

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration  
for the proposed  
Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project: East Pico Blanco Fuelbreak  
Monterey County, California  
State Clearinghouse Number TBD



prepared by:  
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The Lead Agency Pursuant to Section 21082.1 of the  
The California Environmental Quality Act

October 13, 2021

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## MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

### Introduction and Regulatory Context

#### Introduction

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND<sup>1</sup>) describes the environmental impact analysis conducted for the proposed project.

#### Regulatory Guidance

This IS/MND has been prepared by the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) to evaluate potential environmental effects which could result following approval and implementation of the Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative project. This document has been prepared in accordance with current CEQA Statutes (Public Resources Code [PRC] §21000 *et seq.*) and current CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] §15000 *et seq.*).

An Initial Study (IS) is prepared by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR § 15063[a]), and thus, to determine the appropriate environmental document. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15070, a “public agency shall prepare ... a proposed negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration ... when: (a) The Initial Study shows that there is no substantial evidence ... that the project may have a significant impact upon the environment, or (b) The Initial Study identifies potentially significant effects but revisions to the project plans or proposal are agreed to by the applicant and such revisions will reduce potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level.” In this circumstance, the lead agency prepares a written statement describing its reasons for concluding that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). This IS/MND conforms to these requirements and to the content requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15071.

#### Purpose of the Initial Study

The RCDMC has primary authority for carrying out the proposed project and is the lead agency under CEQA. The purpose of this IS/MND is to present to the public and reviewing agencies the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed project and describe the adjustments made to the project to avoid significant environmental effects or reduce them to a less-than-significant level. The IS/MND is being circulated for public and agency review and comment for a review period of 30 days as indicated on the **Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration** (NOI). The 30-day public review period for this project begins on October 13th, 2021 and ends on November 13th, 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> A list and definition of the acronyms and symbols used in this CEQA document is presented on pages 59-61.

## **Project Description and Environmental Setting**

### **Project Location**

The Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project: East Pico Blanco Fuelbreak legal location is in Township 18S, Range 02E(M), sections 30 and 31, Township 19S, Range 01E (M), Section 1. The USGS quadrangles for the project are Big Sur.

### **Background and Need for the Project**

The East Pico Blanco Fuelbreak Project is a Hazardous Fuel Reduction project targeting the northern Santa Lucia Mountains with a shaded fuelbreak treatment, of which the Project will treat 30 acres. The remaining acreage of the Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project is covered under other agencies' review or processes as described in the following section. The Collaborative came together in 2019 to partner on a grant proposal to help protect the Big Sur and Carmel Valley regions of California. With eight active partners and several supporting groups and residents, the Collaborative pooled their needs into one grant proposal to address several issues throughout these areas.

This project is necessitated by the wildfire risk posed to residents living in the Big Sur and Carmel Valley areas of Monterey County. Multiple large wildfires have impacted this region for many decades and the periodicity, intensity and scale have increased in recent years. The Marble Cone Fire in 1977 may be the earliest one many people in the region can remember, and it burned over 177,866 acres, making it one of the largest wildfires in state history. The Kirk Complex in 1999 torched 86,700 acres in the southern Big Sur region. The Basin Complex in 2008 reached 162,818 acres and cost approximately \$120 million dollars to fight. The Soberanes Fire in 2016 burned in much of the same area as the Basin Complex wildfire and it scorched 132,217 acres and cost \$260 million to combat, with one fatality and 57 structures destroyed. In 2020, the Dolan Fire reached 128,050 acres; it overlaps much of the Basin Complex and Kirk Complex fire footprints.

A large portion of this region is hard to access because of the mountainous terrain and many areas do not have roads to reach them. The steep terrain combined with vegetation that has become fire-adapted over many millennia means that wildfire is a natural, if overwhelming, occurrence. As a result, the residents and people who visit here can find themselves in a precarious situation when a wildfire or disaster occurs, as many places in the Big Sur region often have only one road for ingress and egress. If egress is cut off, there are very few options remaining for residents who live in this remote region. This portion of Big Sur also serves as a conduit leading north towards more populated areas, including Carmel Highlands, Carmel Valley Village, Cachagua and other areas. This project will serve to strengthen and enhance the 'Big Box' fuelbreak system on Forest Service lands and the more recent Governor's 35 Priority Projects (2019), with new fuelbreaks established by CALFIRE in the Palo Corona, Palo Colorado and Jamesburg areas. This system of fuelbreaks and treatments will act as a strategic buffer for future wildfires and reduce their intensity and size to manageable levels.

This analysis will focus on a subset of treatments located in the overall Project area. Figure 1 shows the proposed areas under consideration for CEQA analysis. Other areas of the overall Project area have CEQA or NEPA already completed and will not be considered under this analysis.

## Project Objectives

The overall Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project (LPSCFC) will include 541 acres of fuelbreak maintenance and expansion in the northern Los Padres National Forest; 378 acres of prescribed fire management, habitat restoration and invasive plant control in Andrew Molera and Pfeiffer Big Sur State Parks; 280 acres of roadside fuels treatments in Santa Lucia Preserve; 70 acres of shaded fuelbreak creation and fuels modification in the Little Sur River near Pico Blanco; 320 acres of roadside fuels reduction and enhanced defensible space treatment in Rancho Rico; and 38 acres of fuelbreak maintenance in San Clemente Rancho. This totals to approximately 1627 acres of project activities for the LPSCFC project.

The majority of LPSCFC project areas already have CEQA or NEPA completed for those respective areas. They include:

- Los Padres National Forest fuelbreaks (541 acres): NEPA completed ([EIS link](#))
- California State Parks Pfeiffer Big Sur and Andrew Molera State Parks (378 acres): CEQA completed by California State Parks
- The Pico Blanco Boy Scouts Camp near Little Sur River (~40 acres): Environmental review done by NRCS
- San Clemente Rancho (Notice of Exemption filed on June 22, 2021)
- Santa Lucia Preserve (Notice of Exemption, filed on July 22, 2021)

This analysis will focus on one subproject of the LPSCFC: the creation of the **eastern Pico Blanco shaded fuelbreak**. The estimated acreage of this treatment is 30 acres. This treatment will decrease wildfire ignition risk and rate of spread and allow for more effective control of wildfires within a strategically important area of the Big Sur region. There is one other project area that will have another Initial Study done after this one: the Rancho Rico Community Defensible Space Project in Big Sur. The timeline for that project is uncertain but will follow after this project.

### Eastern Pico Blanco Shaded Fuelbreak treatment

This treatment will cover approximately 30 acres east of Pico Blanco Mountain and will create a new shaded fuelbreak that will serve to connect two Forest Service fuelbreaks- the Skinner Ridge Fuelbreak to the north and the Post Summit to Little Sur Fuelbreak to the south. This fuelbreak will be approximately 300 feet wide and will run an estimated 6,200 feet (1.17 miles) from the Little Sur River south to the northern terminus of the Post Summit to Little Sur Fuelbreak. The majority of the fuelbreak will follow a ridgeline between the two end points but will have segments that follow smaller ridges or geographical features. This area is remote and cannot be accessed by vehicles or machinery, therefore the treatments for this fuelbreak be done only with tools that can be carried by hand (loppers, chainsaws, other hand tools).

Within the boundaries of the 300' by 6200' shaded fuelbreak, trees will be limbed/pruned to a height of ten feet from the highest ground level whenever possible using chainsaws or loppers. Other non-tree woody vegetation will be lopped or cut to achieve a horizontal mosaic pattern of no more than 25% cover of woody vegetation within a given acre (excluding trees). Pruned limbs and cut vegetation will be lopped and scattered to a depth of not to exceed eighteen inches. Trees will not be removed unless they are less than

twelve inches in diameter, act as a ladder fuel to the overstory and do not have identified wildlife nesting or roosting in the tree. Forbs and other vegetation will not be removed or cut unless they act as ladder fuels or aid the horizontal spread of fire on the ground. Trees of cultural significance and State and Federally listed plant species and habitats will be flagged and avoided. The end objective is to have a treatment with modified fuel characteristics that decrease fire rate of spread significantly, do not allow crown fire spread in the mature canopy, maintain or not significantly decrease the existing canopy cover, and diminish the intensity of a potential wildfire long enough to allow time for other firefighting tactics to be used in adjacent areas.

### **Project Start Date**

The work specifically mentioned under these Project Objectives will begin approximately Winter of 2021/2022.

## **Project Description**

### **Environmental Setting of the Project Region**

The region of the larger Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project includes a large section of the Santa Lucia Mountains near the Central Coast of California. It extends east as far as Chews Ridge in the Los Padres Strategic National Forest, south to approximately Marble Peak on the North Coast Ridge Road, and north to the Santa Lucia Preserve near Carmel Valley. Much of the landscape is composed of steep mountains and narrow canyons, with some areas in the north containing more gradual hills and relatively flat coastal meadows and prairies. The Big Sur, Carmel and Little Sur River watersheds are encompassed by this project. Vegetation in the Project area consists of mixed conifer forest, coastal redwood stands, montane chaparral, coast live oak woodlands and annual grasslands.

### **Description of the Local Environment**

The project area of the Eastern Pico Blanco Fuelbreak consists of a few parcels east of Pico Blanco Mountain, primarily on a small ridge system that connects two segments of the Little Sur River watershed. One of the parcels is owned by the Boy Scouts of America, with another parcel owned by Graniterock Inc. The other parcels are Federally-owned and are managed by the US Forest Service/Los Padres National Forest. Elevation within the project area ranges from 1600 feet near the Little Sur River to approximately 2100 feet on top of the ridge. Most of the area consists of mixed-conifer forest and hardwood forests, with the southern aspect having patches of chaparral. There are some rock outcrops scattered through the project zone and several small drainages that lead down into the Little Sur River or its tributaries. Down in the riparian zones around the Little Sur River, there are coastal redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*), which transition to Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), tanoak (*Notholithocarpus densiflorus*), bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) and madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) trees further up the slope. There are pockets of coast live oaks and black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*) in some areas on the ridge. There are numerous shrub and forb species, with coyotebrush (*Baccharis pilularis*), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobium*) being predominant. This project area also lies in the California Coastal Zone.

This area can only be accessed on foot through an easement on Granite Rock lands from the south or through the Pico Blanco Boy Scouts camp by the north. This restriction curtails the use of any equipment

that cannot be brought in by foot or hiking. Access to Granite Rock lands can only be done with explicit permission from both Granite Rock and El Sur Ranch, whose lands on the western slope of Pico Blanco must be accessed to get to the Granite Rock parcels. The Boy Scout Camp access requires permission from the Boy Scouts Camp Director, with a gate approximately three miles west of the camp on Palo Colorado Road that restricts access to the camp area. Potential work in the project area may require camping or nearby accommodations for work crews.

### **Current Land Use and Previous Impacts**

The current land use of the Project area consists of recreational use (hiking, camping, fishing), residential use, mining, conservation, logging (historically) and grazing. The land has been used for these purposes since the colonization of California by the Spanish in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Pre-colonization, the Project area was occupied or used by the Ohlone-Rumsen, Costanoan and the Esselen tribes of central California until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Spanish settlers forced them into missions and rancherias. Graniterock/Pico Blanco lands are adjacent to a limestone mining operation on Pico Blanco, which contains mining infrastructure, but the Project area itself is conserved land that contains forest stands connecting to Launtz Creek and north towards the Little Sur River. The Pico Banco Boy Scouts Camp has been used as a summer destination camp for many decades as well, with one road accessing the camp. The camp contains a historic building, cabins, recreational structures including a climbing wall, and a small diversion dam installed over 70 years ago (Tarbox 2020). Granite Rock lands within the Project area appear to be relatively unused; there are reports of a historic hunting lodge on the Graniterock parcel. Much of the current use of this area is for hiking and recreational access to the Los Padres National Forest.



