cultural Resources.**

19. <u>UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS.</u>

Environmental Setting: Utilities that are used within Plumas County are electricity, gas, water, and sewerage. Depending upon the location in Plumas County, electricity may be provided by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative, or Liberty Utilities. The two ways that water and sewer treatment is provided to people in Plumas County are individual on-site systems or through special districts, Community Service Districts (CSDs), and County Service Agencies (CSAs). Propane and heating oils are used as a significant source of heat and are provided by companies such as Suburban Propane, High Sierra Propane, and Hunt & Sons, Inc.

Curbside solid waste services are provided throughout the unincorporated areas of the County by Feather River Disposal, a subsidiary of Waste Management, with the City of Portola and Eastern Plumas County being served by Intermountain Disposal through contracts. Solid waste is transferred to a transfer station by two methods, one being through curbside solid waste service and the other is personally by individuals for their benefit. Solid waste from the five transfer stations located in Plumas County is transferred to Lockwood Regional Landfill in Sparks, Nevada.

There are no special districts in the project area providing water or sewage disposal service.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas,	☐	☐	☐	☒

	or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?				
b)	Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c)	Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d)	Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e)	Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion:

In response to initial comments received from Plumas County Environmental Health, a "Preliminary Technical Report, Sierra Valley Preserve Public Water System", dated July 6, 2020, was prepared by PR Design and Engineering, Inc. and submitted for the project (Exhibit 17).

A memo dated September 24, 2020 was received from Plumas County Environmental Health (Exhibit 9) conditionally approving the proposal in regards to drinking water, sewage disposal, and hazardous materials.

Drinking Water:

The California Water Board, Division of Drinking Water, reviews and approves the creation of a new Public Water System. After approval by the California Water Board, Division of Drinking

Water, Plumas County Environmental Health takes the lead on the construction and operational permitting for the new water system.
"The water system must be designed by a CA Registered Professional Engineer and submitted to Environmental Health. The water system plans must show the layout and materials proposed, along with shop drawings of any bulk water storage tank(s). The plans must be reviewed and approved by Environmental Health prior to any installation or construction. Plans must address the applicable portions of CA Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 4 'Environmental Health', Chapter 16 'Waterworks Standards' and the Plumas County Code, Title 6, Chapter 9 'Water Supply Systems".

"All known existing water wells within the project area lack documentation of a commercial 50 ft sanitary seal. As such, these existing wells are categorically excluded from supplying the drinking water system. Pursuant to the CA Waterworks Standards and Plumas County Code, Title 6, Chapter 8 "Water Wells", the new Public Water System will require the installation of a new commercial drinking water well with a minimum 50 ft deep sanitary seal. The well must be installed under permit issued by Environmental Health, and with the approval of the Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District. The well sanitary seal must extend for a minimum of 50 ft in depth, or to the first confining layer, whichever is greater.

"Once the well is installed, the water from the well must be sampled and shown to meet drinking water standards as defined in the CA Code of Regulations, Title 22 for a Transient-NonCommunity water system. Should the water quality not meet drinking water standards, the installation of water treatment will be required to bring the water quality within the regulatory standards.

"If fire suppression is proposed or required for this project, Environmental Health recommends installing a fire system that is separate from the drinking water system to reduce the potential for water stagnation issues. However, if combined, the drinking water system will require backflow protection."

"Preliminary Fire Water Storage Requirements" dated July 7, 2020 (Exhibit 18) was submitted for the project and analyzes fire suppression and storage requirements for the proposed project. The system(s) will be designed to NFPA 1142 standards and will meet the above criteria as recommended by Plumas County Environmental Health.

In response to comments received from Bret Russell, Chief of the Beckwourth Fire Protection District (Exhibit 19), a letter from PR Design & Engineering, Inc. dated July 28, 2020, was submitted for the project water tank/sprinkler system for fire protection.

"The preliminary size and location of the proposed fire storage reservoir and pump house are shown on the plans. The justification for the proposed water storage volume is based on NFPA 1142 and is described more specifically in the Preliminary Fire Water Storage Requirements document dated July 7, 2020, included with this submittal."

