

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
for the proposed
Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project: Rancho Rico
Monterey County, California
State Clearinghouse Number Pending



Photo by Albion Environmental Inc. May 2022

prepared by:
Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
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Salinas, CA 93905

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

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MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Introduction and Regulatory Context

Introduction

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND¹) 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 in the Rancho Rico Community. 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 Resource Conservation District of Monterey County 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. This disclosure document is being made available to the public, and reviewing agencies, for review and comment. 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 August 15th, 2022, and ends on September 14th, 2022.

¹ A list and definition of the acronyms and symbols used in this CEQA document is presented on pages 56-58.

Project Description and Environmental Setting

Project Location

The Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project: Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment legal location is in Township 19S, Range 01E (M), Sections 31 and Township 19S, Range 02E (M), Section 36. The USGS quadrangle for the project is **Pfeiffer Point**.

Background and Need for the Project

The Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project is a Hazardous Fuel Reduction project targeting the northern Santa Lucia Mountains with a wide variety of fuels reduction and forest resiliency treatments totaling over 1,735 acres. 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 the Basin Complex burned and it scorched 132,217 acres and cost \$260 million to combat, with one fatality and 57 structures destroyed. In 2020, the Dolan Fire burned 128,050 acres and its footprint overlaps much of the historic Basin Complex and Kirk Complex fires.

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, 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 subproject located within the overall project area. Figures 1-3 show the proposed areas under consideration for this CEQA analysis. Other areas of the overall Los Padres Strategic

Community Fuelbreak Collaborative project area have CEQA or NEPA already completed and will not be considered under this analysis.

Project Objectives

The total estimated acreage of **the Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment** project is 104 acres. These treatments will enhance defensible space, allow for safer emergency ingress and egress, decrease wildfire ignition risk and rate of spread, and allow for more effective control of wildfires for a Big Sur community. The main objective is wildfire prevention through fuels treatment by implementing mechanical and hand treatments of overgrown and/or overstocked forested areas of the Rancho Rico community.

Rancho Rico Treatments

Roadside Treatments

The Rancho Rico treatments will consist of roadside mowing and/or mastication within 50 feet on either side on part of the main road system in Rancho Rico. This will be coupled with pruning and limbing of trees and shrubs within this zone, with trees being limbed up the main bole or stem to 10 feet wherever feasible. Shrubs will be pruned as needed to prevent horizontal layering of fuels, with a recommended guideline of at least five radial feet between shrubs in this zone. All mature French broom in this treatment type will be removed mechanically or by hand; cut French broom should be piled away from other vegetation and pile burned or covered with plastic sheeting until it can be disposed of. Masticated material may be distributed along the outer boundary of the treatment area to a depth of no greater than 18" in any given area. There are approximately 1.7 miles of roadside treatment areas within Rancho Rico.

Community Fuels Treatment (Zone 1: 100 to 300 feet)

The defensible space treatment area surrounding homes and structures in parts of Rancho Rico will have trees limbed up to at least ten feet from the ground level starting at 100 feet out from main homes and structures to at least 300 feet out from structures. Bushes and other woody vegetation will be masticated, mowed or cut to reduce ground cover to no more than 25% cover of non-tree woody vegetation in Zone 1. Treatments may be implemented by tracked or wheeled skid steers in accessible parts of the treatment zone. Less accessible areas will be treated by hand crews with chainsaws, loppers and other portable equipment. Masticated, mowed or chipped material will not exceed 18" depth in any given area in this zone. Additionally, if a tree poses a safety threat to a structure or road, it will be removed in accordance with Monterey County tree removal regulations. Trees smaller than 12 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) can be removed to reduce ladder fuels where they exist. The emphasis in this zone is to provide extra security for structures, reduce fire spread rate and intensity and provide an area for fire personnel to defend Rancho Rico structures in the event of a wildfire. Individual treatments in this zone may be modified from this description depending on slope, vegetation composition and discovery of any previously unknown resource concerns.

Community Fuels Treatment (Zone 2: 300 feet and beyond)

In the area greater than 300 feet from structures, trees will be limbed or pruned up to eight feet wherever feasible; this applies to all areas regardless of slope percentage. Other woody vegetation will be mowed or masticated to achieve 33% ground cover of shrubs and woody vegetation in Zone 2, with an average horizontal spacing of 2 times the average shrub height between shrubs and up to six times the average

shrub height on slopes greater than 25%; masticated/mowed/mulched material resulting from treatments will not exceed 18" depth in any given area in this zone. The emphasis in this zone is to reduce ladder fuels and prevent fire moving into the canopy of trees. No trees will be removed unless they are 8 inches dbh or less and contribute to ladder fuels in this zone. In areas inaccessible to machinery, cut limbs or vegetation will be lopped and scattered, with material distributed evenly and not exceeding 18" in depth. There will be no piling of materials in either zone unless specifically requested by the landowner.