**Figure 1. East Pico Blanco Fuel break project location in context with other Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project Areas**

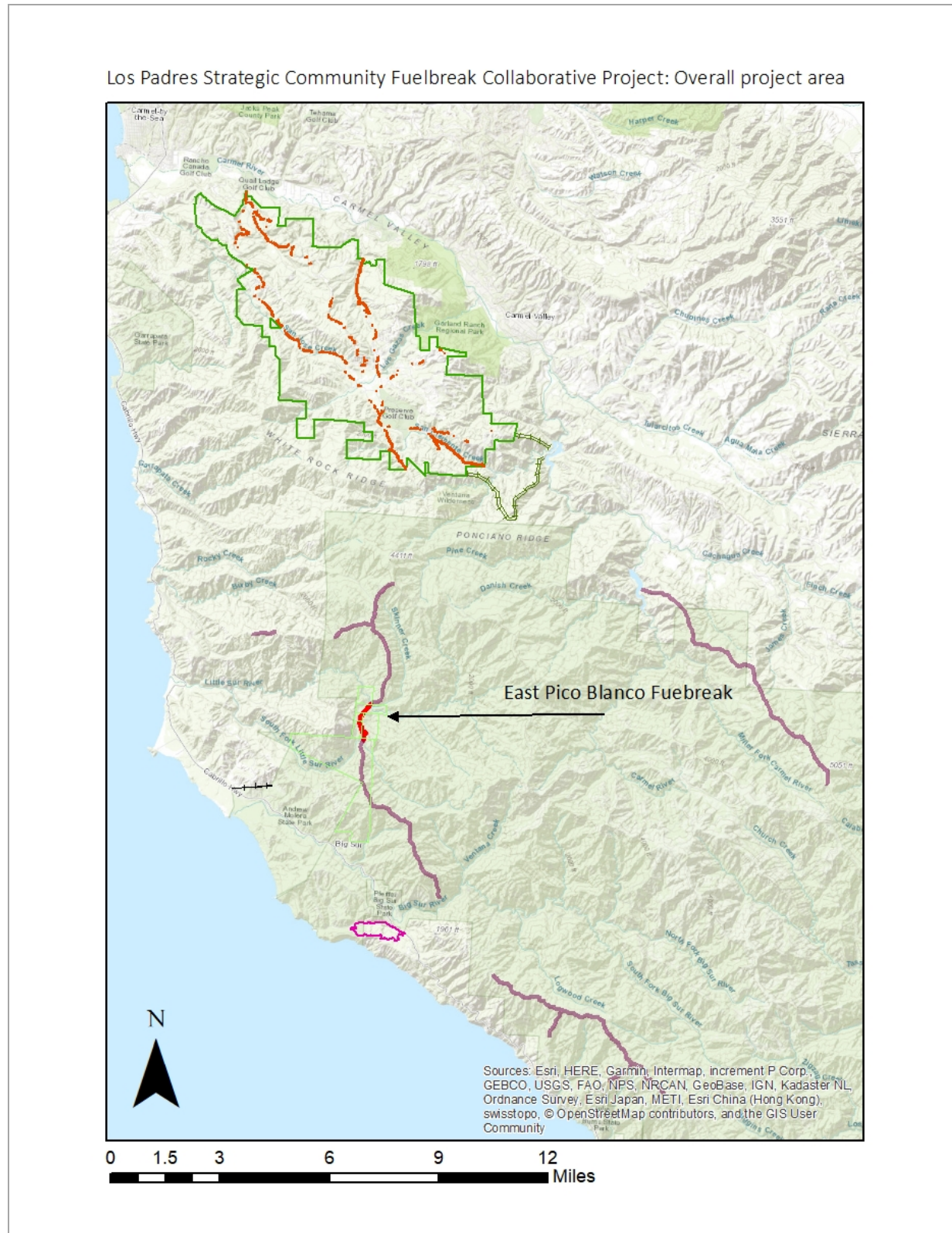
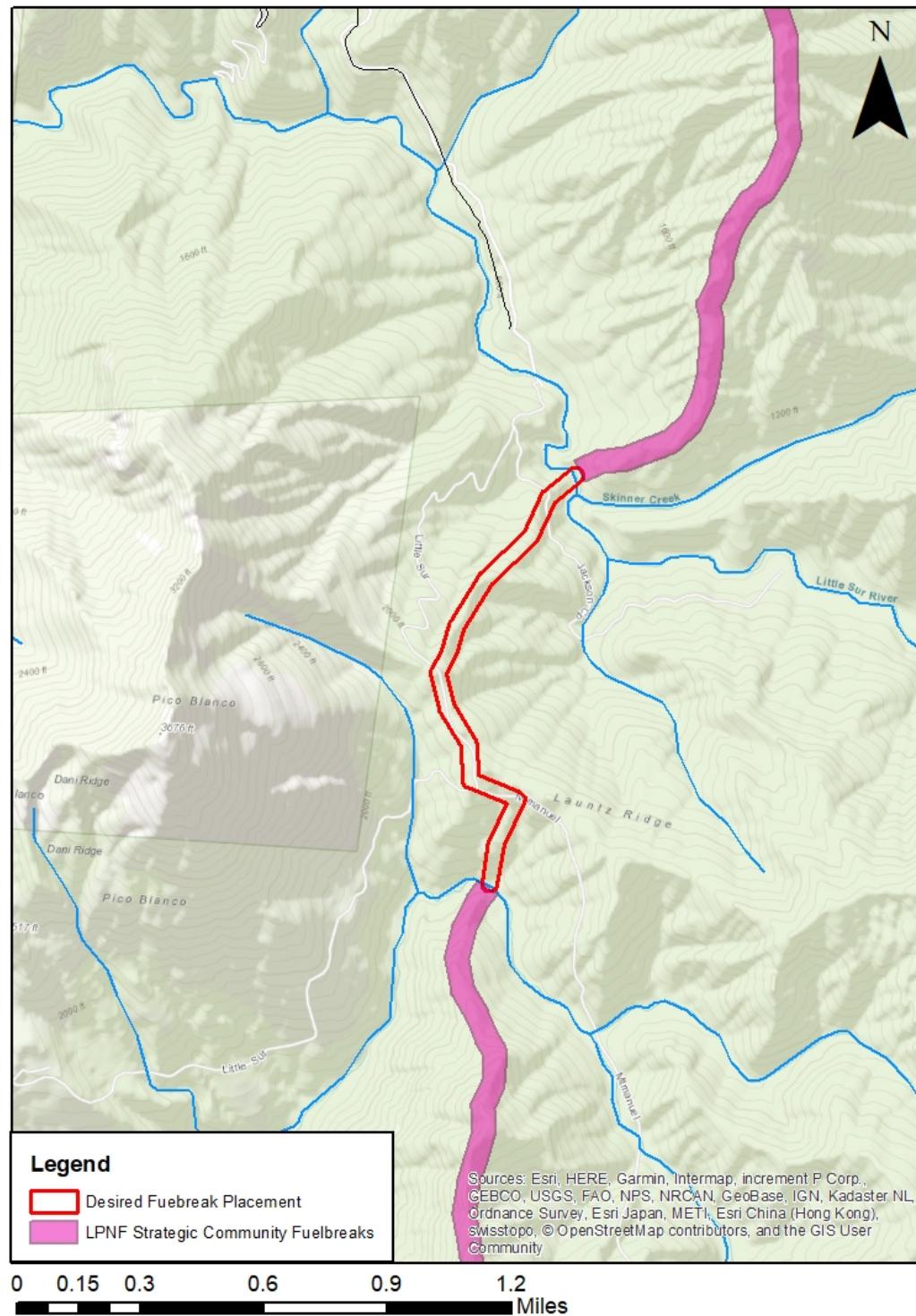


Figure 2. Eastern Pico Blanco Fuelbreak Map

## Eastern Pico Blanco Fuelbreak Treatment







## Conclusion of the Mitigated Negative Declaration

### Environmental Permits

The proposed project may require the following environmental permits and the RCDMC may be required to comply with the following State regulations:

- Coastal Development Permit
- Tree Removal Permit

### Mitigation Measures

#### ARCHAEOLOGY

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-1:** Within areas of ground disturbing activities, if project work appears to expose any previously unknown archeological, prehistoric, historic or paleontological resource sites along the path of the fuel break or within 30 feet beyond the project boundary, the site will be avoided. Work may continue elsewhere within the overall Project area. Exposed cultural or paleontological resources will be appropriately flagged in order to immediately establish an exclusion buffer of at least 100 feet. A professional archeologist will examine the site, evaluate found objects, and make a finding of their significance. An archeologist will also develop recommendations for the permanent protection of objects and site treatments as necessary. Identified sites will be permanently protected through avoidance. These sites will be made off limits to both personnel and equipment. A professional archeologist will determine an appropriate permanently flagged exclusion zone once the site has been adequately assessed for significance.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-2:** If human remains are discovered within the Project area during project implementation, work will be suspended at the site where the remains have been uncovered and the County coroner will be immediately notified. If the remains are determined by the County coroner to be Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) will be notified within 24 hours and the guidelines of the NAHC will be adhered to in the treatment and disposition of the remains.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-3:** Implementation crews will be trained in the identification of cultural resources before beginning work in the area by someone with expertise with local culture.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-4:** Implementation crews will avoid rock outcrops when working on the shaded fuel break. No work will occur on rock outcrops in the project boundary.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-5:** Culturally important trees will be identified, marked and protected with a minimum buffer of at least 25 feet from project activities. These trees will be identified with cooperation from the Esselen Tribe and the locations of the trees will only be shared with the Tribe, the RCDMC and project contractors.

## BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

**Mitigation Measure BIO-1:** A 25-foot “no treatment” buffer will be established on either side of intermittent dry gulches that may be encountered in the course of completing project work. All riparian areas will be considered ‘No Work Zones.’ The start of the watercourse buffer zones will be flagged with Watercourse Lake Protection Zone (WLPZ) flagging.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-2:** No placement of slash near any watercourse, seasonal stream, or where there is a strong likelihood that materials would migrate to surface waters in high precipitation events.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-3:** There will be no crossings of waterways or streambeds by mechanical equipment.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-4:** Areas within the Project areas considered sensitive habitat will be flagged as special protection zones where no project activities will occur.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-5:** In areas where buckwheat spp. (Smith's blue butterfly host plants) have been mapped or can occur, operations will be avoided and seasonally restricted. Smith's blue butterfly flight season is mid-June to early September. Individual plants will be flagged and not disturbed during project activities.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-6:** Areas mapped with milkweed shall have limited disturbance and no milkweed plants will be removed. Chips shall not be spread in these areas. Individual plants will be flagged and not disturbed during project activities.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-7:** Project activity may not occur during wet, rainy, times of the year or in muddy conditions in order to avoid impacts to sensitive amphibian species and their movement.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-8:** Woodrat nests will be flagged for avoidance with special treatment flagging. Heavy equipment shall be routed around nests, and trees will be aimed away from nests, where possible. The intent is to avoid woodrat nests to the greatest extent practical.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-9:** Conduct bird nest surveys before/during treatment. Project activity that occurs during nesting season will require visual inspection for nests. Signs of nest include completed nests, accumulation of nesting material at base of tree, accumulation of bird droppings, and sounds associated with nesting birds. Trees or understory vegetation with active nests will not be worked on. A minimum 150' buffer will be observed around all active nests.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-10:** Project activity for fuel treatments will not occur during bird nesting season.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-11:** Conduct a training session for all vegetation treatment crew personnel before any significant work. The training will be conducted by a qualified biologist and will include a discussion of the sensitive biological resources in the Project areas and the potential presence of special-status species. This must include a discussion of special-status species' habitats, protection measures to ensure species are not impacted by project activities, project boundaries, and biological conditions outlined in the project permits, as applicable.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-12:** Little Sur River: 150 foot work exclusion zone from centerline of the river.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-13:** Any List 1, List 2 or List 3 Sensitive Plants found within a work area will be avoided during project work, and a California Registered Professional Forester (RPF) or professional botanist will evaluate any potential findings identified within work areas.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-14:** To prevent the spread of invasive plant species to the extent feasible, project personnel are to clean plant material and soil from equipment and clothing before entering project area and after working in areas infested with known invasive plant species, including but not limited to French broom and jubata grass.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-15:** RCDMC shall be responsible for protecting against the spread of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) through implementation of the following requirements:

- Train management staff and contractors on host species, symptoms, and disease transmission pathways for *Phytophthora ramorum* and other *Phytophthora* species, and on BMPs to prevent the spread of SOD, including:
- Clean equipment after working in forest and woodland habitats, including chainsaws and boots (spray with a 10% bleach solution or other disinfectant, then rinse).
- As is feasible, work in forest and woodlands in the dry season instead of the wet season when spores are being produced and infections are starting. Avoid or minimize pruning oak, tanoak, and bays in wet weather.
- Leave potentially infected downed trees on site instead of transporting the material to an uninfected area. Where infection is already known to be present, leaving *P. ramorum*-infected or killed trees on site has not been shown to increase the risk of infection to adjacent trees.
- If necessary to reduce safety or fire hazards, infected trees can be cut, branches chipped, and wood split. Clean equipment after work is completed. Do not leave cut wood and chips in an area where they might be transported to an uninfected location.