While the project will require the construction of a new water system, there is nothing to indicate that the construction would cause significant environmental effects. The system will be regulated by the CA Water Board, Division of Drinking Water and Plumas County Environmental Health

The Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District must approve the project water well in compliance with District rules and regulations and determine adequacy of supply. Therefore, it is determined that there is adequate water for the project.

Sewage Disposal:
The memo refers to "The Preliminary Design-Onsite Wastewater Treatment System" Section III, Subsection A-"Proposed OWTS-Residential" (Exhibit 20) prepared by PR Design & Engineering, Inc, dated July 6, 2020:
"The existing 1,200-gallon septic tank, if it remains in the current location and is demonstrated to be in good condition, will be sufficient for up to a total of four (4) residence bedrooms, either for a single-family home, or for two (2) smaller homes."

"If not already present, water-tight and vapor-tight tank access risers with lids that terminate above grade must be installed at each septic tank access location. Please retain the existing septic tank lids in place to provide a second level of tank safety.

"If the proposed duplex unit is created, or if separate homes are installed to replace the existing home damaged by a recent fire, each residence unit should be fitted with separate soil pipes that connect directly to the septic tank with their respective "sanitary tee's" in the tank to avoid potential line blockage issues with the adjoining unit.

Section III, Subsection B "Proposed OWTS – Commercial" (Exhibit 20):
"The commercial septic system must be installed under permit issued by Environmental Health as an engineered design. The designing engineer must submit detailed septic system construction plans to Environmental Health for review and approval prior to construction. The designing engineer, or their designee, will be required to witness and document construction of the septic system with field notes and photographs.

"Septic system final approval will be subject to submission of an engineering field note summary with photo documentation, a letter of conformance signed by the designing engineer, and an as-built diagram of the system. Environmental Health is required to conduct on-site inspections during construction, and witness a demonstration of pump and alarm function at final inspection."

The project would result in the construction of a new onsite commercial wastewater disposal system. The system would be constructed under permit from Plumas County Environmental Health.

Due to the nature of the project, solid waste would be generated. County Code mandates regular disposal of commercial solid waste by contract hauler in this case, Intermountain Disposal. There is no indication that this project will generate solid waste in excess of capacity of local infrastructure or will otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Utilities and Service Systems.**

20. **WILDFIRE.**

Environmental Setting: Suppression of natural fires has allowed the forest understory to become dense, creating the potential for larger and more intense wildland fires. Wind, steepness of terrain, and naturally volatile or hot-burning vegetation contributes to wildland fire hazard potential. In reviewing fire threat mapping data provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, it appears that a majority of the County is classified as having a "Moderate" to "High" threat of wildland fire.

More specifically, reviewing Figure 26 from the Plumas County 2035 General Plan shows the location of the proposed project as being located within a Local Responsibility Area or LRA.

