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January 14, 2022

Eric Hughes, Project Manager
County of San Luis Obispo, Department of Planning and Building
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**Subject: City Boys Farms, Conditional Use Permit- DRC2017-00123 (Project)
Notice of Preparation (NOP)
State Clearinghouse No. 2019089069**

Dear Mr. Hughes:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received a NOP from the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for the above-referenced Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under Fish and Game Code.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's **Trustee Agency** for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (*Id.*, § 1802). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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CDFW is also submitting comments as a **Responsible Agency** under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), related authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code will be required.

Bird Protection: CDFW has jurisdiction over actions with potential to result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections that protect birds, their eggs, and nests include sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession, or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird).

Unlisted Species: Species of plants and animals need not be officially listed as Endangered, Rare, or Threatened (E, R, or T) on any State for Federal list to be considered E, R, or T under CEQA. If a species can be shown to meet the criteria for E, R, or T as specified in the CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15380), CDFW recommends it be fully considered in the environmental analysis for this Project.

Lake and Streambed Alteration: CDFW has regulatory authority with regard to activities occurring in streams and/or lakes that could adversely affect any fish or wildlife resource, pursuant to Fish and Game Code sections 1600 *et seq.* Section 1602 subdivision (a) of the Fish and Game Code requires an entity to notify CDFW before engaging in activities that would substantially change the bed, channel, or bank of a stream or substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of a stream.

Water Pollution: Pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 5650, it is unlawful to deposit in, permit to pass into, or place where it can pass into "Waters of the State" any substance or material deleterious to fish, plant life, or bird life, including non-native species. It is possible that without mitigation measures, activities associated with the Project could result in pollution of Waters of the State from storm water runoff or construction-related erosion. Potential impacts to the wildlife resources that utilize these watercourses include the following: increased sediment input from road or structure runoff; toxic runoff associated with development activities and implementation; and/or impairment of wildlife movement along riparian corridors. The Regional Water Quality Control Board and United States Army Corps of Engineers also has jurisdiction regarding discharge and pollution to Waters of the State.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: City Boys Farms, Inc.

Objective: The Project proponent is seeking a Conditional Use Permit, for cannabis cultivation in eastern San Luis Obispo County. The proposed Project includes the development of approximately 10 acres for indoor and outdoor cannabis cultivation. The Project will consist of approximately 152,680 square feet of indoor and outdoor cannabis cultivation facilities; 146,240 square feet of indoor and outdoor commercial cannabis nurseries; and 2,500 square feet of cannabis non-storefront retail and manufacturing facilities.

Location: The Project will occur within a 25.59-acre parcel located at 4225 South El Pomar Road, Templeton, California, 93465; San Luis Obispo County; Assessor's Parcel Number 034-321-004; Agriculture zoned.

Timeframe: Unspecified.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building in adequately identifying and mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct, and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the document.

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that will be prepared will determine the likely environmental impacts associated with the Project. CDFW is concerned regarding potential impacts to resources including special-status species resulting from the ground-disturbing development activities and ongoing facilities operation, including but not limited to, the State Candidate for listing as Endangered tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*); State and federally Endangered least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*); State Threatened and federally Endangered San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*); State Species of Special Concern and federally Threatened California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*); State Species of Special Concern the northern California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*), Coast Range newt, western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*), western spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), and burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*); and the rare and endemic Crotch bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) which is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in California (CDFW 2015a); California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1 dwarf calycadenia (*Calycadenia villosa*), mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* var. *puberula*), and spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*); and California Rare Plants Ranked 1B.2: Lemmon's jewelflower (*Caulanthus lemmonii*), Eastwood's larkspur (*Delphinium parryi* ssp.

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eastwoodiae), yellowflowered eriastrum (*Eriastrum luteum*), Santa Lucia dwarf rush (*Juncus luciensis*), and shining navarretia (*Navarretia nigelliformis ssp. radians*) (CNDDDB 2018).