## GEOLOGY AND SOILS

**Mitigation Measure GEO-1:** Waterbars will be installed where trails lead into or have access to a watercourse. An adequate number of waterbars as determined by the Project Manager will be installed to prevent the degradation of water quality. Constructed trails on side slopes will be located where impacts can be minimized and their numbers kept to the minimum required.

## HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-1:** Fuel-oil mix will at no time be transported across a live stream, except for that in the fuel tank of equipment being operated. Refueling staging areas will be situated away from waterways, dry or wet, and equipment will be stored and maintained within properly cleared areas.

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-2:** Contractors providing operations equipment (chainsaws or other powered hand tools) will make daily inspection of equipment for leaks, correcting and repairing any such leaks prior to resuming any crossing of live streams. The inspection reports will be submitted to RCDMC, along with evidence of any repairs required and completed before returning equipment to project work sites.

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-3:** Contractors will locate and stage all fuel storage facilities away from streams and areas that could potentially flow into a stream in the event of an accidental spill. Fuel spillage will be minimized by conducting these operations in flat areas and by having fuel containment equipment (i.e., absorbent sheets and waddles) at the refueling sites.

## HYDROLOGY

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-1:** Crushed and compacted vegetation left on the ground is expected to stabilize disturbed soil. The streams within the Project area will have wide vegetative buffers that will act as a sediment filter strips.

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-2:** Any newly-exposed soil of over 100 square feet in area will be mulched with brush to minimize the potential for erosion. Hand water bars will be installed to divert water onto stable vegetation and away from watercourses, as needed.

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-3:** All streams having riparian vegetation will have a 50-foot no treatment buffer established on either side of their channels. All springs will be encircled by a 50-foot no treatment buffer.

## Summary of Findings

This IS/MND has been prepared to assess the project's potential effects on the environment and an appraisal of the significance of those effects. Based on this IS/MND, it has been determined that the Los East Pico Blanco Fuelbreak Project will not have any significant effects on the environment after implementation of mitigation measures. This conclusion is supported by the following findings:

1. The proposed project will have no effect related to Aesthetics, Land Use Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services and Recreation.
2. The proposed project will have a less than significant impact on Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise, Transportation and Traffic and Utilities, Service Systems and Water Quality.

3. Mitigation is required to reduce potentially significant impacts related to Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials and Hydrology.

The Initial Study/Environmental Checklist included in this document discusses the results of resource-specific environmental impact analyses which were conducted by the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County. This Initial Study revealed that potentially significant environmental effects could result from the proposed project; however, RCDMC has integrated mitigation measures in its project plans which will eliminate impact or reduce environmental impacts to a less than significant level. These include a number of mitigations for biological resources to reduce any impacts to Smith's butterfly and its preferred habitat, foothill yellow-legged frog, California red-legged frog, San Francisco dusky-footed wood rat, western pond turtle, monarch butterfly, Townsends big-eared bat, black swift and steelhead trout. Mitigation measures for Geology and Soils were derived to reduce the impacts from runoff on steep slopes affected by the project. Measures for Hazards and Hazardous Materials were created to minimize the risk posed by gasoline, diesel fuel, oil and cleaning chemicals to the local project environment. Other measures were designed for Hydrology and Water Quality to reduce impacts to water percolation, overland flow, riparian vegetation and channel structure.

The RCDMC has found, in consideration of the entire record, that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project as currently revised and mitigated would result in a significant effect upon the environment. The IS/MND is therefore the appropriate document for CEQA compliance.



## INITIAL STUDY/ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

PROJECT INFORMATION					
1. Project Title:	East Pico Blanco Shaded Fuelbreak				
2. Lead Agency Name and Address:	Resource Conservation District of Monterey County				
3. Contact Person and Phone Number:	Jamie Tuitele-Lewis, (559) 593-9235				
4. Project Location:	Township 18S, Range 02E(M), sections 30 and 31, Township 19S, Range 01E (M), Section 1				
5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address:	Resource Conservation District of Monterey County 744-A LaGuardia Street, Salinas, CA 93940				
6. General Plan Designation:	Big Sur Land Use Plan				
7. Zoning:	National Forest/Watershed and Scenic Conservation				
8. Description of Project: See Pages 5-8 of this document					
9. Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:	Refer to pages 6-8 of this document				
10: Other public agencies whose approval may be required:	See page 12 of this document				
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:</b>					
<p>The environmental factors checked below are the ones which would potentially be affected by this proposed project and were more rigorously analyzed than the factors which were not checked. The results of this analysis are presented in the detailed Environmental Checklist which follows.</p>					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agriculture and Forestry Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Air Quality
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Geology / Soils
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hazards & Hazardous Materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hydrology / Water Quality
<input type="checkbox"/>	Land Use / Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mineral Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Noise
<input type="checkbox"/>	Population / Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recreation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation / Traffic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Utilities / Service Systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mandatory Findings of Significance

## DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment, and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☐

I find that although the proposed project **COULD** have a significant effect on the environment, there **WILL NOT** be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☒

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required. ☐

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a “potentially significant impact” or “potentially significant unless mitigated” impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed. ☐

I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION**, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required. ☐



Paul Robins, Executive Director  
(831) 975-7775

October 13, 2021

Date Signed

## ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>I. Aesthetics. Will the project:</b>				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which will adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

There are no expected impacts to local area aesthetics based on the project treatment types, location and scale.

#### ***a) Will the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?***

No Impact: The project will not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, as the type of treatments being applied and their relation to public viewpoints does not overlap or cause any significant change to any vista in the area.

#### ***b) Will the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?***

No Impact: The only resource that will be removed in any significant way will be shrubs generally under the height of ten feet. Occasional hazard trees may be dropped in place but otherwise no impacts are expected at all to scenic resources.

#### ***c) Will the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?***

No Impact: The project is not expected to degrade the visual character of the Project area or nearby viewpoints of the Project area.

#### ***d) Will the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which will adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?***

No Impact: There are no activities requiring lighting that will affect day or night views in the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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### **II. Agriculture and Forest Resources.**

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California

Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997, as updated) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                                     |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code §12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code §4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code §51104(g))? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 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?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### Discussion

There are few to no impacts from the East Pico Blanco Fuelbreak on agricultural or forest resources in the Project area. The removal of ladder fuels and some of the shrub component technically results in some minor loss of forest vegetation but the scale of this removal does not affect the primary forest stand in a significant way, as canopy cover would be maintained, seed sources would remain intact and successional trajectory of the Project area would not be altered from project activities.

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

No Impact: None of the land within the Project area is classified as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance.

***b) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?***

No Impact: No land in the project would conflict with a Williamson Act contract or zoning for agricultural use, as the project description does not contain any land zoned for agricultural use or have a known Williamson Act contract.

***c) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code §12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code §4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code §51104(g))?***

**No Impact:** The project does not conflict with any known zoning or will cause any re-classification of areas that are zoned as forested land, timberlands or Timberland Production.

***d) Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?***

**No Impact:** While some smaller diameter trees (<8") may be removed to reduce hazardous ladder fuels, this is not projected to alter or change in any significant way lands in the Project area to non-forested lands. Forested lands will remain classified as forested lands with minimal alteration after project work is implemented. Dominant and co-dominant trees would retain canopy cover, retaining shade and micro-climate conditions.

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

**No Impact:** The project does not describe or contain any activities which would change the existing environment to non-forest use. There are no farmlands contained within the Project area scope, so conversion to non-agricultural use is not applicable in this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>III. Air Quality.</b>				
Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied on to make the following determinations. Will the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) 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 (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

***Information about Air Quality***

***Discussion***

There are small, less than significant impacts expected from this project in terms of air quality. As the only project emissions are expected from vehicle use (to access trailhead) and chainsaw operation, the expected emissions are relatively low compared to other types of forest and fuels management projects. Expected emissions would not exceed Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) standards. Sensitive receptors (Boy Scout campers and staff) adjacent to the Project area are only on site for a few months during any given year, with at least a half-mile distance between chainsaw emissions and any potential receptors.

**a) Will the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?**

No Impact: The project will not conflict with the Air Quality Plan. It is not projected to emit over 137 lbs/day of VOCs or NO<sub>x</sub> emissions based on projected work and equipment as described in the project description. The project will be in accordance with the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) Air Quality Monitoring Plan.

**b) Will the project violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?**

Less Than Significant Impact: The project will not violate any air quality standard or contribute to air quality violations, although there will be some emissions resulting from equipment and vehicle use. It is not projected to emit more than 137 lbs/day of NO<sub>x</sub> or VOCs, 550 lbs/day of CO, 82 lbs of PM<sub>10</sub>, 150lbs/day of SO<sub>x</sub> or generate traffic that significantly affects levels of service.

**c) Will the project 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 (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?**

No Impact: There are no known emissions of pollutants from this project that will result in a considerable net increase in for any regional non-attainment standard for a federal or state ambient air quality standard. Currently, the MBARD is in attainment for all known ambient air quality standards.

**d) Will the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?**

Less Than Significant Impact: The project will not violate CO, PM<sub>10</sub> or toxic air contaminant standards for any known or reasonably foreseeable sensitive receptors. The only sensitive receptors in the area are occasional campers seasonally occupying a Boy Scout Camp directly to the north of the project, and there is expected to be little to no impact from project activities due to the limitations of the Project area (chainsaws and other hand equipment only).

**e) Will the project create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?**

No Impact: The project will minimize objectionable odors as there are very limited emissions expected from this project, and there are no permanent residents in the immediate Project area. The type of emissions expected are not expected to have any significant impacts to a substantial number of people.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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**IV. Biological Resources. Will the project:**

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the 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, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Discussion

Graniterock Construction (GC) owns a parcel of land contiguous with Forest Service and Pico Blanco Boy Scout Camp (BSC) lands near the Little Sur River. Proposed work is to expand an adjacent fuelbreak from the Forest Service land (and potentially BSC lands) through their parcel by installing a modified fuels treatment over 40 acres. Because access is extremely remote and rugged, most of the Project area cannot be reached by vehicles. This modified fuel treatment will rely on chainsaw work and hand tools.

## California Department of Fish and Game Species of Special Concern

Under California law, Species of Special Concern are to be considered during the environmental review process. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; California Public Resources 27 Code §§ 21000-21177) requires State agencies, local governments, and special districts to evaluate and disclose impacts from "projects" in the State. Section 15380 of the CEQA Guidelines indicates that species of special concern should be included in an analysis of project impacts if they can be shown to meet the criteria of sensitivity outlined in State regulations.

Steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*): South-Central California populations of steelhead trout, as shown on the CNDDDB, is listed as a Federal Threatened Species. Cal Fish maps indicate that individuals have been recorded for the Little Sur River and its tributaries, presenting high quality spawning and rearing habitat. There will be no impacts to Steelhead trout since the East Pico Blanco Project area is outside of their suitable habitat.