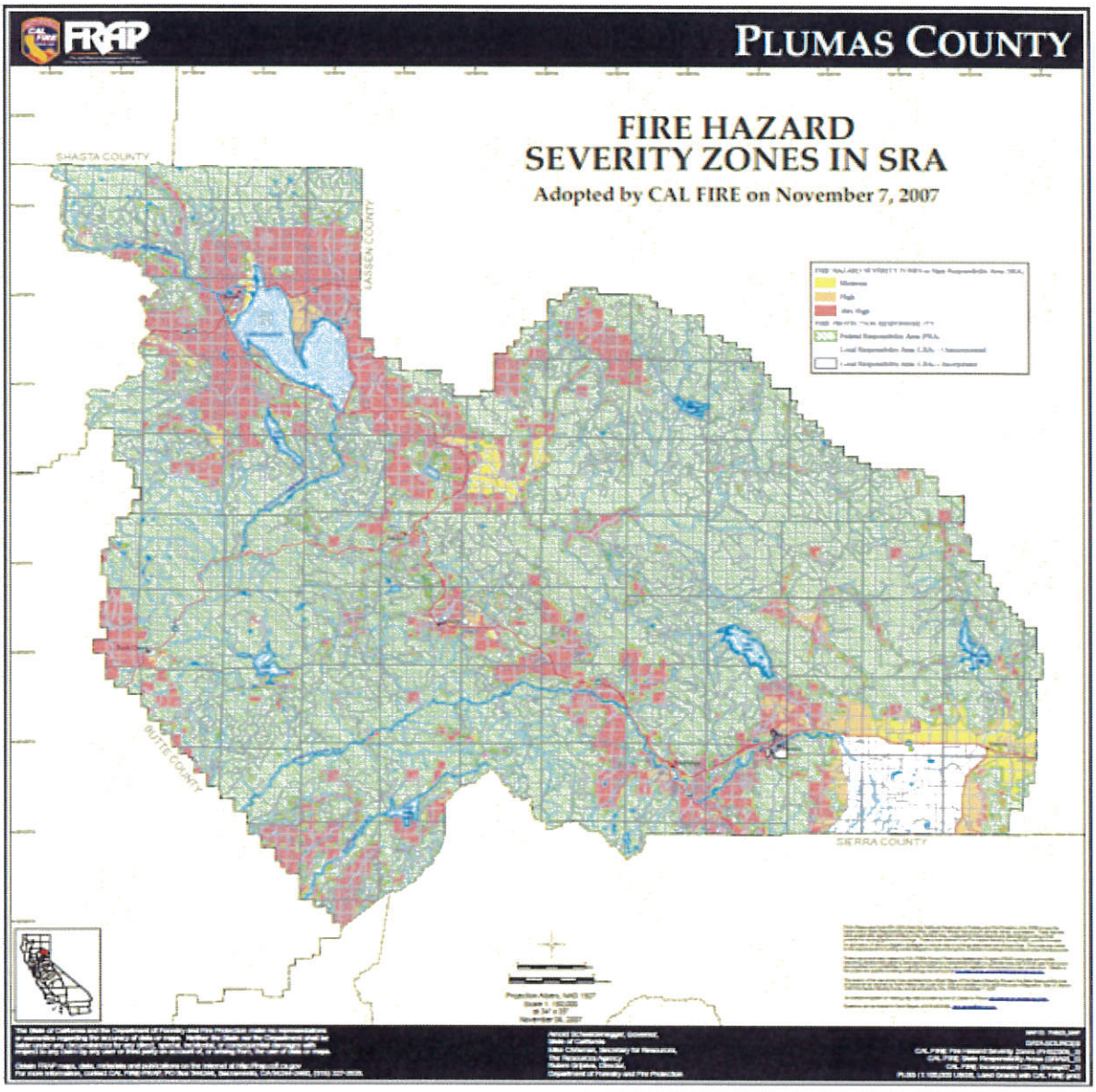

Figure 26. Fire Hazard Severity Zones in Plumas County, CA. Source: Department of Forestry

The Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map is a result of Government Code Section 51178 which requires the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to identify "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones."

The "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones" map is created based on the following criteria, per the "Fact Sheet: California's Fire Hazard Severity Zones" (Exhibit 14):

1. Vegetation – Fire hazard considers the potential vegetation over a 30- to 50-year time horizon. Vegetation is "fuel" to a wildfire and it changes over time.
2. Topography- Fire typically burns faster up steep slopes.
3. Weather- Fire moves faster under hot, dry, and windy conditions.
4. Crown fire potential – Under extreme conditions, fires burn to the top of trees and tall brush.
5. Ember production and movement – Fire brands are embers blown ahead of the main fire. Fire brands spread the wildfire and they get into buildings and catch the building on fire.
6. Likelihood – Chances of an area burning over a 30- to 50-year time period based on history and other factors.

Among the varying intended uses for the Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps, one is to guide building officials in the implementation and application of the wildland-urban interface standards for new construction.