Tricolored Blackbird

Tricolored blackbirds (TRBL) are known to occur within 4.5 miles of the Project area (CDFW 2022). A review of aerial imagery indicates that the subject parcel is bordered by a stream on the north and east perimeters. The stream contains vegetation which could serve as habitat to TRBL. TRBL colonies require suitable nesting habitat, nearby freshwater, and nearby foraging habitat including semi-natural grasslands, agricultural croplands, or alkali scrub (Beedy et al. 2017). Habitat both within and surrounding the Project area may provide suitable foraging habitat for TRBL. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for TRBL, potential significant impacts associated with Project activities include nest and colony abandonment, reduced reproductive success, and reduced health and vigor of eggs and young.

The Project area is within the vicinity of habitat that contains elements that have the potential to support TRBL nesting colonies. As mentioned above, TRBL are known to breed near fresh water, and nearby foraging habitat including semi-natural grasslands, agricultural croplands, or alkali scrub (Beedy et al. 2017). Potential nesting habitat is present in areas with proximity to the subject parcel.

To evaluate potential impacts to TRBL, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and its vicinity and implementing the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that construction be timed to avoid the normal bird-breeding season (February 1 through September 15). However, if construction must take place during that time, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys for nesting TRBL buffer in accordance with CDFW's "*Staff Guidance Regarding Avoidance of Impacts to Tricolored Blackbird Breeding Colonies on Agricultural Fields in 2015*" (CDFW 2015b) no more than 10 days prior to the start of implementation to evaluate presence/absence of TRBL nesting colonies in proximity to Project activities and to evaluate potential Project-related impacts.
- If an active TRBL nesting colony is found during preconstruction surveys, CDFW recommends implementation of a minimum 300-foot no-disturbance buffer in accordance with CDFW's "*Staff Guidance Regarding Avoidance of Impacts to Tricolored Blackbird Breeding Colonies on Agricultural Fields in 2015*" (CDFW 2015b). CDFW advises that this buffer remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that nesting has ceased, the birds have fledged, and are no longer reliant upon the colony or parental care for

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survival. It is important to note that TRBL colonies can expand over time, and for this reason, the colony should be reassessed to determine the extent of the breeding colony within 10 days of Project initiation.

- In the event that a TRBL nesting colony is detected during surveys, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the project and avoid take, or if avoidance through the implementation of the no-disturbance buffer referenced above is not feasible, to acquire an Incidental Take Permit (ITP), pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(b), prior to any ground-disturbing activities.

Least Bell's Vireo

Least Bell's vireo (LBV) are known to occur within 8 miles of the subject parcel (CDFW 2022). Suitable LBV habitat includes rivers and streams with dense riparian vegetation. Riparian vegetation often used include shrubs and trees including willows, mulefat, wild rose, cottonwoods, and other dense vegetation. A review of aerial imagery indicates that the Project area is bordered by a stream along the northern and eastern perimeters, which consists of trees and vegetation that could serve as habitat to LBV.

Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for LBV, potential significant impacts associated with the Project's construction could include nest abandonment, reduced reproductive success, and reduced health and vigor of eggs and young. Breeding habitat loss resulting from urban development, water diversion, and spread of agricultural are the primary threats to LBV. In addition, high rates of brood parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds have caused reductions in breeding populations (USFWS 1998). Little suitable habitat for LBV remains in San Luis Obispo County. Depending on timing, disturbance to nesting activities can cause abandonment of the nest, significantly impacting LBV populations.

To evaluate potential impacts to LBV, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and its vicinity and implementing the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that construction be timed to avoid the normal bird-breeding season (February 1 through September 15). However, if construction must take place during that time, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys for LBV in accordance with USFWS' "*Least Bell's Vireo Survey Guidelines*" (USFWS 2001) prior to the start of implementation of ground- or vegetation-disturbing activities to evaluate presence/absence of LBV and to evaluate potential Project-related impacts.
- If a LBV is found during surveys, CDFW recommends implementation of a minimum 300-foot no-disturbance buffer in accordance with USFWS' "*Least Bell's Vireo*

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Survey Guidelines" (USFWS 2001). CDFW advises that this buffer remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that nesting has ceased, the birds have fledged, and are no longer reliant upon parental care for survival.

- In the event that a LBV is detected during surveys, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the project and avoid take, or if avoidance through the implementation of the no-disturbance buffer referenced above is not feasible, to acquire an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(b), prior to any ground-disturbing activities.