California Red-Legged Frog (*Rana draytonii*): The California red-legged frog requires a variety of habitat elements with aquatic breeding areas embedded within a matrix of riparian and upland dispersal habitats. Breeding sites of the California red-legged frog are in aquatic habitats including pools and backwaters within streams and creeks, ponds, marshes, springs, sag ponds, dune ponds and lagoons. Additionally, California red-legged frogs frequently breed in artificial impoundments such as stock ponds. Suitable habitat characteristics are not present in the proposed Project area. Extant individuals for the Big Sur region have been reported through the CNDDDB database. Reported populations of CRLF for this region include

Point Sur (2007), Swiss Canyon Creek just NW of Andrew Molera State Park (2006), an unnamed drainage approximately 0.8 miles NW of Pfeiffer Rock (2010), Pfeiffer Beach Creek (2016), a private ephemeral pond owned by Post Ranch Inn (2006), and a perennial creek between Castro and Grimes canyon 6 miles SE of Big Sur.

Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog (*Rana boylei*): This aquatic species requires shallow, flowing water, found in small to moderate-sized streams with at least some cobble-sized substrate. This type of habitat is best suited to oviposition and provides significant refuge habitat for larvae and postmetamorphs. Foothill yellow-legged frogs are infrequent or absent in habitats where introduced aquatic predators such as fishes and bullfrogs are found including small streams and wet areas. Data displaying extant and verified sightings of this species showed no indication of this species nor is suitable habitat present within the East Pico Blanco Project area.

Western Pond Turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*): The Western Pond Turtle is listed as a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This species requires some slack or slow water aquatic habitat and as a result is uncommon within high gradient streams that occur within the Project area. Habitat quality seems to vary with the availability of aerial and aquatic basking sites. Hatchlings (i.e. individuals through their first year of activity) require shallow water habitat with relatively dense submergent or short emergent vegetation in which to forage. Western Pond Turtles also require an upland oviposition site in the vicinity of the aquatic site. Suitable oviposition sites must have the proper thermal and hydric environment for incubation of the eggs. Data displaying extant and verified sightings of this species showed no indication of this species nor is suitable habitat present within the East Pico Blanco Project area.

San-Francisco Dusky-footed Woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes annectens*): The San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. Dusky-footed woodrats occur within and adjacent to the Project area and are common throughout forested and chaparral habitats of Monterey Bay and Big Sur. Woodrat houses (lodges or nests) made of sticks are usually built at the base of a shrub or tree. Individual houses may be occupied by successive generations for decades. This species feeds principally on woody plants, acorns, and grasses. Woodrat nests will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Smith's Blue Butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*): In 1976 Smith's Blue butterfly was one of the first insects listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. California does not allow any insect to be listed as a state endangered species but does recognize it as a federally protected species under the CA Environmental Quality Control Act. It is also protected under the Lacey Act and by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Department of Defense, and the US Forest Service. Coast and Seacliff Buckwheat are the exclusive host plants of Smith's Blue butterfly. Each plant species blooms at different times, creating a temporal breeding boundary within the species. Females lay eggs on the flower heads and one week later, larvae emerge. Larvae feed on the petals and seeds and are cryptically colored. The four larval stages, or instars, last 3-4 weeks. Pupation occurs either in the flower or leaf litter beneath the plant. If the former occurs, it will fall into the leaf litter and remain there for 47 weeks until the butterfly emerges. Several populations have been reported in the Big Sur area through the CNDDDB database. If appropriate plant habitat for Smith's Blue butterfly is found in the project area, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*): The western monarch butterfly relies on the California landscape for both breeding and overwintering habitat. In the spring, adult butterflies begin to move inland feeding on flower



nectar, mating and laying eggs on a variety of milkweed plants, the sole source of food for monarch caterpillars. Several overwintering sites have been recorded for the central coast and Big Sur coastline however, none have been identified within the Project area. If milkweed plants are found in the project area, they will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*): Black swifts are considered a Bird Species of Special Concern (breeding), priority 3. Black swifts tend to breed near water such as coastal bluffs and inland waterfalls. Their breeding range remains largely unchanged since 1940. In Monterey County, a small population has been known from the Big Sur coast and adjacent Santa Lucia Mountains. From 1988 to 1992, a breeding bird atlas project found confirmed or suspected evidence of nesting at three coastal sites (Anderson Creek mouth, Torre Creek mouth, and Rocky Point; the latter is the site called “Pt. Sur” in Remsen 1978 and “Bixby Creek mouth” in 1993 and “Canogas Falls, Devils Canyon fork of Big Creek” at one inland location). No breeding sites or such characteristics have been identified in the proposed project area.

Townsend’s big-ear bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*): *C. townsendii* occurs primarily in oak woodlands and lower to mid-elevation mixed coniferous deciduous forests of the inner coast ranges and coastal areas. Its distribution tends to be geomorphically determined, by the availability of caves or cave-like roosting habitat. Population concentrations occur in areas with substantial surface exposures of cavity-forming rock. *C. townsendii* also roosts in cave analogues, such as old mine workings and abandoned buildings. There are no caves in the Project area that could be used as habitat; there are nearby historic structures that may provide some habitat, but the locations of these structures fall outside of the project area (approximately .25 miles from the project boundary).

Santa Lucia fir (*Abies bracteata* (D. Don) Pott.): Santa Lucia fir is a tree species (Pinaceae family) that exists only in Monterey County in the Santa Lucia Mountains. The tree is ranked between S2 and S3 by the State of California; CNPS ranks it as a 1B.3. The nearest known occurrence is along the South Fork of the Little Sur River approx. 0.8 miles to the southwest of the project area. While no Santa Lucia fir were found during recent surveys, habitat is assumed in the project area. The project activities do not pose a significant threat to any tree species. A survey before implementation begins will be done, and any Santa Lucia fir trees found in the project area will be marked with flagging and have a small no-work buffer around them (25 feet), even if they exist as ladder fuels.

Little Sur manzanita (*Arctostaphylos edmundsii* J.T. Howell): Little Sur manzanita is an evergreen shrub with a low growth form found in chaparral and coastal scrub. California ranking is S2 and CNPS ranking is 1B.2. The nearest known occurrences are on Andrew Molera State Park property about 2.5 miles to the southwest. While it is unlikely that the shrub is found in the project area, there is some chaparral habitat near the south end of the project area that could potentially contain Little Sur manzanita. While chaparral habitat will be generally avoided by project activities, some shrubs could potentially be pruned. A pre-implementation survey will be done and any *A. edmundsii* found will be marked and buffered so that no work occurs around it or impacts it directly.

San Luis Obispo sedge (*Carex obispoensis* Stacey): San Luis Obispo sedge is a perennial rhizomatous grass-like plant found in a wide variety of habitats, often growing in seeps, including closed-cone coniferous forests and chaparral. The State ranking for *C. obispoensis* is S3 while the CNPS ranking is 1B.2. No *C. obispoensis* was found during recent surveys, but potential habitat does exist and will be surveyed for in a pre-implementation botanical survey. If found, the area will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Compact cobwebby thistle (*Cirsium occidentale* (Nutt.) Jeps. var. *compactum* Hoov.): Compact cobwebby thistle is a perennial herb in the Asteraceae family found in coastal areas of California. California ranks cobwebby thistle at S2 and CNPS at 1B.2. It can also be found in chaparral near coastal areas. The nearest occurrences are found approximately four miles to the west near the mouth of the Little Sur River. Because of existing potential habitat, this species will be surveyed for in a pre-implementation survey. If the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Jolon clarkia (*Clarkia jolonensis* Parnell): This annual herb in the Onagraceae family is ranked S2 by the State and 1B.2 by CNPS. It is found in chaparral, cismontane woodland and riparian woodland from 65 to 2,165 feet. Habitat for this species exists in the project area. If the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Hutchinson's larkspur (*Delphinium hutchinsoniae* Ewan.): Hutchinson's larkspur is a perennial herb (Ranunculaceae family) found in broadleaf upland forests, chaparral and coastal prairie. It is ranked S2 by California and 1B.2 by CNPS. No known occurrences are found within the project area, but potential habitat is within the project boundary. If the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Umbrella larkspur (*Delphinium umbraculorum* Lewis & Epl.): Umbrella larkspur is a perennial herb (Ranunculaceae family) found in chaparral and cismontane habitats throughout coastal California. The plant is ranked S3 by the State and 1B.3 by CNPS. No known occurrences were found in the project area; there is a known occurrence approximately 3 miles to the northwest of the project area. Potential habitat exists and the species will be surveyed for. If the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Fragrant fritillary (*Fritillaria liliacea* Lindl.): A perennial bulbiferous herb (Liliaceae family) that is known in a variety of habitats, including cismontane woodland. Ranked S2 in California and 1B.2 by CNPS. It is unknown if it occurs in the project area, but even with potential habitat, the type of disturbance that any plant may receive would be insignificant due to the types of project activities and the life form of the plant.

Abrams lupine (*Lupinus albifrons* Benth. var. *abramsii* (C.P. Smith) Hoov.): A perennial herb (Fabaceae family) found across a variety of habitats, this species is ranked S3 by California and 3.2 by CNPS. No occurrences are known in the project area, but potential habitat does exist. If the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Arroyo Seco bush-mallow (*Malacothamnus palmeri* (Wats.) Greene var. *lucianus* Kearn.): This perennial shrub (Malvaceae family) is ranked at S1 in California and 1B.2 for CNPS. It is found in foothill woodlands and chaparral of Monterey County. The nearest record is approximately 0.5 miles to the southwest near Pico Blanco. Habitat in the project area is assumed and the species will be surveyed for. If the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Dudley's lousewort (*Pedicularis dudleyi* Elmer): This member of the figwort family (Orobanchaceae family) grows in shaded conditions in maritime chaparral, coastal redwood, and mixed evergreen forest communities of San Luis Obispo, Monterey, and San Mateo counties. The species is ranked S2 by the State and 1B.2 by CNPS; it is vulnerable to trampling and trail maintenance activities. There is a record of this

species in the project area from 1982; the species will be surveyed for in the pre-implementation survey. Occurrences that are found will be marked and given a no-work buffer radius sufficient to prevent damage to any existing plants.

San Benito pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta exilis* (Gray) ssp. *aeolica* Van Horn & Ornduff): San Benito pentachaeta is an annual herb in the Asteraceae family found in cismontane woodlands and foothill grasslands. It is ranked S2 in California and 1B.2 by CNPS. While no occurrences are known in the project area, potential habitat does exist. If the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Adobe sanicle (*Sanicula maritima* Wats.) is a California rare plant ranked at S2 and is considered threatened in California by CNPS (1B.1). This perennial herb is a member of the carrot family (Apiaceae) and is found in wet to dry clay soils of coastal prairie and coastal sage scrub plant communities. Its distribution is centered in the coastal hills of San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties, with one historical record from the San Francisco area. There is a poor quality record of a possible occurrence on the south slope of Pico Blanco approximately 0.5 miles to the west of the project area. There is little habitat for this species in the project area, but it will be included in any pre-implementation surveys. If the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

**a) *Would the project 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 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?***

Less than significant with Mitigation Incorporated: A review of the California Natural Diversity Database, Department of Fish and Wildlife information along with other sources indicate that that no candidate, sensitive, or special status species are located within the East Pico Blanco Project area. Species with the highest probability of occurring within the Project area inhabit riparian areas, stream courses, wet environments, and mature growth redwoods. Such sites will not be affected and impacts to these areas would be reduced through Mitigation Measures BIO-1 and HYDRO-3.

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

No Impact: No formally designated riparian habitats or sensitive natural communities exist within the Project area. Project activity will be limited to oak woodland and mixed conifer habitats. For the East Pico Blanco Project area, fuel treatments may occur adjacent to riparian habitats; however, the proposed alignment for the shaded fuel break is located on/near a ridgeline. Because of the low flammability and high moisture content of herbaceous riparian vegetation, there is no need for work in these areas. There will be no traversing of riparian or sensitive habitats by heavy machinery in any of the project sites. Additionally, there are no records for sensitive species associated with riparian habitat/perennial waters such as California red-legged frog or foothill yellow-legged frog in the Project

areas. In addition, Mitigation Measures BIO-1 and HYDRO-3 will be implemented during project work in order to reduce potential impacts to these areas to a level that is less than significant.

***c) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?***

No Impact: Based on fuel modification approaches for the proposed Project areas, there will no impact to protected wetlands as defined by section 404 of the Clean Water Act. There is no proposed earth work, and fuel treatments will occur in oak woodland and mixed conifer habitats.