Furthermore, in 2005, the Plumas County Fire Safe Council created the Plumas County Communities Wildfire Protection Plan to provide mitigations to potential threats from wildfire, such as hazardous fuel reduction, defensible space, land use, and building codes. Since 2005, the Plan was updated in 2013 and 2019.

	Potentially Significant Impact	**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:				
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a	☐	☐	☐	☒

wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire?				
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Expose people or structure to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☐	☒

e)

Impact Discussion: The project site is not located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones. It is located within a Local Responsibility Area or LRA. Although the California Fire Safe regulations are currently under review for amendment, Local Responsibility areas are not now subject to the regulations.

The project is served by a paved, maintained state highway with adequate provision for access. The project would not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

Additionally, the project site topography is fairly level and it is anticipated that maintenance of the property's vegetation would be required to ensure maximum efficiency of the facility. It is not anticipated that wildfire risks would be exacerbated causing the project occupants to be exposed to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire.

The project is located on a site with level topography and the project is located in an overall area that has fairly flat and level topography. As a result, people or structures would not be exposed to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding, or landslides as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes.

Therefore, the project would result in ***no impact*** to **Wildfire**.

21. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact Discussion: The analysis from this Initial Study for the proposed project found the project would not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, or threaten to eliminate a plant or animal in compliance with the mitigation measures set forth by the project applicant.

As discussed throughout this Initial Study, the proposed project was analyzed for cumulatively considerable impacts. This Initial Study found that the project would not have a cumulatively considerable impact when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects in compliance with the mitigation measures set forth by the project applicant.

The Initial Study found that the project would not have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly in compliance with the mitigation measures set forth by the project applicant.

EXHIBITS:

1. Special Use Permit application for Sierra Valley Preserve, February 13, 2020; Revision: November 13, 2020-Arkin Tilt Architects and PR Design and Engineering.
2. Plumas County General Plan 2035-General Plan Land Use Designations.
3. Plumas County Zoning map.
4. Comments from California Water Board, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, dated April 8, 2020.
5. Comments received from Plumas-Sierra Counties Agricultural Commissioner, California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection and Plumas County Building Official.
6. Email from Sam Longmire, APCS, Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District, dated January 22, 2021.
7. Excerpt, Plumas Audubon Society, Sierra Valley Preserve: Avian Surveys and Stewardship Recommendations 2017.
8. Excerpt, Geotechnical Engineering Report, Sierra Valley Preserve Visitor Center, February 13, 2020, prepared by NV5.
9. Memo from Plumas County Environmental Health with Division of Drinking Water attachment, dated September 24, 2020.
10. Response letter to Plumas County Environmental Health from PR Design & Engineering, dated July 22, 2020.
11. Drainage Narrative (application).
12. Memorandum from Bob Perreault, Director of Public Works, dated May 4, 2020.
13. Response letter to Public Works from PR Design and Engineering, dated August 31, 2020.
14. Trip Generation Narrative (application).
15. Sierra Valley Preserve Project Traffic Analysis and Recommendations, prepared by PR Design & Engineering, dated August 31, 2020.
16. Parking Demand Narrative (application).
17. Preliminary Technical Report, Sierra Valley Preserve Public Water System, prepared by PR Design & Engineering, dated July 6, 2020.
18. Preliminary Fire Water Storage Requirements, prepared by PR Design & Engineering, dated July 7, 2020.
19. Email from Bret Russell, Chief, Beckwourth Fire Protection District, dated May 4, 2020.
20. Preliminary Design, Onsite Wastewater Treatment System, prepared by PR Design & Engineering, dated July 6, 2020.
21. Letter from Matthew Hatcher, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Mooretown Rancheria, dated February 23, 2021.
22. Wildlife and Habitat Assessments for proposed Bluff Trail, Rebecca Trail extension, Jenner Memorial, and Marshall Parcel projects on Sierra Valley Preserve, dated July 21, 2019, Hardy Conservation, Paul Hardy, M.S., Wildlife Biologist.