No treated vegetation will be transported offsite in this project.

Project Start Date

The work specifically mentioned under these Project Objectives will begin Fall/Winter of 2023.

Project Description

Environmental Setting of the Project Region

The overall project area spans a large section of the Santa Lucia Mountains near the Central Coast of California. The project area 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, Monterey cypress stands, coastal sage scrub, maritime chaparral, coastal prairie, montane chaparral, coast live oak woodlands and annual grasslands.

Description of the Local Environment

Rancho Rico is a small family community west of Highway 1, south of the town Big Sur. It sits on a ridge above Sycamore Canyon and extends west to the Pacific Ocean. The Post Ranch Resort and a Big Sur Fire Brigade station are immediately to the south of Rancho Rico, while private residences and Pfeiffer Beach are found to the north and west. On the east, Highway 1 borders Rancho Rico. This area is found in the California Coastal Zone as defined by the California Coastal Commission (California Coastal Commission 2022). There are several parcels in the project area, some of which contain homes and other structures, including barns, gardens, fences and other infrastructure. A series of private roads connects these areas, which has one entry/exit point to Highway 1. Most of the Rancho Rico community area sits on the ridge at approximately 800 to 1,000 feet elevation. The top of the ridge area has been mostly cleared for agricultural use and contains annual grasslands and developed areas with some pockets of maritime chaparral. As the property slopes steeply north towards Sycamore Canyon, the vegetation here is composed of coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*), tanoaks (*Notholithocarpus densiflorus*), bigleaf maples (*Acer macrophyllum*), coastal redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) in steeper drainages and Douglas fir (*Psuedotsuga menziesii*) trees. The understory contains a variety of woody species, including poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobium*), gooseberry (*Ribes* spp.), manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), California lilacs (*Ceanothus* spp.) and French broom (*Genista monosperma*). Some areas have larger infestations of French broom in openings and have been previously treated with hand and mechanical treatments.

Current Land Use and Previous Impacts

The current land use of the project area consists of residential use, conservation, and grazing. The land has been used for these purposes since the colonization of California by the Spanish in the late 18th century. Pre-colonization, the project area was occupied by the Ohlone-Rumsen, Costanoan and the Esselen tribes of central California until the 19th century, when Spanish settlers forced them into missions and rancherias. Rancho Rico is a small community occupied by the Chapellet family for at least the last four decades. It is assumed that some portion of this area was historically grazed by cattle and/or sheep, due to the extensive amount of land in the Big Sur coastal area that was used for this purpose in the 18th and 19th centuries. Logging of redwood trees also occurred around this area, although it is not known how intensively this was done in the project area itself.

Figure 1. Overall Project Location

Project Location



Project Lead: Resource Conservation District of Monterey County

Figure 2. Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Map with treatment polygons