***d) Would the project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?***

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: No impacts to seasonal breeding or migratory terrestrial, aquatic or avian species will occur as a result of this project. Mitigation measures BIO-1, BIO-2, BIO-3, BIO-7, and HYDRO-3 are incorporated into project implementation in order to reduce any potential impacts to aquatic or riparian species to a less than significant level.

***e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?***

Less than Significant Impact: Proposed fuel treatments for the East Pico Blanco project site are based on a shaded fuelbreak model. Removal of mature native trees larger than that of 8 in. in size will be avoided. Fuel treatments will primarily focus on understory thinning of combustible shrubs (i.e. ladder fuels) and smaller trees. Retaining adequate tree cover in these areas, some crown overlap is acceptable, to maintain cooler and moister understory conditions. Additionally, understory vegetation will remain green longer into the growing season, reducing fire spread within the fuelbreak.

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

No Impact: The project does not conflict with any known Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan or other habitat conservation plans.

## **Measures to Reduce Impacts to Biological Resources**

**Mitigation Measure BIO-1:** A 25-foot “no treatment” buffer will be established on either side of intermittent dry gulches that may be encountered in the course of completing project work. All riparian areas will be considered ‘No Work Zones.’ The start of the watercourse buffer zones will be flagged with Watercourse Lake Protection Zone (WLPZ) flagging.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-2:** Placement of slash generated near any watercourse, seasonal stream, or where there is a strong likelihood that materials would migrate to surface waters in high precipitation events will be avoided.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-3:** There will be no crossings of waterways or streambeds by mechanical equipment.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-4:** Areas within the Project areas considered sensitive habitat will be flagged as special protection zones where no project activities will occur.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-5:** In areas where buckwheat spp. (Smith's blue butterfly host plants) have been mapped or can occur, operations will be avoided and seasonally restricted. Smith's blue butterfly flight season is mid-June to early September. Individual plants will be flagged and not disturbed during project activities.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-6:** Areas mapped with milkweed shall have limited disturbance and no milkweed plants will be removed. Chips shall not be spread in these areas. Individual plants will be flagged and not disturbed during project activities.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-7:** Project activity may not occur during wet, rainy, times of the year or in muddy conditions in order to avoid impacts to sensitive amphibian species and their movement.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-8:** Woodrat nests are flagged for avoidance with special treatment flagging. Heavy equipment shall be routed around nests and trees will be aimed away, where possible. The intent is to avoid woodrat nests to the greatest extent practical.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-9:** Conduct nest surveys before/during treatment. Project activity that occurs during nesting season will require visual inspection for nests. Signs of nest include completed nests, accumulation of nesting material at base of tree, accumulation of bird droppings, and sounds associated with nesting birds. Trees or understory vegetation with active nests will not be worked on. A minimum 150' buffer will be observed around all active nests.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-10:** Project activity for fuel treatments will not occur during bird nesting season.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-13:** Any List 1, List 2 or List 3 (i.e. 1B.1 would be List 1) Sensitive Plants found within a work area will be avoided during project work, and a California Registered Professional Forester (RPF) or professional botanist will evaluate any potential findings identified within work areas.

Mitigation Measures **BIO-11, BIO-12, BIO-14** and **BIO-15** were derived as practices to ensure compliance with any state, county or local regulations and ordinances and are generalized for the project area. They are listed in on pages 13-14 of the document.

No significant adverse impacts to Biological Resources are anticipated with the implementation of the above mitigation measures.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>V. Cultural Resources. Will the project:</b>				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Information about Cultural Resources

#### Discussion

In spring of 2021, the Project area was researched and then surveyed by Albion Environmental Inc.. Their final report is located in Appendix A. Albion's cultural resource assessment for this CEQA Analysis included a Northwest Information Center (NWIC) records search, archival and background research, Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File search and Native American outreach, and a pedestrian survey of the Project area.

Archival research did not uncover any data that documented the presence of historic structures within the Project area, and it is Albion's judgement that their presence is unlikely due to the terrain. However, archival research and local Tribal group outreach indicates the Project area and the vicinity contain archaeological and cultural resources. The record search identified one previously recorded cultural resource within the Project area, CA-MNT-828H, a historic-era Serrano Horse Ranch. However, the location is noted as only approximate and the site record does not contain any maps or locational details aside from basic township and range information. Moreover, the record search identified eight previously recorded cultural resources within a 0.25-mile radius of the Project area. These eight resources consist of three precolonial sites with bedrock mortars (CA-MNT-299, CA-MNT-1357, CA-MNT-1358), four historic-era built environment resources (P-27-002848, P-27-003623, P-27-003624, and P-27-003625) and one multi-component site (CA-MNT-770/H) with both precolonial and historic-era components. The NAHC Sacred Lands File search was negative; however, as the NAHC states, the absence of specific resource information in the Sacred Lands File does not indicate the absence of cultural resources in the Project area. Native American outreach documented Tribal concerns about cultural resources within the immediate vicinity of the Project area and potential Tribal Cultural Resources within the Project area.

After reviewing the record search results, Albion conducted a pedestrian survey of all accessible portions of the Project area, as well as the Access Route that the work crew may use for the Project. Throughout the Project area, ground visibility was very poor, with approximately 0–5% of the ground surface being visible during the survey inspection. Rock outcrops that may have been used as bedrock mortars or as a quarry for stone tool raw material acquisition and production were not observed within the Project area during the

survey. However, one rock outcrop was observed outside but in the vicinity the Project area, but vegetation and terrain constraints did not allow for close inspection of this outcrop. The survey revealed no cultural materials on the surface of the project area, and no evidence of intact precolonial or historic-era archaeological deposits were identified on the surface of the Project area.

### **Assessment of Potential Project Impacts**

Overall, given the negative pedestrian survey, the lack of evidence of rock outcrops, and extremely rugged terrain in the Project area, the potential for archaeological resources within the Project area is low. Based on this information, and on the fact that there is no proposed ground disturbance anticipated in the Project area, it is RCDMC's judgement that the Project will not impact any precolonial or historic-era archaeological resources. Additionally, it is our judgment that work crews utilizing the existing trail to access the Project area will not impact CA-MNT-828H or CA-MNT-770/H.

The vicinity around the Project area was undoubtedly used during precolonial times, and likely through a prolonged period of time, as it would have provided excellent natural resource acquisition areas near fresh water and a link to the Pacific Ocean. This area is also very important to the local Tribal community that is represented by multiple Tribal groups. Based on this information, it is RCDMC's judgement the Project area may contain Tribal Cultural Resources, and although the Project does not anticipate any ground disturbance within the Project area, vegetation removal activities may have the potential to impact Tribal Cultural Resources.

### **Tribal Resources**

In accordance with Assembly Bill 52 Native Americans: California Environmental Quality Act, the RCDMC sent letters to thirteen different local tribes that live in or have some connection to the Project area. Of these thirteen tribes, the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County responded to the RCDMC, and a subsequent dialogue occurred about the project and tribal resources that the Esselen Tribe wanted the RCDMC to protect. During the discussion of tribal resources and interests, the Tribe identified the need to protect certain heritage trees that have inherent cultural value to the Tribe. To ensure this occurs, the RCDMC will coordinate with the Tribe to survey the Project area, identify the trees, flag them and provide a buffer around the trees to prevent direct or indirect damage to the trees. Their location(s) will also be recorded with a GPS and stored in a confidential spatial database that will only be available to the Tribe and the RCDMC. This process will occur before any project implementation activities happen.

#### ***a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5?***

No Impact: There are no historical resources within the project boundary that were found during the cultural resource assessment. Some historic cabins are located nearby within 0.25 miles of the project but will not be impacted by any of the project management implementation directly or indirectly.

#### ***b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?***

**Less Than Significant Impact:** This project will not cause any adverse changes to any archaeological resources as none were identified in the cultural resource assessment survey. There were resources identified by a database records search located within 0.25 miles of the project area boundary, including bedrock mortars. None of these resources were found during field surveys in 2021. However, in the case that new resources are uncovered during implementation, these resources will be flagged, avoided with a buffer of at least 100 feet and then identified as soon as is possible by an archaeologist.

***c) Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?***

**No Impact:** The project would not destroy any paleontological resources or sites as no such sites or resources were discovered or found in the Project area. If any are found during implementation, they will be flagged, identified by an archaeologist and then avoided permanently, with a buffer of at least 100 feet around it.

***d) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?***

**No Impact:** The cultural resource survey did not reveal any known information regarding human remains nor were any discovered during the 2021 field survey. As the project will not use equipment that disturbs the soil, there are no expected impacts to this resource.

## **Measures to Reduce Impacts to Cultural and Tribal Resources**

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-1:** Within areas of ground disturbing activities, if project work appears to expose any previously unknown archeological, prehistoric, historic or paleontological resource sites along the path of the fuel break or within 30 feet beyond the project boundary, the site will be avoided. Work may continue elsewhere within the overall Project area. Exposed cultural or paleontological resources will be appropriately flagged in order to immediately establish an exclusion buffer of at least 100 feet. A professional archeologist will examine the site, evaluate found objects, and make a finding of their significance. The archeologist will also develop recommendations for the permanent protection of objects and site treatments as necessary. Identified sites will be permanently protected through avoidance. These sites will be made off limits to both personnel and equipment. A professional archeologist will determine an appropriate permanently flagged exclusion zone once the site has been adequately assessed for significance.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-2:** If human remains are discovered within the Project area during project implementation, work will be suspended at the site where the remains have been uncovered and the County coroner will be immediately notified. If the remains are determined by the County coroner to be Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) will be notified within 24 hours and the guidelines of the NAHC will be adhered to in the treatment and disposition of the remains.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-3:** Implementation crews will be trained in the identification of cultural resource awareness before beginning work in the area by someone with expertise with local culture.



**Mitigation Measure ARCH-4:** Implementation crews will avoid rock outcrops when working on the shaded fuel break. No work will occur on rock outcrops in the project boundary.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-5:** Culturally important trees will be identified, marked and protected with a minimum buffer of at least 25 feet from project activities. These trees will be identified with cooperation from the Esselen Tribe and the locations of the trees will only be shared with the Tribe, the RCDMC and project contractors.

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

## Discussion

Within the Eastern Pico Blanco Project area, soil units are comprised proportionately by the Sur-Junipero (62%) and Gamboa-Sur (34%) and Cieneba-Rock outcrop (4%) complexes with slopes ranging from 50% to 100%. Soil types include stony sandy loams, very gravelly fine sandy loams, and sandy loams that have a high to very high erosion hazard and a rapid to very rapid runoff potential. The project elevation ranges from 1,600 feet near the Little Sur River to approximately 2,100 feet on top of the ridge. Given that the majority of the project work will occur along the ridgeline between the Skinner Ridge fuelbreak to the north and Post Summit to Little Sur Fuelbreak to the south, slopes within the majority of the Project area are significantly less steep than the surrounding topography.

The Eastern Pico Blanco Project area lies within the Metasedimentary geologic unit with rocks comprised of Mesozoic to Pre-Cambrian granite and metamorphic rocks, including gray biotite schist, gneiss, and metaquartzite and calc-silicate materials.

All project work for the shaded fuelbreak at Eastern Pico Blanco will occur by hand (using loppers, chainsaws, and other hand tools), greatly limiting the likelihood of soil disturbance. Trees will be limbed/pruned to a height of ten feet from the highest ground level whenever possible using chainsaws or loppers. Given that the tree canopy will generally be left intact, there is not expected to be a significant impact to erosion potential for the soils below the limbed/pruned trees. Other woody vegetation will be lopped or cut to achieve a horizontal mosaic pattern of no more than 25% cover of woody vegetation in a given acre (excluding tree canopy cover). Forbs and other vegetation will not be removed or cut unless they act as ladder fuels or aid the horizontal spread of fire on the ground. Where forbs or shrubs need to be removed, vegetation will be trimmed back to within 4-6 inches from the ground to minimize soil disturbance. Pruned limbs and cut vegetation will be lopped and scattered to a depth of no more than twelve inches. The existing vegetation and vegetative debris that will remain on the soil surface will catch the majority of sediment as it develops, therefore a significant increase in sediment runoff is not expected.