San Joaquin Kit Fox

San Joaquin Kit fox (SJKF) have been documented to occur within 8 miles of the subject parcel (CDFW 2022). A review of aerial imagery indicates that the Project area is bordered by grassland habitat to the west, which could serve as habitat to SJKF. SJKF den in right-of-ways, vacant lots, etc., and populations can fluctuate over time. Presence/absence in any one year is not necessarily a reliable indicator of SJKF potential to occur on a site. SJKF may be attracted to project areas due to the type and level of ground-disturbing activities and the loose, friable soils resulting from intensive ground disturbance. As a result, there is potential for SJKF to occupy or colonize the Project area. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for SJKF, potential significant impacts associated with the Project's construction could include den collapse, inadvertent entrapment, reduced reproductive success, reduction in health and vigor of young, and direct mortality of individuals.

Habitat loss resulting from agricultural, urban, and industrial development is the primary threat to SJKF (Cypher et al. 2013). The subject parcel is adjacent to grassland habitat that may be potentially suitable for SJKF; therefore, subsequent ground-disturbing activities have the potential to significantly impact local SJKF populations.

To evaluate potential impacts to SJKF, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and implementing the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of Project implementation, to determine if the Project area or its immediate vicinity contains suitable habitat for SJKF.
- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist assess presence/absence of SJKF and/or their dens by conducting surveys within 200 feet of the Project area, following the USFWS "*Standardized recommendations for protection of the San Joaquin kit fox prior to or during ground disturbance*" (USFWS 2011). Pre-construction surveys are also recommended, and CDFW advises conducting these

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surveys in all areas of potentially suitable habitat no less than 14 days and no more than 30 days prior to beginning of ground-disturbing activities.

- SJKF detection warrants consultation with CDFW to discuss how to avoid take, or if avoidance is not feasible, to acquire an ITP prior to ground-disturbing activities, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081(b).

California Red-Legged Frog

California red-legged frog (CRLF) have the potential to occur in the vicinity of the subject parcel. CRLF requires a variety of habitats including aquatic breeding habitats and upland dispersal habitats. Breeding sites of CRLF are in aquatic habitats including pools and backwaters within streams and creeks, ponds, marshes, springs, sag ponds, dune ponds, and lagoons. Additionally, CRLF frequently breed in artificial impoundments such as stock ponds (USFWS 2002). Breeding sites are generally found in deep, still, or slow-moving water (greater than 2.5 feet) and can have a wide range of edge and emergent cover amounts. CRLF can breed at sites with dense shrubby riparian or emergent vegetation, such as cattails or overhanging willows or can proliferate in ponds devoid of emergent vegetation and any apparent vegetative cover (i.e., stock ponds). CRLF habitat includes nearly any area within 1-2 miles of a breeding site that stays moist and cool through the summer; this includes non-breeding aquatic habitat in pools of slow-moving streams, perennial or ephemeral ponds, and upland sheltering habitat such as rocks, small mammal burrows, logs, densely vegetated areas, and even, man-made structures (i.e. culverts, livestock troughs, spring-boxes, abandoned sheds) (USFWS 2017). A review of aerial imagery indicates that the subject parcel is bordered by a stream along the northern and eastern perimeters, which could serve as habitat to CRLF. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for CRLF, potentially significant impacts associated with the Project's construction could include exposure to fertilizers and pesticides including herbicides and fungicides, which may pose contamination threats to the CRLF and direct mortality.

Habitat loss from growth of cities and suburbs, mining, overgrazing by cattle, invasion of nonnative plants, impoundments, water diversions, stream maintenance for flood control, degraded water quality, and introduced predators, such as bullfrogs are the primary threats to CRLF (USFWS 2017). Potential suitable sheltering habitat for CRLF may occur within or adjacent to the Project site. Therefore, subsequent ground-disturbing activities have the potential to significantly impact CRLF.

To evaluate potential impacts to CRLF, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and implementing the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment of the property and assessment of CRLF locality records in the vicinity of the Project site.