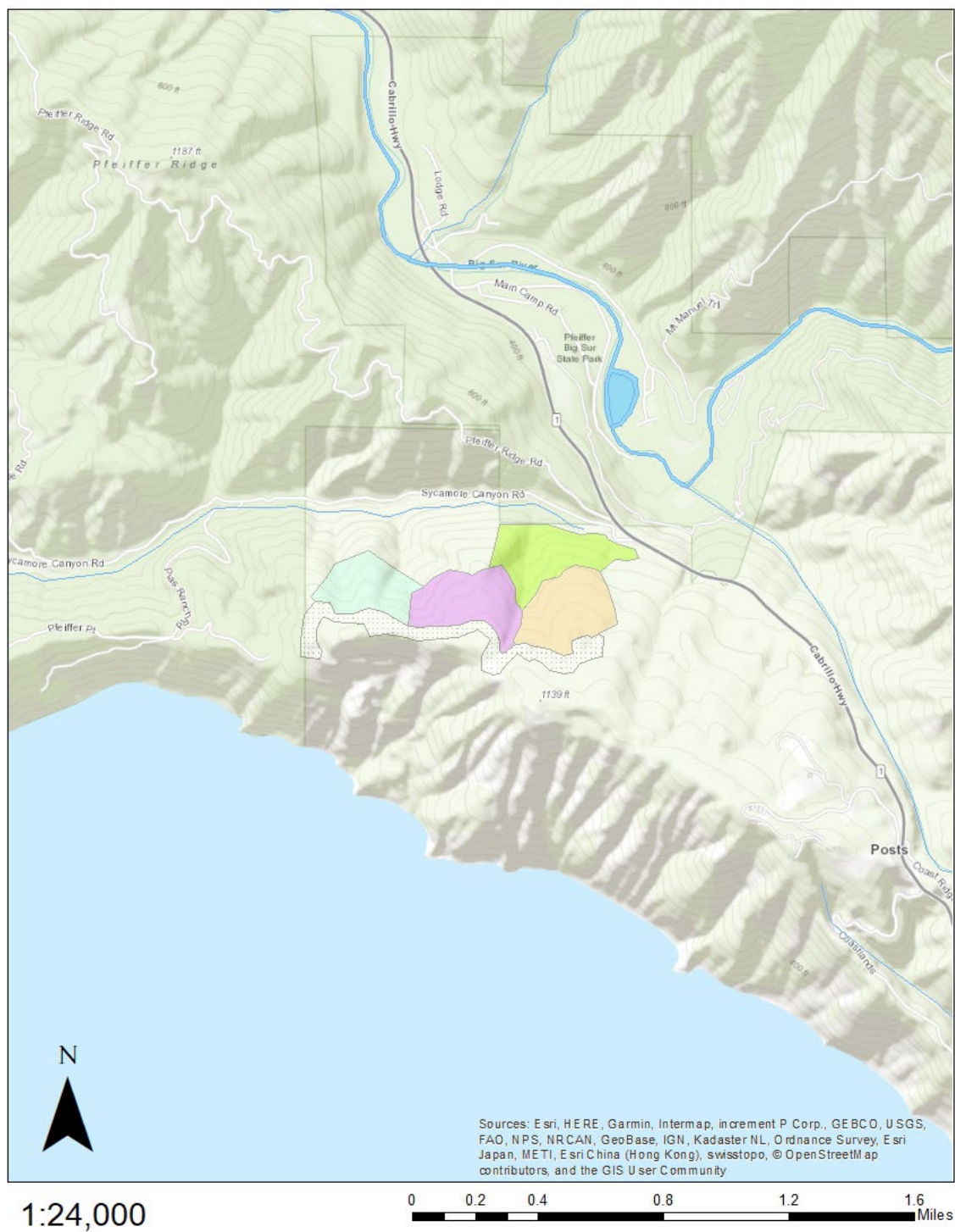
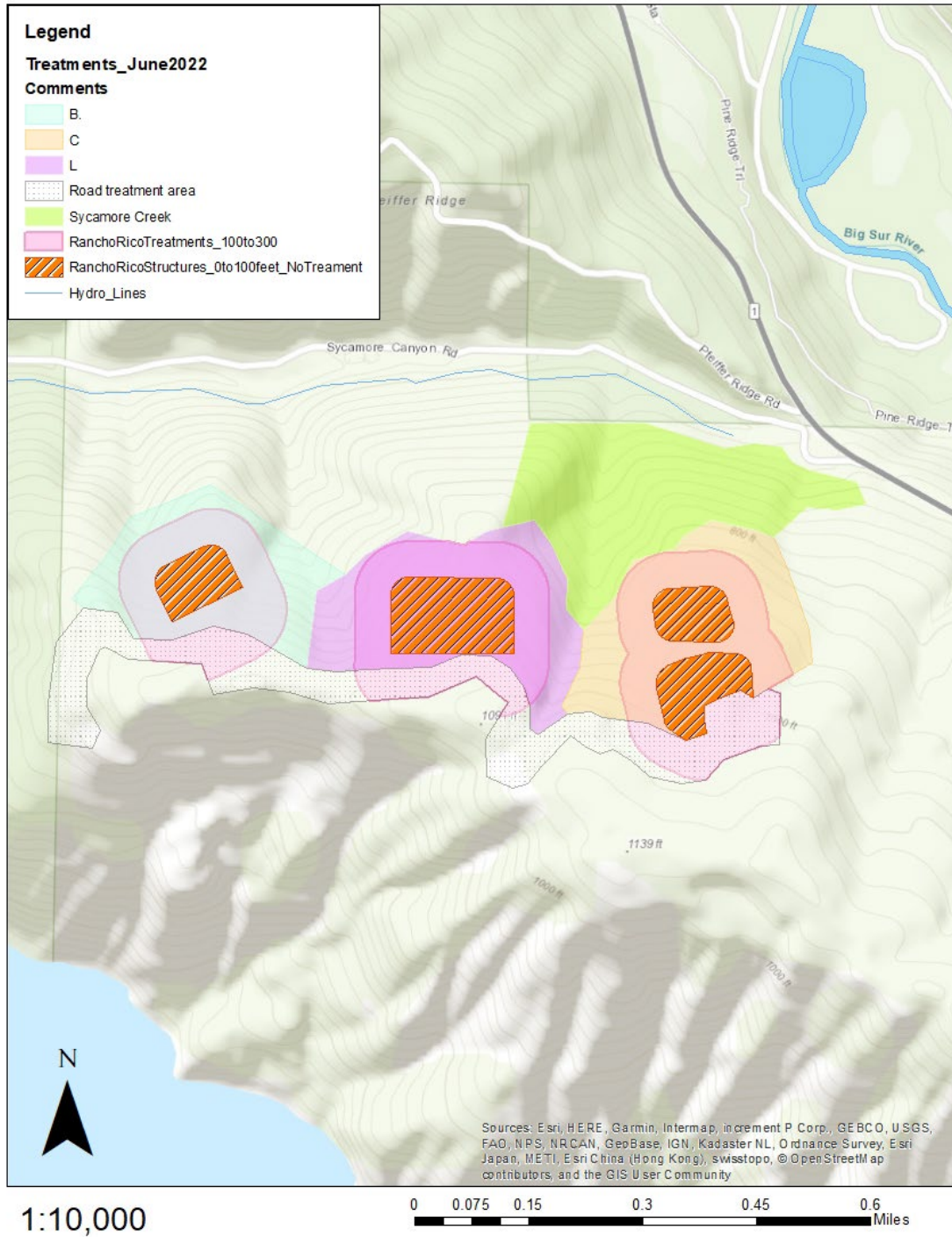