***a) Would the project expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:***

***i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42.)***

Less than Significant Impact: A desktop analysis was done utilizing both the Department of Conservation's Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map and Fault Activity Map of California. The Project area is located within the seismically active Santa Lucia Mountain Range within the Central California Coast Ranges geomorphic province, but it is not located in the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. Although Eastern Pico Blanco is not located on any known earthquake faults, the Project area lies near (within one mile) of Quaternary faults in the San Gregorio fault zone. The Eastern Pico Blanco Project area lies within one mile from the Palo Colorado fault, within three miles of the Sierra Hill fault, and within four miles of the San Gregorio fault. The Palo Colorado and San Gregorio faults are both late Quaternary faults that have been displaced within the last 700,000 years, while the Sierra Hill fault is a Quaternary fault (age undifferentiated). The Project area is also located within 15 to 20 miles of the Holocene segment of the Palo Colorado fault (active during the past 11,700 years).

It is possible that the Project area could be subject to strong seismic ground shaking or seismic-related ground failure if seismic activity occurred on a nearby fault. However, given that the project activities include vegetation maintenance and almost no soil disturbance, it is unlikely that the work would change the local impacts of the ground shaking. It is therefore considered that the impact would be less than significant.

***ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?***

Less Than Significant Impact: See comments under VI a) i) above.

***iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?***

No Impact: Liquefaction occurs when loose, water-saturated sediment loses strength and fails during strong ground shaking. The project activities do not have any components involving ground-shaking or vibration resulting from equipment, as equipment will be limited to hand tools.

***iv) Landslides?***

Less Than Significant Impact: The Eastern Pico Blanco Project area has a low landslide risk due to its underlying geology. Additionally, all project work in the Eastern Pico Blanco area will be completed by hand so there will be no soil disturbance. See comments under VI a) i) above.

***b) Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?***

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: Soil types present are predominantly sandy loams and gravelly loams on steep slopes that have a high erosion potential. The expected project activities are not expected to result in substantial soil erosion or cause the loss of topsoil, with mitigation measures incorporated.

***c) Would the project 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?***

Less Than Significant Impact: See comments under VI a) i) and iv) above.

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

No Impact: No soils were identified in the Project area with this definition.

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

No Impact: No septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems will be developed for this project.

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

No Impact: The project will not involve any ground disturbing activities such as grading or surface excavation and will not have potential to directly or indirectly destroy a paleontological resource or geologic feature.

**Measures to Reduce Impacts to Geology and Soils**

**Mitigation Measure GEO-1:** Waterbars will be installed where trails lead into or have access to a watercourse. An adequate number of waterbars as determined by the Project Manager will be installed to prevent the degradation of water quality. Constructed trails on side slopes will be located where impacts can be minimized and their numbers kept to the minimum required.

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

#### **Information about Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

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

Less Than Significant Impact: There will be greenhouse gases expected from equipment (chainsaws) and vehicle use to access the property, although the Project Area itself will be accessed only on foot. The expected contribution of these emissions, including CO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> are expected to not have a significant impact on the environment. Because the Project Area will only be accessible by foot, the only mechanical equipment that will be able to be brought in will be chainsaws. The operation of chainsaws is expected to last for approximately one month, with vehicle use being restricted to accessing the trail head area on the property containing the Project Area.

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

Less Than Significant Impact: The project does not conflict with the Big Sur Land Use Plan, the State Forest Carbon Plan or any other known regulation, policy or plan. One of the main project goals is to reduce the impacts and scale of catastrophic wildfire, which this project aims to do so through means that minimizes resource concerns.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>VIII. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Would the project:</b>				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

of hazardous materials into the environment?

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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, will it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, Would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the Project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, Would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the Project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

While there is potential for hazardous materials to pose a small threat to the environment of the project area, these materials will be limited to chainsaw fuel, oil, chain lube and cleaning chemicals. With mitigation incorporated for these materials, there is expected to be very minor impact from having these materials on site.

#### ***a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?***

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: There is some risk to the project environment through the use of gasoline, bleach and/or oil for refueling, maintenance and cleaning of equipment. The limitations imposed by the Project area's remoteness reduces the impact of this hazard somewhat, as the volume of fuel and cleaning chemicals would be limited. Additionally, there are mitigation measures for hazardous materials handling and transport in place for the project activities as well. These measures, coupled with the project's limitations, will reduce the risk of any hazard posed by fueling, cleaning or any other project activity involving hazardous materials to less than significant.

#### ***b) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?***

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: This risk will be mitigated through measures outlining spill procedures, requirement of hazardous material clean-up tools and products, proper disposal methods and also through reporting of any hazardous materials spills.

#### ***c) Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?***

No Impact: No, there are no schools within 0.25 miles of the Project area.

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

No Impact: No, the Project area is not located on a site with these hazardous materials.

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

No Impact: There are no airports or areas with airport use plans within two miles of the Project area.

***f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the Project area?***

No Impact: See comments for VIII, e.

***g) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?***

No Impact: No, the project does not interfere with an emergency evacuation or response plan.

***h) Would the project expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?***

Less Than Significant Impact: While there is a small chance that a wildfire could be started through project work activities, the types of work activities (pruning, lopping, scattering) that are expected will have little risk of starting a wildfire. All chainsaws will have spark arrestors which is the primary risk factor for starting wildfires under project implementation. Additionally, there are almost no structures within 0.5 miles of the project work area, which reduces the impacts to structures and people. Therefore, there is a less than significant risk posed by this project.

## **Measures to Reduce Impacts Related to Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-1:** Diesel fuel will at no time be transported across a live stream, except for that in the fuel tank of equipment being operated. Refueling staging areas will be situated away from waterways, dry or wet, and equipment will be stored and maintained within properly cleared areas.

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-2:** Contractors providing operations equipment (chainsaws) will make daily inspection of equipment for leaks, correcting and repairing any such leaks prior to resuming any crossing of live streams.

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-3:** Contractors will locate and stage all fuel storage facilities away from streams and areas that could potentially flow into a stream in the event of an accidental spill. Fuel spillage will be minimized by conducting these operations in flat areas and by having fuel containment equipment (i.e., absorbent sheets and waddles) at the refueling sites.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>IX. Hydrology and Water Quality. Would the project:</b>				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there will be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells will drop to a level that will not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which will result in substantial on- or off-site erosion or siltation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in on- or off-site flooding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures that would impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
j) Result in inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

The Eastern Pico Blanco Project area is located within the Little Sur Watershed, flanked by the South Fork of the Little Sur River on its southern side and the Little Sur River on its northern side. There are several small drainages located within the Project area that drain to the Little Sur River.

The project's primary work activities include the implementation of sheltered fuelbreaks with hand tools and chainsaws along Eastern Pico Blanco/Granite Rock land. No disturbed soil is expected to reach the stream system in connection with project work and stream sediment will not be disturbed in stream channels.

***a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?***

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: Project work poses a potential for impacts to water quality standards related to soil sediments resulting from work crews utilizing Project Area trails as well as the release of fuel/oil mix and equipment lubricants. This potential will be reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of mitigation measures HYDRO -1, HYDRO-2, HYDRO-3, BIO-1, GEO-1, HAZ-1, HAZ-2 and HAZ-3.

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

No Impact: Only a minor amount of surface water will be used during the implementation of project work and this will be limited to fire protection. As a result, no impacts to groundwater supplies or groundwater recharge will occur.

***c) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial on- or off-site erosion or siltation?***

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: No existing drainage patterns will be altered, and all project impacts will occur outside of stream courses and riparian areas. Potential for impacts of vegetation removal will be controlled through the implementation of Measures HYDRO -1, HYDRO-2, BIO-1, GEO-1, HAZ-1, HAZ-2 and HAZ-3, which will limit any potential impacts related to hydrology and water quality to a less than significant level.

***d) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in on- or off-site flooding?***

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: Within those portions of the fuel break course on steep slopes, considerable vegetative debris will be generated and serve as protective ground cover, and numerous water bars will be developed to reduce runoff flows that could be increased from the removal of vegetation on these steeper slopes. Mitigation Measures HYDRO -1, HYDRO-2, BIO-1, GEO-1, HAZ-1, HAZ-2 and HAZ-3 are expected to significantly reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level.

***e) Would the project 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?***



**No Impact:** The Project area is within a wildland area and has no manmade storm water drainage systems in place. Mitigation Measure GEO-1, along with Measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2, are expected to significantly reduce any potential sources of polluted runoff to a less than significant level.

***f) Would the project otherwise substantially degrade water quality?***

**Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated:** The Mitigation Measures HYDRO-1, HYDRO-2, HYDRO-3, BIO-1, GEO-1, HAZ-1, HAZ-2 and HAZ-3 will reduce potential overall water quality impacts to a less than significant level.

***g) Would the project place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?***

**No impact:** The Project area contains no housing units and no housing will be constructed as a result of project work.

***h) Would the project place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures that would impede or redirect flood flows?***

**No impact:** No structures will be developed that would impede or redirect flood flows.

***i) Would the project expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?***

**No Impact:** The Eastern Pico Blanco Project area is uninhabited and vegetation removal and here will not be any levees or dams constructed within the Project areas.

***j) Would the project result in inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?***

**No Impact:** There is no potential for seiches or tsunamis within the Project area. Vertical fuel break segments on steep slopes will be very limited and Mitigation Measure GEO-1 will reduce the potential for mud flows to a less than significant level in downstream areas.

**Measures to Reduce Impacts to Hydrology and Water Quality**

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-1:** Project Activities are limited to non-soil-disturbing hand-labor vegetation treatments. Crushed and compacted vegetation left on the ground is expected to stabilize any incidentally-disturbed soil. The streams within the Project area will have wide vegetative buffers as a protective measure that will provide a secondary benefit as sediment filter strips.

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-2:** Any newly-exposed soil of over 100 square feet in area will be mulched with brush to minimize the potential for erosion. Hand water bars will be installed to divert water onto stable vegetation and away from watercourses, as needed.

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-3:** All smaller streams having riparian vegetation will have a 50-foot no treatment buffer established on either side their channels. All springs will be encircled by a 50-foot no treatment buffer.

## Other Mitigation Measures

### Measures to Reduce Impacts to Biological Resources

Mitigation Measure BIO-1

### Measures to Reduce Impacts to Geology and Soils

Mitigation Measure GEO-1

### Measures to Reduce Impacts Related to Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2

Mitigation Measure HAZ-3

Using the techniques outlined above, no disturbed soil is expected to reach the stream system as a result of this project and any impacts resulting from project work are expected to be less than significant.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>X. Land Use and Planning. Would the project:</b>				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, a general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Discussion

There are no project actions that would have any impacts on current land uses, ordinances, communities, programs or conservation plans that would apply to the project area.

### **a) Would the project physically divide an established community?**

No Impact: The project will not physically divide any communities in the Project area through project activities.

### **b) Would the project conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, a general plan, specific plan, local coastal**

**program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?**

**No Impact:** The Project area falls under the California Coastal Zone Act, which does restrict certain activities and uses of land. The listed project activities do not conflict with the CZA, as there will be minimal ground disturbance in the Project area, with other project activities (lopping and scattering of material, removal of ladder fuels (<8" dbh)) having any significant impacts to the Coastal Zone Act goals and objectives mitigated.

**c) Would the project conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?**

**No Impact:** There are no known habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans in the Project areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XI. Mineral Resources. Would the project:</b>				
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion**

There are no mineral resource impacts either directly or indirectly from any project activities.

**a) Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?**

**No Impact:** There are no mineral resources that would be lost as a result of any of the project activities.

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

**No Impact:** There are no mineral resource recovery sites within the Project area.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XII. Noise. Would the project result in:</b>				
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or in other applicable local, state, or federal standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

or groundborne noise levels?