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- CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys for CRLF within 48 hours prior to commencing work (two night surveys immediately prior to construction or as otherwise required by the USFWS) in accordance with the *USFWS Revised Guidance on Site Assessment and Field Surveys for the California Red-legged Frog* (USFWS, 2005) to determine if CRLF are within or adjacent to the project area.
- If any CRLF are found during preconstruction surveys or at any time during construction, construction should cease and the CDFW contacted to discuss a relocation plan for CRLF by a qualified biologist.
- CDFW recommends that initial ground-disturbing activities be timed to avoid the period when CRLF are most likely to be moving through upland areas (November 1 and March 31). When ground-disturbing activities must take place between November 1 and March 31, CDFW recommends a qualified biologist monitoring construction activities daily for CRLF.

Northern California Legless Lizard

Northern California legless lizard (NCLL) are found primarily in areas with sandy or loose organic soils or where there is plenty of leaf litter (Zeiner et al. 1990c). The species has been documented to occur in the vicinity of the subject parcel. The subject parcel, as well as the adjacent stream and grassland likely support the habitat elements mentioned above; therefore, the subject parcel is suitable for occupation or colonization by the species. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for NCLL, potentially significant impacts associated with the Project's activities could include site abandonment, which may result in reduced health or vigor of young, or direct mortality.

Habitat loss is a primary threat to NCLL (Zeiner et al., 1990). The Project area is within the range of NCLL. The subject parcel contains and is bordered by suitable habitat. As a result, ground-disturbing activities associated with development of the Project area have the potential to significantly impact local populations of this species.

To evaluate potential impacts to the Northern California legless lizard, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and implementing the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of project implementation, to determine if the Project area or its immediate vicinity contain suitable habitat for Northern California legless lizard.

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- If suitable habitat is present, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for NCLL and their requisite habitat features to evaluate potential impacts resulting from ground-disturbance.
- Avoidance whenever possible is encouraged via delineation and observing a 50 foot no disturbance buffer of individuals; however, a qualified biologist with the appropriate handling permit may relocate NCLL out of the project area into a nearby area with suitable habitat.

Coast Range Newt

Coast Range newt (CRN) can inhabit oak, chaparral, and grasslands. In the terrestrial phase, they live in moist to dry habitats under woody or leafy debris, in rock crevices, or in animal burrows. In the aquatic phase, they are found in ponds, streams, and reservoirs (Thomson, et al. 2016).

The subject parcel is within the range of CRN. Coast Range newt have been documented to occur in the vicinity subject parcel and the Project area likely supports the habitat elements mentioned above; therefore, the subject parcel is suitable for occupation or colonization by these species. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for Coast Range newt, potentially significant impacts associated with the development of the subject parcel could include burrow abandonment or destruction, and reduced health and vigor of eggs and young.

Habitat loss is a primary threat to the Coast Range newt (Zeiner et al., 1990, & Thomson et al., 2016). The subject parcel is bordered by a stream along the northern and eastern perimeters. Open areas, as well as densely vegetated areas within and adjacent to the Project area have the potential to significantly impact local populations of the species.

To evaluate potential impacts to CRN, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and implementing the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of Project implementation to determine if the Project area or its immediate vicinity contains suitable habitat for CRN.
- If suitable habitat is present, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for the species and their requisite habitat features to evaluate potential impacts resulting from ground-disturbance.
- Avoidance whenever possible is encouraged via Project site delineation and observing a 50-foot no-disturbance buffer around burrows and individuals.

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Western pond turtle

Western pond turtle (WPT) have been documented to occur within 4 miles of the subject parcel (CDFW 2022). A review of aerial imagery indicates that the subject parcel is bordered by a stream along the northern and eastern perimeters, which could serve as habitat to WPT. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for WPT, potential significant impacts associated with the Project's construction could include den collapse, inadvertent entrapment, reduced reproductive success, reduction in health and vigor of young, and direct mortality of individuals.

Habitat loss resulting from agricultural and urban development is the primary threat to WPT, as well as possible impacts of competition and predation by introduced species (Thomson et al. 2016). The subject parcel is bordered by a stream along the northern and eastern perimeter, which could serve as habitat to WPT. Western pond turtle are known to nest in the spring or early summer within 100 meters of a water body, although nest sites as far away as 500 meters have also been reported (Thomson et al. 2016). Therefore, subsequent ground-disturbing activities have the potential to significantly impact WPT populations.