Figure 3. Rancho Rico Community Fuels Project- Detailed Treatment Map



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 associated State and local regulations:

- Coastal Development Permit
- Tree Removal permit
- County Encroachment Permit

Mitigation Measures

Archaeological/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 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 in treatment areas. No work will be implemented on rock outcrops in the project boundary.

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 while completing project work. Sycamore Creek will have a 50 foot machine exclusion zone from centerline of the creek. 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 area considered sensitive habitat will be flagged as special protection zones where no project activities will occur.

Mitigation Measure BIO-5: In areas where buckwheat species (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 project activities will not occur within 10 feet of plants.

Mitigation Measure BIO-6: Areas mapped with milkweed species 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 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 to be felled 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 nesting 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: 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 area 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-11: 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-12: 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-13: 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 on slopes 30% or greater where 500 sq. ft. or more of soil has been exposed by project activities. 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 proposed 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 Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Service and Recreation.
2. The proposed project will have a less than significant impact on Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forest Resources, Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise, Transportation and Traffic and Utilities and Service Systems.
3. Mitigation is required to reduce potentially significant impacts related to Biological Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality and Mandatory Findings of Significance.

The Initial Study/Environmental Checklist included in this document discusses the results of resource-specific environmental impact analyses which were conducted by the Department. This Initial Study revealed that potentially significant environmental effects could result from the proposed project; however, RCDMC has incorporated mitigation measures 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, Townsends big-eared bat, Santa Lucia fir and black swift. 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 negative impacts to water percolation, overland flow, riparian vegetation and channel structure.

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:	Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment				
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 31 and 36				
5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address:	Resource Conservation District of Monterey County 744-A LaGuardia Street, Salinas, CA 93905				
6. General Plan Designation:	Big Sur Land Use Plan				
7. Zoning:	Rural Residential/Watershed and Scenic Conservation				
8. Description of Project: See Pages 5-8 of this document					
9. Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:	Refer to page 7-8 of this document				
10: Other public agencies whose approval may be required:	California Coastal Commission, County of Monterey Public Works				
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:					
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Aesthetics	<input 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 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) 975-7757

Date Signed

ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
I. Aesthetics. Will the project:				
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion

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 within a state scenic highway (Highway 1).

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. Some homes in Rancho Rico will have more light and expanded views, which can be classified as either desirable or non-desirable, as a result from defensible space treatments applied in that project area. Mature, healthy trees and most understory trees will be left in place, but limbing of trees up to twelve feet will take place and removal of brush in areas around the property will allow longer views and may make the structure more noticeable from surrounding areas. This will be mitigated by the retention of the mature trees in the project area, which will still provide cover for the structures from multiple viewpoints.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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

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 reclassification 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. While some smaller diameter trees (<12" DBH) 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.

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
III. Air Quality.				
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Information about Air Quality

Discussion

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

No Impact. The plan will not conflict with the Air Quality Plan. It is not projected to emit over 137 lbs/day of VOCs or NO_x emissions based on projected work and equipment as described in the project description. It plans to 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 plan will not contribute substantially to existing air quality or projected 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_x or VOCs, 550 lbs/day of CO, 82 lbs of PM₁₀, emit 150 lbs/day of SO_x 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, PM₁₀ or toxic air contaminant standards for any known or reasonably foreseeable sensitive receptors. The only sensitive receptors in the area are private residents in Rancho Rico; these residences are spread out over several hundred acres and are not concentrated. The project activities will not be focused near resident households, with a minimum buffer of at least 100 feet from homes, and through communication with residents, any pollutant emissions resulting from that work will be minimized further.

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

Less Than Significant Impact. The project will minimize objectionable odors affecting a substantial amount of people due to the low density of residents in Rancho Rico and the type of emissions expected do not meet this criteria or 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
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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"/>

Information about Biological Resources

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 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 Big Sur River and its tributaries, presenting high quality spawning and rearing habitat. There will be no impacts to Steelhead trout since the Rancho Rico 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 (2018), Pfeiffer Beach Creek (2016 and 2018), a private ephemeral pond owned by Post Ranch Inn (2018), and a perennial creek between Castro and Grimes canyon 6 miles SE of Big Sur (2000).