- |  |                          |                          |                                     |                                     |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, will the project expose people residing or working in the Project area to excessive noise levels? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, will the project expose people residing or working in the Project area to excessive noise levels?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
- 

### **Discussion**

***a) Would the project create exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or in other applicable local, state, or federal standards?***

Less Than Significant Impact: The project will require the use of chainsaws to complete project activities and operators of chainsaws will have adequate ear protection when operating. As the project activities will occur in a forested setting at least 0.5 miles from any population, the noise impact of operating chainsaws is minimal.

***b) Would the project create exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?***

No Impact: Chainsaw operation will cause almost undiscernible ground vibrations when project activities occur, even within the immediate Project area. With the nearest population of people living at least 0.5 miles to the north and only for a few months of the year, this exposure level drops to a level of no impact.

***c) Would the project create a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?***

No Impact: There are no project activities that would permanently increase ambient noise levels in the Project area.

***d) Would the project create a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?***

Less Than Significant Impact: There are some expected temporary increases in noise levels while the project is implemented, primarily from chainsaw use. The impact is projected to be limited to the Project area, and as there are no people within at least 0.5 miles of the project boundary, this temporary increase will have little impact on that population. When the project is completed, noise levels are expected to revert immediately to pre-project levels.

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

No Impact: There are no airports within two miles of the Project area.

***f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the Project area to excessive noise levels?***

No Impact: There are no private airstrips in the Project area.

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

### ***Discussion***

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

No Impact: The project does not propose any construction of houses, structures or add infrastructure to indirectly induce population growth in the Project area or elsewhere.

***b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing homes, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?***

No Impact: The project would not displace any number of houses due to any described actors or activities in the project description. No new housing will need to be built.

***c) Would the project displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?***

No Impact: No, the project would not displace any people due to any described actors or activities in the project description. No new housing will need to be built.

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

**Discussion**

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

**Fire protection?**

No Impact: The project would not impact fire protection services except to create a defensible area on the landscape to help implement wildfire control strategies.

**Police protection?**

No Impact: The project would not impact police protection services.

**Schools?**

No Impact: The project would not impact schools or their operations in any way.

**Parks?**

No Impact: The project would not impact California State Park, Monterey County Parks, Monterey Regional Parks District or National Park services.

**Other public facilities?**

No Impact: The project would not impact public facilities in any foreseen way.

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

### Discussion

**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?**

No Impact: There are no recreational facilities, regional or neighborhood parks in the Project area, so no impacts are expected from project activities in this regard.

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

No Impact: there are no recreational facilities or construction of any type of facility involved in this project proposal.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XVI. Transportation/Traffic. Would the project:</b>				
a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

**a) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?**

No Impact: The project does not conflict with any known transportation plan, ordinance or policy based on the current planned treatments and design.

**b) Would the project conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?**

No Impact: The project does not conflict with congestion management programs for designated roads or highways or for the Monterey County congestion management plan managed by Transportation Agency for Monterey County.

**c) Would the project result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?**

No Impact: There are no expected impacts to any air traffic or safety risks imposed by this project and its activities.

**d) Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?**

No Impact: The project will not increase hazards to transportation due to any design features within the plan or incompatible uses for roads or other transportation features.

**e) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?**

Less Than Significant Impact: The areas where project activities are expected to take place will have a basic plan in place before operation begins to describe steps to take in case of emergency access is needed by other vehicles. This plan, along with adequate communication with local residents, should alleviate any impacts posed by the project activities in regard to emergency access.

**f) Would the project conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?**

No Impact: There are no elements within the project that would have any foreseeable impacts on pedestrian, public transit or bicycling facilities within the project, as none of these facilities are known in the Project area.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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**XVII. Utilities and Service Systems. Would the project:**

a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion****a) Would the project exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?**Less Than Significant Impact:

There are no expectations that this project will result in any discharges of wastewater from any aspect of the project, with the only exception being cleaning of equipment. This activity will be restricted in scope, as all equipment and water have to be hiked into the Project area and the main tools are hand tools (loppers, brush rakes, pole saws) and chainsaws. The quantity of wastewater generated will be negligible and will amount to no more than tens of gallons over the entire project implementation period.

**b) Would the project require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?**

No Impact: There are no new facilities being constructed or expansion of any existing facility in this project.

**c) Would the project require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?**

No Impact: No new storm water drainage facilities are being built with this project nor are there any plans to expand any existing stormwaters drainage with this project.

**d) Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?**

**No Impact:** Existing water resources are adequate for the implementation of this project and no new resources or entitlements are expected as a result of this project.

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

**No Impact:** Yes, if a wastewater treatment provider made a determination, the project's expected demand would be able to be met by said wastewater treatment provider in Monterey County.

**f) Would the project be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?**

**No Impact:** The project activities do not include transporting vegetative materials offsite but rather have them piled or scattered in such a way to minimize ladder fuels in the Project area. Because of the remoteness of the Project area, there is no expected need for any landfill or solid waste disposal needs.

**g) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?**

**No Impact:** Yes, the project expects to adhere to all federal, state and local statutes for solid waste.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XVIII. Mandatory Findings of Significance.</b>				
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Does the project have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Authority: Public Resources Code Sections 21083 and 21083.05. Reference: Government Code Section 65088.4, Public Resources Code Sections 21080(c), 21080.1, 21080.3, 21083.05, 21083.3, 21093, 21094, 21095, and 21151; <i>Sundstrom v. County of Mendocino</i> , (1988) 202 Cal.App.3d 296; <i>Leonoff v. Monterey Board of Supervisors</i> (1990), 222 Cal.App.3d 1337; <i>Eureka Citizens for Responsible Government v. City of Eureka</i> (2007) 147 Cal.App.4th 357; <i>Protect the Historic Amador Waterways v. Amador Water Agency</i> (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th at 1109; <i>San Franciscans Upholding the Downtown Plan v. City and County of San Francisco</i> (2002) 102 Cal.App.4th 656.				

## Discussion

Overall, there are some expected but low-level impacts to the local environment as a result of project activities. Ladder fuels, including shrubs, small trees (<8" dbh), vines and forbs, will be trimmed or removed to reduce risk of canopy fire transmission. Mature trees over 8" dbh may be trimmed up to eight feet or

higher to also reduce the same risk. Non-special status vegetation on the ground will in some areas be trimmed substantially or removed to create spacing between plants on the ground in the fuelbreak area. With mitigation measures in place, impacts to the general environment and specific wildlife and plant species will be reduced to a less than significant threshold.

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

Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated: The project will have some local impacts to vegetation, including trimming or full removal of plant species in some areas that are densely vegetated in the project boundary. This may cause a temporary reduction in the quality of habitat for non-special status terrestrial and avian wildlife species. It will also create new micro-climate conditions that will benefit some plant species over others, including potential invasive plant species. These negative impacts are not expected to be long-lived (< five years) but because of the potential for any negative impact to any State or Federally listed species, mitigation measures have been incorporated in the project to reduce these impacts.

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

Less Than Significant Impact: This shaded fuelbreak treatment is part of a larger network of fuelbreaks in the Big Sur region. Overall, this system of fuelbreaks covers a large area of western Monterey County specifically to provide strategic locations to control wildfire from. Some of these fuelbreaks are past projects or have been put in during wildfire emergencies in the last forty years. There are other fuels treatments in this region that cover the same vegetation communities and ecosystems and help to link to this network, which is known colloquially as the Big Box Fuelbreak (Monterey County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2010). These treatments cross private, state and federal lands and have been analyzed for their environmental impacts in varying ways.

This project would add to the overall cumulative impact of this network of fuels treatments in Big Sur. Because this is a shaded fuelbreak with no dominant or codominant trees being removed, minimal ground disturbance, no mechanized equipment beyond chainsaws, and treatment types limited by access and terrain, the overall contribution of this potential negative impact is small relative to other fuels management that has been implemented in this network. While the project will have some temporary and localized effects on the vegetation and indirect effect to wildlife species in the area, these impacts will be minimal with the mitigations listed in this document incorporated and what impacts are left are expected to fade quickly over the span of a few years to the point of being indiscernible.

***c) Would the project have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?***

No Impact: This project is expected to have little to no adverse impact or effect on human beings directly or indirectly, other than the existing risk to workers implementing the project. The Project area is very remote, the access is limited to hiking, and the nearest residents are Boy Scouts of America campers at least .5 miles north/northwest of the project's northern boundary. Because of these factors, the direct and/or indirect effects are considered to be insignificant to the point of no impact to humans near the Project area.

**Appendix A**  
**Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP)**  
**for the**  
**Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project**  
**Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration**  
**Monterey County, California**

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15074(d), when adopting a mitigated negative declaration, the lead agency will adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) that ensures compliance with mitigation measures required for project approval. The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County is the lead agency for the above-listed project and has developed this MMRP as a part of the final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) supporting the project. This MMRP lists the mitigation measures developed in the IS/MND which were designed to reduce environmental impacts to a less-than-significant level. This MMRP also identifies the party responsible for implementing the measure, defines when the mitigation measure must be implemented, and which party or public agency is responsible for ensuring compliance with the measure.

**Potentially Significant Effects and Mitigation Measures**

The following is a list of the resources that will be potentially affected by the project and the mitigation measures made part of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration.

**Cultural Resources**

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-1:** Within areas of ground disturbing activities, if project work appears to expose any previously unknown archeological, prehistoric, historic or paleontological resource sites along the path of the fuel break or within 30 feet beyond the project boundary, the site will be avoided. Work may continue elsewhere within the overall Project area. Exposed cultural or paleontological resources will be appropriately flagged in order to immediately establish an exclusion buffer of at least 100 feet. A professional archeologist will examine the site, evaluate found objects, and make a finding of their significance. The archeologist will also develop recommendations for the permanent protection of objects and site treatments as necessary. Identified sites will be permanently protected through avoidance. These sites will be made off limits to both personnel and equipment. A professional archeologist will determine an appropriate permanently flagged exclusion zone once the site has been adequately assessed for significance.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-2:** If human remains are discovered within the Project area during project implementation, work will be suspended at the site where the remains have been uncovered and the County coroner will be immediately notified. If the remains are determined by the County coroner to be Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) will be notified within 24 hours and the guidelines of the NAHC will be adhered to in the treatment and disposition of the remains.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-3:** Implementation crews will be trained in the identification of cultural resource awareness before beginning work in the area by someone with expertise with local culture.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-4:** Implementation crews will avoid rock outcrops when working on the shaded fuel break. No work will occur on rock outcrops in the project boundary.

**Mitigation Measure ARCH-5:** Culturally important trees will be identified, marked and protected with a minimum buffer of at least 25 feet from project activities. These trees will be identified with cooperation from the Esselen Tribe and the locations of the trees will only be shared with the Tribe, the RCDMC and project contractors.