To evaluate potential impacts to WPT, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and implementing the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of Project implementation to determine if the Project area or its immediate vicinity contains suitable habitat for WPT.
- Because the timeframe for construction is unspecified, CDFW believes the Project does have the potential to impact WPT. Because of this, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for WPT 10 days prior to Project implementation. In addition, CDFW recommends that focused surveys for nests occur during the egg-laying season (March through August) and that any nests discovered remain undisturbed until the eggs have hatched.
- CDFW recommends that if any WPT are discovered at the site immediately prior to or during Project activities, they be allowed to move out of the area on their own.

Western spadefoot

Western spadefoot inhabit grassland habitats, breed in seasonal wetlands, and seek refuge in upland habitat where they occupy burrows outside of the breeding season (Thomson et al. 2016). The subject parcel, as well as the adjacent stream and grassland habitat likely support the habitat elements mentioned above; therefore, the subject parcel is suitable for occupation or colonization by the species.

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Habitat loss and fragmentation resulting from agricultural and urban development is the primary threat to western spadefoot (Thomson et al. 2016). The Project area is within the range of western spadefoot and contains suitable wetland, grassland, and upland habitat. As a result, ground-disturbing activities associated with development of the Project site have the potential to significantly impact local populations of this species.

To evaluate potential impacts to western spadefoot, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the Project site and incorporating the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for western spadefoot and their requisite habitat features to evaluate potential impacts resulting from ground- and vegetation-disturbance.
- Avoidance whenever possible is encouraged via delineation and observance of a 50-foot no-disturbance buffer around burrows. If western spadefoot are observed on the Project site, CDFW recommends that Project activities in their immediate vicinity cease and individuals be allowed to leave the Project site on their own accord. Alternatively, a qualified biologist with appropriate take authorization can move them out of harm's way and to a suitable location.

American badger

American badger are known to occur within the vicinity of the subject parcel (CDFW 2022). Badgers occupy sparsely vegetated land cover with dry, friable soils to excavate dens, which they use for cover, and that support fossorial rodent prey populations (i.e. ground squirrels, pocket gophers, etc.) (Zeiner et. al 1990). The open areas on the Project site and the adjacent grasslands to the west could serve as habitat to American badger; therefore, the Project has the potential to impact American badger. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for American badger, potentially significant impacts associated with ground disturbance include direct mortality or natal den abandonment, which may result in reduced health or vigor of young.

Habitat loss is a primary threat to American badger (Gittleman et al. 2001). As a result, ground-disturbing activities have the potential to significantly impact local populations of American badger.

To evaluate potential impacts to American badger, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and implementing the following mitigation measures:

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- If suitable habitat is present, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for American badger and their requisite habitat features (dens) to evaluate potential impacts resulting from ground- and vegetation-disturbance.
- Avoidance whenever possible is encouraged via delineation and observation of a 50-foot no-disturbance buffer around dens until it is determined through non-invasive means that individuals occupying the den have dispersed.
- Any American badger detected within the work area during Project activities shall be allowed to move out of the work area of its own volition.

Burrowing Owl

Burrowing Owl (BUOW) inhabit open grassland containing small mammal burrows; a requisite habitat feature used by BUOW for nesting and cover. The Project area is bordered by grassland habitat that has the potential to support BUOW; therefore, there is potential for BUOW to colonize the Project site. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for BUOW, potential significant impacts associated with the Project's construction could include burrow collapse, inadvertent entrapment, nest abandonment, reduced reproductive success, reduced health and vigor of eggs and/or young, and direct mortality of individuals.

Habitat loss and degradation are considered the greatest threats to BUOW in California's Central Valley (Gervais et al. 2008). The Project area is bordered by grassland habitat that has the potential to support BUOW; therefore, subsequent ground-disturbing activities associated with the Project has the potential to significantly impact local BUOW populations. In addition, and as described in CDFW's "*Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation*" (CDFG 2012), excluding and/or evicting BUOW from their burrows is considered a potentially significant impact under CEQA.