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. Extant individuals occurring near Rancho Rico have been recorded in the Big Sur River including Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, Pheneger Creek (2018), Andrew Molera State Park (2018) and 1 mile south of the town of Big Sur (2018). Individuals have also been reported in the creek of Sycamore Canyon, upstream and east of Pfeiffer Beach (2018). Data displaying extant and verified sightings of this species showed no indication of this species within the Rancho Rico project area, thus suitable habitat for this species does not occur in the 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. 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. There is only one recording of Western Pond Turtle within a 5 miles radius of the project area which occurs in the Big Sur River, west of Highway 1, about 2 miles northwest of Big Sur. Data displaying extant and verified sightings of this species showed no indication of this species nor is suitable habitat present within the Rancho Rico 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, flagged for avoidance with a no-disturbance buffers.

Smith's Blue Butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*): In 1976 Smith's Blue 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. 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 including: chaparral habitat in cliffs northwest of Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park (1989), east side of Highway 1 in Lafler Canyon (1998), road cuts along east side of Highway 1 near Torre Canyon (1998). Hostplants *Eriogonum latifolium* and *parvifolium* are most commonly associated with coastal dunes and coastal sage scrub plants communities. These types of plant communities occur within the project area thereby requiring biological assessments, flagging with 10 feet no-disturbance buffers and appropriate LOPs.

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, and 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 including: near the mouth of Castro Canyon, about 1.8 miles south of the project area (2016) and Sycamore Canyon near Pfeiffer Beach, about 1.2 miles northwest of the project area (2016). There are no identified California monarch overwintering sites within the project area.

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 above the surf and cliffs behind or adjacent to waterfalls in deep canyons. 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, California Bird Species of Special Concern Rocky Point; the latter is the site called Pt. Sur in Remsen 1978 and Bixby Creek mouth in 1993 and

at one inland location (Canogas Falls, Devils Canyon fork of Big Creek). Several rare summer residents of mountain foothill canyons were recorded nesting on cliffs behind or adjacent to waterfalls in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park (1995). No breeding sites or such characteristics have been identified in the proposed project site.

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 .10 miles to the north of the project area along Pfeiffer Ridge. 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. Any Santa Lucia fir trees found in the project area will be marked with flagging and have a 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 4 miles to the north/northwest. Chaparral habitat will be avoided in general for this project; however, some individual plants could potentially be pruned. 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 or is known in the project area, but potential habitat does exist. 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 seven miles to the north near the mouth of the Little Sur River. 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, dry cismontane woodlands and riparian woodlands from 65 to 2,165 feet. A known CNDDDB occurrence (June 2022) overlaps part of the project area. If the plant is found, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance. In addition, topsoil disturbance is minimized through other project mitigations, reducing the impact to this species.

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. Two known occurrences are found .25 miles to the northeast of the project boundary on California State Parks land. If the plant is found, 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 or are known in the project

area. Potential habitat exists; if the plant is found during pre-implementation 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. There is a known occurrence .20 miles to the west of the project area. Any fragrant fritillary found during the project implementation will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Abram's 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 pre-implementation surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Arroyo Seco bush-mallow (*Malacothamnus palmeri* (Wats.) Greene var. *lucianus* Kear.): 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. 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. No known occurrences exist within four miles of the project area. Any occurrences of Dudley's lousewort 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. No adobe sanicle is known from existing occurrences; if the plant is found during surveys, it will be mapped and flagged for avoidance.

Discussion

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 known or located within the Rancho Rico 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. Additionally, any species that is a candidate, sensitive or special status that is found during pre-implementation surveys or during implementation will have no-work buffer areas applied to them immediately and work may cease until adequate mitigation is fully implemented.

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?

Less than Significant Impact. No formally designated riparian habitats or sensitive natural communities have been established within the Project area. Project activity will be limited to oak woodland and mixed conifer habitats. For the Rancho Rico project area, fuel treatments may occur adjacent to riparian habitats. 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 CRLF or FYLF in the project area. In addition, Mitigation Measures 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 area, there will no impact to protected wetlands as defined by section 404 of the Clean Water Act. There is no proposed earth work, 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 are incorporated into project implementation in order to reduce any unforeseen 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 Rancho Rico project site are based on a shaded fuelbreak model. Removal of mature native trees larger than that of 12 inches (in most areas, 8 inches or less) 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 canopy cover in these areas, with some crown overlap, is acceptable to maintain cooler and moister understory conditions. Additionally, understory vegetation will remain greener 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. This project will not interfere with any Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan or any other known conservation plans.

Mitigation Measures to Reduce Impacts Related 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 area considered sensitive habitat will be flagged as special protection zones where no project activities will occur.