## **Biological Resources**

**Mitigation Measure BIO-1:** A 25-foot “no treatment” buffer will be established on either side of intermittent dry gulches that may be encountered in the course of completing project work. All riparian areas will be considered ‘No Work Zones.’ The start of the watercourse buffer zones will be flagged with Watercourse Lake Protection Zone (WLPZ) flagging.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-2:** Placement of slash generated near any watercourse, seasonal stream, or where there is a strong likelihood that materials would migrate to surface waters in high precipitation events will be avoided.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-3:** There will be no crossings of waterways or streambeds by mechanical equipment.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-4:** Areas within the Project areas considered sensitive habitat will be flagged as special protection zones where no project activities will occur.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-5:** In areas where buckwheat spp. (Smith's Blue butterfly host plants) have been mapped or can occur, operations will be avoided and seasonally restricted. Smith's Blue butterfly flight season is mid-June to early September. Individual plants will be flagged and not disturbed during project activities.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-6:** Areas mapped with milkweed shall have limited disturbance and no milkweed plants will be removed. Chips shall not be spread in these areas. Individual plants will be flagged and not disturbed during project activities.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-7:** Project activity may not occur during wet, rainy, times of the year or in muddy conditions in order to avoid impacts to sensitive amphibian species and their movement.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-8:** Woodrat nests are flagged for avoidance with special treatment flagging. Heavy equipment shall be routed around nests and trees will be aimed away, where possible. The intent is to avoid woodrat nests to the greatest extent practical.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-9:** Conduct nest surveys before/during treatment. Project activity that occurs during nesting season will require visual inspection for nests. Signs of nest include completed nests, accumulation of nesting material at base of tree, accumulation of bird droppings, and sounds associated with nesting birds. Trees or understory vegetation with active nests will not be worked on. A minimum 150' buffer will be observed around all active nests.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-10:** Project activity for fuel treatments will not occur during bird nesting season.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-11:** Conduct a training session for all construction crew personnel before any significant ground disturbance or building work, year-round. The training will be conducted by a qualified biologist and will include a discussion of the sensitive biological resources in the Project areas and the potential presence of special-status species. This must include a discussion of special-status species' habitats, protection measures to ensure species are not impacted by project activities, project boundaries, and biological conditions outlined in the project permits, as applicable.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-12:** Little Sur River: 150 foot no work zone from centerline of the river.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-13:** Any List 1, List 2 or List 3 Sensitive Plants found within a work area will be avoided during project work, and a California Registered Professional Forester (RPF) or professional botanist will evaluate any potential findings identified within work areas.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-14:** The RCDMC shall prevent the spread of invasive plant species to the extent feasible. Clean plant material and soil from equipment and clothing before entering project area and after working in areas infested with known invasive plant species, including but not limited to French broom and jubata grass.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-15:** The RCDMC shall be responsible for protecting against the spread of SOD through implementation of the following requirements:

- Train management staff and contractors on host species, symptoms, and disease transmission pathways for *Phytophthora ramorum* and other *Phytophthora* species, and on BMPs to prevent the spread of SOD, including:
- Clean equipment after working in forest and woodland habitats, including chainsaws, boots, and truck tires (spray with a 10% bleach solution or other disinfectant, then rinse).
- As is feasible, work in forest and woodlands in the dry season instead of the wet season when spores are being produced and infections are starting. Avoid or minimize pruning oak, tanoak, and bays in wet weather.
- Leave potentially infected downed trees on site instead of transporting the material to an uninfected area. Where infection is already known to be present, leaving *P. ramorum*-infected or killed trees on site has not been shown to increase the risk of infection to adjacent trees.
- If necessary to reduce safety or fire hazards, infected trees can be cut, branches chipped, and wood split. Avoid working in wet weather. Clean equipment after work is completed. Do not leave cut wood and chips in an area where they might be transported to an uninfected location.

## Geology and Soils

**Mitigation Measure GEO-1:** Waterbars will be installed where trails lead into or have access to a watercourse. An adequate number of waterbars as determined by the Project Manager will be installed to prevent the degradation of water quality. Constructed trails on side slopes will be located where impacts can be minimized and their numbers kept to the minimum required.

## **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-1:** Fuel/oil mix will at no time be transported across a live stream, except for that in the fuel tank of equipment being operated. Refueling staging areas will be situated away from waterways, dry or wet, and equipment will be stored and maintained within properly cleared areas.

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-2:** Contractors providing operations equipment (chainsaws or other powered hand tools) will make daily inspection of equipment for leaks, correcting and repairing any such leaks prior to resuming any crossing of live streams.

**Mitigation Measure HAZ-3:** Contractors will locate and stage all fuel storage facilities away from streams and areas that could potentially flow into a stream in the event of an accidental spill. Fuel spillage will be minimized by conducting these operations in flat areas and by having fuel containment equipment (i.e., absorbent sheets and waddles) at the refueling sites.

## **Hydrology and Water Quality**

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-1:** Crushed and compacted vegetation left on the ground is expected to stabilize disturbed soil. The streams within the Project area will have wide vegetative buffers that will act as a sediment filter strips.

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-2:** Any newly-exposed soil of over 100 square feet in area will be mulched with brush to minimize the potential for erosion. Hand water bars will be installed to divert water onto stable vegetation and away from watercourses, as needed.

**Mitigation Measure HYDRO-3:** All smaller streams having riparian vegetation will have a 50-foot no treatment buffer established on either side their channels. All springs will be encircled by a 50-foot no treatment buffer.



## Appendix B

### Cultural Resource Assessment Report

#### Executive Summary

In February 2021, the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCD) contracted with Albion Environmental, Inc. (Albion) to conduct a cultural resource assessment of a 40-acre Project Area located in the northern Los Padres National Forest, north of Big Sur, Monterey County, California. RCD is proposing a hazardous fuel reduction project (Project) as part of the larger Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project. The goals of the Project are to reduce fuel hazards, increase forest and vegetation community resiliency, and control and manage invasive plant species. The Project is subject to environmental review, including an assessment of cultural resources, and must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As such, it is necessary for the Project to determine if it will have an effect on historical resources under CEQA, which includes archaeological and Tribal Cultural resources.

To comply with CEQA requirements, Albion completed the following tasks: (1) background historical research, including archival maps and photos and a records search at the Northwest Information Center (NWIC) of the California Historical Resources Information System, extending to a quarter mile beyond the Project Area; (2) pedestrian field survey of the Project Area to identify any previously unidentified archaeological resources; (3) Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File search and Native American stakeholder outreach; and (4) a report documenting cultural resource identification efforts for the Project.

Archival research indicates that the Project Area and immediate vicinity have been subjected to a moderate amount of past archaeological and cultural resource investigations, as the records search identified two cultural resource studies that have been previously conducted within a portion of the Project Area and three cultural resource studies that have been previously conducted within a quarter-mile radius of the Project Area.

Additionally, archival research did not uncover any data that documented the presence of historic structures within the Project Area; however, archival research and Native American outreach indicates the Project Area and the vicinity are sensitive to contain archaeological and cultural resources. The record search identified one previously recorded cultural resource within the Project Area, CA-MNT-828H, a historic-era Serrano Horse Ranch. However, the location is noted as only approximate and the site record does not contain any maps or locational details aside from basic township and range information. Moreover, the record search identified eight previously recorded cultural resources within a quarter-mile radius of the Project Area. These eight resources consist of three precolonial sites with bedrock mortars (CA-MNT-299, CA-MNT-1357, CA-MNT-1358), four historic-era built environment resources (P-27-002848, P-27-003623, P-27-003625, and P-27-003624) and one multi-component site (CA-MNT-770/H), with both precolonial (a single bedrock mortar) and historic-era (redwood cabins) components. The NAHC Sacred Lands File search was negative, and Native American outreach documented Tribal concerns about cultural resources within the immediate vicinity of the Project Area and potential Tribal Cultural Resources within the Project Area.

After reviewing the record search results, Albion conducted a pedestrian survey of all accessible portions of the Project Area, as well as the Access Route work crew may use for the Project.

Throughout the Project Area, ground visibility was very poor, with approximately 0–5% of the ground surface being visible during the survey inspection. Rock outcrops that may have been used as bedrock mortars or as a quarry for stone tool raw material acquisition and production were not observed within the Project Area during the survey. However, one rock outcrop was observed outside but in the vicinity of the Project Area, but vegetation and terrain constraints did not allow for close inspection of this outcrop. The survey revealed no cultural materials on the surface of the Project Area, and no evidence of intact precolonial or historic-era archaeological deposits were identified on the surface of the Project Area.

Overall, given the negative pedestrian survey, the lack of evidence of rock outcrops, and extremely rugged terrain in the Project Area, the potential for archaeological resources within the Project Area is low. Based on this information and the fact that there is no proposed ground disturbance anticipated in the Project Area, it is Albion’s judgement that the Project will not impact any precolonial or historic-era archaeological resources. Additionally, it is our judgment that work crews utilizing the existing trail to access the Project Area will not impact CA-MNT-828H or CA-MNT-770/H. The vicinity around the Project Area was undoubtedly used during precolonial times, and likely through a prolonged period of time, as it would have provided excellent natural resource acquisition areas near fresh water and a link to the Pacific Ocean. This area is also very important to the local Tribal community represented by multiple Tribal groups. Based on this information, it is Albion’s judgement the Project Area may contain Tribal Cultural Resources, and although the Project does not anticipate any ground disturbance within the Project Area, vegetation removal activities may have the potential to impact Tribal Cultural Resources.

Many important cultural resources, such as Tribal Cultural Resources, do not necessarily leave an archaeological footprint or have physically identifiable manifestations, so it is vital to seek out the possibility of these important resources and their locations through consultation with local Tribal members. Therefore, we recommend the RCD, under the authority of Assembly Bill 52, work with local Tribal communities to identify Tribal Cultural Resources and understand potential Project impacts to any Tribal Cultural Resources. RCD is responsible for collecting and incorporating Tribal information into the environmental review process.

Additionally, depending on the outcome of Assembly Bill 52 consultation, we recommend the work crew receive a cultural resource awareness training prior to conducting fieldwork and we recommend that work crews stay within the trail footprint when traversing the Access Route to the Project Area. Moreover, due to the relative frequency of bedrock mortar sites in the surrounding area, Project activities in areas with rock outcrops should be avoided. Please note, rock outcrops were not observed within the Project Area during the survey for the current study. If previously unidentified cultural materials are unearthed during construction, it is CEQA policy that work be halted in that area until a qualified archaeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the find. An additional archaeological study may be needed if Project limits are extended beyond the present study limits.

Link to the full cultural resources report here: [Albion Environmental Inc. Final Report for RCDMC](#)

## LIST AND DEFINITION OF ACRONYMS AND SYMBOLS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

### Acronyms

APE	Area of Potential Effect
AQAP	Air Quality Attainment Plan
ARB	Air Resources Board
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMPs	Best Management Practices
BP	Before Present
CA	California
CAA	Clean Air Act
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CCAA	California Clean Air Act
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CHRIS	California Historical Resources Information System
CNDDb	California Natural Diversity Data Base
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon Dioxide
CO <sub>2</sub> e	Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (a standard unit to measure global warming potential)
CSOHP	California State Office of Historic Preservation
dBa	decibel
DBH	Diameter at Breast Height
et al.	<i>et alii</i> (Latin) (it means “and others”)
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESBA	Emergency Services Building Act
FFS	Forest Fire Station
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
H	Historic (As used in CA-TRI-1374H, means this is a historic site)
HWY	Highway
IS	Initial Study
IS/MND	Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
km	kilometer(s)
kWh	kilowatt hour (of electricity)
LPSCFC	Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative
m	meter(s)
M.A.	Master of Arts
MDBM	Mount Diablo Base Meridian
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
MMRP	Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Plan

N/A	Not Applicable
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NOI	Notice of Intent (to adopt a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration)
NWIC	Northwest Information Center
OPR	(Governor's) Office of Planning and Research
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
PM10	Particulate Matter less than 10 microns in diameter
P.O.	Post Office
PRC	Public Resources Code
RPF	Registered Professional Forester
RWQCG	Regional Water Quality Control Board
RCDMC	Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
SCH	State Clearinghouse
SW	Southwest
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
THP	Timber Harvesting Plan
USGS	United States Geological Survey
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
W	West

## Symbols

§	Section
#	Number
%	Percent

## Plant Rankings

**State Ranking** - The state rank (S-rank) is assigned much the same way as the global rank, except state ranks in California often also contain a threat designation attached to the S-rank.

S1 = Less than 6 EOs OR less than 1,000 individuals OR less than 2,000 acres

S1.1 = very threatened

S1.2 = threatened

S1.3 = no current threats known

S2 = 6-20 EOs OR 1,000-3,000 individuals OR 2,000-10,000 acres

S2.1 = very threatened

S2.2 = threatened

S2.3 = no current threats known

S3 = 21-80 EOs or 3,000-10,000 individuals OR 10,000-50,000 acres

S3.1 = very threatened

S3.2 = threatened

S3.3 = no current threats known

S4 = Apparently secure within California; this rank is clearly lower than S3 but factors exist to cause some concern; i.e. there is some threat, or somewhat narrow habitat. No Threat Rank.

S5 = Demonstrably secure to ineradicable in California. No Threat Rank.

CNPS Ranking

List 1A: Plants Presumed Extinct in California

List 1B: Plants Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and Elsewhere

List 2: Plants Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California, But More Common Elsewhere

List 3: Plants About Which We Need More Information - A Review List

List 4: Plants of Limited Distribution - A Watch List

Threat Code extensions and their Meanings:

1 - Seriously endangered in California

2 – Fairly endangered in California

3 – Not very endangered in California

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