Mitigation Measure BIO-5: In areas where buckwheat species (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 (> .25 inches of rain in 24 hours) 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: 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 area 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-11: 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-12: 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-13: 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
V. Cultural Resources. Will the project:				
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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

Background research indicates that the Project Area and immediate vicinity have been subjected to a fair amount of past archaeological and cultural resource investigations, as the NWIC records search indicated that five cultural resource studies have been previously conducted within portions of the Project Area and 16 cultural resource studies have been previously conducted within a 0.25-mile radius of the Project Area. The NWIC records search identified no previously recorded cultural resources within the Project Area, and three previously recorded cultural resources within 0.25-mile radius of the Project Area, all of which are historic-era roads or highways. Archival research identified a 1954 historic aerial image of the Project Area that shows the existing vegetation and dirt roads in the Project Area are much the same today as they were in 1954. The areas clear of trees where residences currently exist in the Project Area are also visible in the 1954 image, although only one of the residences, the one in the eastern portion of the Project Area, appears to have been present then. No other historic structures/buildings are present within the Project Area. Additionally, the NAHC Sacred Lands File search was positive; however, Albion has not received any information pertaining to the resource listed in the Sacred Lands File and how it may intersect with the current Project Area. Native American outreach documented Tribal concerns about cultural resources within the immediate vicinity of the Project Area.

After reviewing the record search results, Albion conducted a pedestrian survey of all accessible portions of the Project Area. Throughout the Project Area, ground visibility was very poor, with approximately 5% of the ground surface being visible during the survey inspection due to being heavily covered with vegetation and duff. Additionally, portions of the Project Area were extremely sloped, prohibiting survey coverage. The pedestrian survey did not identify any previously recorded or new cultural resources, precolonial or historic, nor anthropogenic soils within the Project Area.

Overall, given the negative pedestrian survey, previously conducted negative archaeological studies, and the 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. 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 and a direct link to the Pacific Ocean. This area is also very important to the local Tribal community represented by multiple Tribal groups.

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, the RCD will, 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.

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.

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

Less Than Significant Impact. There are no known historical resources in the area discovered during surveys or previously recorded that would be impacted by proposed project activities. In case historic resources are discovered during project implementation, work will be halted and the resource will be assessed by a trained archaeologist to determine the best course of action. If resources are discovered, mitigation measures will be created and added to the project mitigation plan.

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. No cultural or archaeological resources were discovered during surveys; however, as the AB 52 process continues through the project, any relevant cultural resources that are brought to the RCDMC's attention by local tribal groups will be discussed and assessed with those groups. Mitigation measures will be developed as needed during those discussions and implemented in the project mitigation plan.

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

No Impact. No unique paleontological resources were found during surveys or research.

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

No Impact. No human remains were found during surveys and no significant soil disturbance is expected with this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VI. Geology and Soils. Would the project:				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geological feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Discussion

Of the 104 acres within the Rancho Rico project area, soil units are comprised of (in decreasing order by percentage of area): Gamboa Sur complex, Los Osos clay loam (30 to 50 percent slopes), Los Gatos gravelly loam (50 to 75 percent slopes), Gazos silt loam (30 to 50 percent slopes), Los Osos clay loam (9 to 15 percent slopes), Millsholm-Gazos complex, Plaskett-Reliz complex, and Gazos silt loam (15 to 30 percent slopes).

Soil types are predominantly very gravelly fine sandy loam (Gamboa Sur complex), clay loam (Los Osos), gravelly loam (Los Gatos), gravelly silty clay loam (Gazos silt loam), loam (Millsholm-Gazos complex) and very channery loam (Plaskett-Reliz complex). Most of the Rancho Rico project area is located on a ridge at approximately 800 to 1,000 feet elevation, with the property steeply sloped at its north where it borders Sycamore Canyon. The Rancho Rico project area has a moderate to very high erosion hazard and a moderate to very rapid runoff potential.

Geologically-speaking, the Rancho Rico project area lies within the Franciscan Complex (mélange) which is comprised of Cretaceous and Jurassic sandstone with smaller amounts of micaceous shale. The Franciscan Complex is characterized by its weak, intensely sheared rock that is highly susceptible to large rockslides and earth flows (Wills et al., 2001).

While the Rancho Rico area has a fair amount of unstable geology, the incorporated mitigation measures will reduce soil disturbance. With vegetative ground left intact and other project mitigation measures incorporated, the project area will have a decreased erosion, runoff and landslide potential. Masticators will not cut into the soil profile and there will be minimal impact to soils. Tracked masticators will be used on slopes less than or equal to 30% (ratio of 1:3) and the mowing implement will have at least a minimum height off the ground of 4 inches for the mowing implement. Where 500 square feet or more of soil has been exposed by project activities on slopes 30% or greater, water bars will be installed to direct runoff into a vegetated area. Equipment will also be kept on roads whenever possible and existing roads will be used to implement treatments to keep erosion potential to a minimum.

a) Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

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

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. Both project areas are located within the seismically active Santa Lucia Mountain Range within the Central California Coast Ranges geomorphic province but are not located in an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. Although Rancho Rico 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 Rancho Rico project area lies within one mile of both the San Gregorio fault and the Sierra Hill fault. The San Gregorio fault is a late Quaternary fault that has been displaced within the last 700,000 years, while the Sierra Hill fault is a Quaternary fault (age undifferentiated). Both project areas are 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 areas 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 minor 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?

Less Than Significant Impact: Liquefaction occurs when loose, water-saturated sediment loses strength and fails during strong ground shaking. According to the Monterey County Geologic Hazards Map, there is some risk for liquefaction near Sycamore Creek by the Pacific Ocean near the Rancho Rico project area. However, the project activities will have a less than significant impact in that they will involve a minimal disturbance to soil and will generally not occur along the riparia area, and therefore will not directly or indirectly expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effect. See additional comments about project activities and mitigation measures under VI a) i) above.

iv) Landslides?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: Given that the Franciscan Complex is highly prone to landslides and the steepness of slope in the Sycamore Canyon area of the Rancho Rico area, it has a high risk for landslides. However, mitigation measures that minimize soil disturbance will decrease the impact potential to less than significant. Additionally, all project work in the Rancho Rico 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 removal of vegetation and soil impacts attributable to masticator operations have the potential to cause erosion or loss of topsoil. These impacts however will be minimized through the implementation of mitigation measures explained under VI a) i) above.

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 with Mitigation Incorporated: 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?

Less than Significant Impact: A relatively small portion of clay loams are present within the Los Osos soil units in the Rancho Rico project area which have a high shrink-swell potential and can be considered expansive soils. Several residential buildings already exist in these areas. Given that project work does not include the construction of buildings that could be at risk from expansive soils and that it consists of vegetation maintenance, the impact is considered less than significant.

e) Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of 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 destroy a paleontological resource or geologic feature directly or indirectly.

Mitigation Measures to Reduce Impacts to Geology and Soils

Mitigation Measure GEO-1: Waterbars will be installed on slopes 30% or greater where 500 sq. ft. or more of soil has been exposed by project activities. 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.

No significant adverse impacts to geology and soils 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
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VII. Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Would the project:

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment? | <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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" 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 (masticators/mowers, chainsaws) and vehicle use (trucks, skid steers). The expected contribution of these emissions, including CO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} is expected to not have a significant impact on the environment.

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

No Impact. The project does not 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
VIII. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<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 of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 diesel fuel or gasoline, engine 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, diesel, bleach, oil for refueling, maintenance and cleaning of equipment. There are mitigation measures for hazardous materials handling and transport that will be incorporated for the project activities. These measures 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 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 any of these sites listed.

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 with Mitigation Incorporated: While there is a small chance that a wildfire could be started through project work activities, the types of work activities (masticating, lopping, pruning, scattering) that are expected will have little risk of starting a wildfire with mitigation incorporated. Project activities will be implemented during appropriate time of day and work will stop on the day that a Red Flag Warning is issued and will not resume until the Warning is lifted. All chainsaws and gas-powered equipment will have spark arrestors, which is the primary risk factor for starting wildfires under project implementation.

Mitigation 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 (masticators, mowers, skid steers, 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
IX. Hydrology and Water Quality. Would the project:				
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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"/>

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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

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

Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated: Operation of equipment near stream channels may violate water quality standards, so mitigation measures have been created to restrict the type of equipment and work that can take place within a certain distance of stream channels and riparian features. There may be some minor discharge of water resulting from cleaning of equipment but is not expected to rise to levels of significant impact; water discharged will be done so in accordance with mitigation measure listed in this section. 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)?

Less Than Significant Impact: The project will not be drawing water from local wells or water resources unless there is an emergency situation. It will not alter the land in any way that would interfere with groundwater recharge and in some areas, masticated or scattered vegetative material after implementation may aid with groundwater recharge for a temporary period of time. Therefore, there are no significant projected impacts to groundwater recharge or groundwater supply from this project.

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 project occurring on steeper slopes (> 25% slope), considerable vegetative debris will be generated and serve as protective ground cover, and an adequate amount of 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: There is no expected runoff that would be generated that would be substantial in any way. 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 when implemented for other resource concerns, minimizing any risk from runoff.

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 will not create structures or housing of any types.

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 placed in the 100-year floodplain of any stream, creek or river in the project area.

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: There are no known dams or levees in the project area that would allow this to occur. Additionally, work in stream and riparian areas will have mitigations limiting the type of work and any does not allow any alterations to stream channels, streambeds or other riparian features. The project does not foresee even any unintentional impacts that would result in the failure of a dam or levee.

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

No Impact: The project does not allow inundation by seiche, mudflow or tsunami.

Mitigation Measures to Reduce Impacts to Hydrology and Water Quality

Mitigation Measure HYDRO-1: Project Activities will minimize any soil disturbance; no topsoil will be removed and masticated or mowed areas are not expected to remove any layers of soil. 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, untreated 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 or other downed woody material 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

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
X. Land Use and Planning. Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<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

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: Because of its location, 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 (Mastication/mowing, lopping and scattering of material, removal of ladder fuels (<8" dbh)) complying with the Coastal Zone Act, as conveyed in the Monterey County Big Sur Land Use Plan.

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 area.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XI. Mineral Resources. Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<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
XII. Noise. Would the project result in:				
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 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 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 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 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 masticators, mowers, chainsaws and vehicles to complete project activities and operators of equipment will have adequate ear protection when operating. Project activities will occur along portions of roads will be. Community residents will be in communication with contractors about operating times to minimize noise for residents of Rancho Rico. Other operations in the extended community defensible space treatments will be at a minimum of at least 100 feet away from homes and treatments in the 100 to 300 foot buffer from homes will be limited to primarily chainsaw operation.

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

Less Than Significant Impact: There will be some groundborne vibrations generated from masticators and mowers but these vibrations on the ground will be minimized because operation of masticating and mowing equipment will not transmit significant ground vibrations as the cutting of vegetation above a certain level from the ground will not transfer vibrational energy to the ground in significant ways. Noise levels from operation will be minimized through coordination with Rancho Rico residents to implement operations during times that residents would be less impacted.

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, from equipment operation use. The impact is projected to be limited to the Project area. When the project is completed, noise levels are expected to revert immediately to pre-project levels. These temporary ambient noise levels are only expected to affect Rancho Rico residents and possibly some residents of Sycamore Canyon Road for short periods of time.

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
XIII. Population and Housing. Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<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 Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XIV. Public Services. Would the project:				
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
Fire protection?	<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 Parks, 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XV. Recreation. Would the project:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<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
XVI. Transportation/Traffic. Would the project:				
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 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
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 any contractor's equipment. The quantity of wastewater generated from cleaning of equipment will be negligible and will amount to no more than tens to hundreds 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 distance of the Project area from approved County landfills, there are no expected needs 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
XVIII. Mandatory Findings of Significance.				
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

effects of probable future projects.)

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

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; *Sundstrom v. County of Mendocino*, (1988) 202 Cal.App.3d 296; *Leonoff v. Monterey Board of Supervisors* (1990), 222 Cal.App.3d 1337; *Eureka Citizens for Responsible Government v. City of Eureka* (2007) 147 Cal.App.4th 357; *Protect the Historic Amador Waterways v. Amador Water Agency* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th at 1109; *San Franciscans Upholding the Downtown Plan v. City and County of San Francisco* (2002) 102 Cal.App.4th 656.

Discussion

- 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 Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment Project could have a small potential to degrade the quality of the environment before mitigations are considered. However, after the addition of mitigations to the project, the RCDMC estimates that there is very little to no impact posed by this project to habitats of native fish or wildlife, any significant threat to native plant or animal populations, impact or restrict any endangered, rare or threatened species and no impact to California history or prehistory. The mitigations incorporated were included to prevent that from occurring during implementation. Small, temporary impacts will occur to some vegetation as ladder fuels will be removed and some areas will receive mastication or mowing treatments that may reduce available habitat for certain species of animals and negatively impact small numbers of individual plants (not endangered, rare or sensitive populations). It is expected that within a time period of five to seven years that any implementation impacts to plant or animal populations will be fully recovered and any environmental impacts other than that will be indiscernible.

- 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 project would add to the overall cumulative impact of this network of fuels treatments in Big Sur. Because this project will maintain the mature forest canopy and focus on reducing ladder fuels, the overall contribution of this project to the area is small. 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 (five to seven) 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, and the temporary effect of noise from implementation on Rancho Rico and Sycamore Canyon Road residents. Because of these factors, the direct and/or indirect effects are insignificant enough to the point of no impact to humans in and near the project area.

Appendix A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) for the

Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Collaborative Project- Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment

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 Rancho Rico Community Fuels Treatment 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. All responsibility for implementing these measures belongs to the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCMDC), unless stated otherwise in the measure.

Archaeological/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 to the RCDMC. 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 by the RCDMC 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.

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 area 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: 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 area 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-11: 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-12: 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-13: 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 on slopes 30% or greater where 500 sq. ft. or more of soil has been exposed by project activities. 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

Link to full report conducted by Albion Environmental Inc. in the spring of 2022:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:927b3a49-4b85-3e68-852c-73b55ce0b0eb>

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
CNDDDB	California Natural Diversity Data Base
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
CO ₂ 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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