To evaluate potential impacts to BUOW, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and its vicinity and implementing the following mitigation measures:

- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of Project implementation, to determine if the Project area or its vicinity contains suitable habitat for BUOW.
- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for BUOW following the California Burrowing Owl Consortium's "*Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines*" (CBOC 1993) and CDFW's "*Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation*" (CDFG 2012). Specifically, CBOC and CDFW's Staff Report suggest

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three or more surveillance surveys conducted during daylight with each visit occurring at least three weeks apart during the peak breeding season (April 15 to July 15), when BUOW are most detectable. In addition, CDFW advises that surveys include a 500-foot buffer around the Project area.

- CDFW recommends no-disturbance buffers, as outlined in the “*Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation*” (CDFG 2012), be implemented prior to and during any ground-disturbing activities. Specifically, CDFW’s Staff Report recommends that impacts to occupied burrows be avoided in accordance with the following table unless a qualified biologist approved by CDFW verifies through non-invasive methods that either: 1) the birds have not begun egg laying and incubation; or 2) that juveniles from the occupied burrows are foraging independently and are capable of independent survival.

Location	Time of Year	Level of Disturbance		
		Low	Med	High
Nesting sites	April 1-Aug 15	200 m*	500 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Aug 16-Oct 15	200 m	200 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Oct 16-Mar 31	50 m	100 m	500 m

* meters (m)

- If BUOW are found within these recommended buffers and avoidance is not possible, it is important to note that according to the Staff Report (CDFG 2012), exclusion is not a take avoidance, minimization, or mitigation method and is considered a potentially significant impact under CEQA. However, if necessary, CDFW recommends that burrow exclusion be conducted by qualified biologists and only during the non-breeding season, before breeding behavior is exhibited and after the burrow is confirmed empty through non-invasive methods, such as surveillance. CDFW recommends replacement of occupied burrows with artificial burrows at a ratio of 1 burrow collapsed to 1 artificial burrow constructed (1:1) as mitigation for the potentially significant impact of evicting BUOW. BUOW may attempt to colonize or re-colonize an area that will be impacted; thus, CDFW recommends ongoing surveillance, at a rate that is sufficient to detect BUOW if they return.

Crotch Bumble Bee

Crotch bumble bee (CBB) have been documented to occur within the vicinity of the subject parcel (CDFW 2022). Suitable CBB habitat includes areas of grasslands and upland scrub that contain requisite habitat elements, such as small mammal burrows. CBB primarily nest in late February through late October underground in abandoned small mammal burrows but may also nest under perennial bunch grasses or thatched

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annual grasses, underbrush piles, in old bird nests, and in dead trees or hollow logs (Williams et al. 2014; Hatfield et al. 2015). Overwintering sites utilized by CBB mated queens include soft, disturbed soil (Goulson 2010), or under leaf litter or other debris (Williams et al. 2014). The Project area is bordered by grassland habitat that has the potential to support CBB; therefore, ground disturbance and vegetation removal associated with Project activities has the potential to impact CBB populations. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for CBB, potential significant impacts associated with the Project's construction could include burrow collapse, inadvertent entrapment, nest abandonment, reduced reproductive success, reduced health and vigor of eggs and young, and direct mortality of individuals.

To evaluate potential impacts to CBB, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and its vicinity and implementing the following mitigation measures: CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for CBB, and their requisite habitat features prior to Project implementation to evaluate impacts resulting from potential ground- and vegetation-disturbing activities.

- CDFW recommends that all suitable burrows and thatched/bunch grasses be avoided by a minimum of 50 feet to avoid potentially significant impacts. If ground-disturbing activities will occur during the overwintering period (October through February), consultation with CDFW is recommended to discuss how to implement Project activities and avoid impacts to the CBB. Any detection of CBB prior to or during Project implementation warrants consultation with CDFW to discuss how to avoid impacts to CBB.

Special Status Plants

Eight special status plants (SSP) meeting the definition of rare or endangered under CEQA section 15380 are known to occur in the vicinity of the subject parcel including the following California Rare Plants Ranked 1B.1 dwarf calycadenia (*Calycadenia villosa*), mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* var. *puberula*), and spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*); and the following California Rare Plants Ranked 1B.2 Lemmon's jewelflower (*Caulanthus lemmonii*), Eastwood's larkspur (*Delphinium parryi* ssp. *eastwoodiae*), yellowflowered eriastrum (*Eriastrum luteum*), Santa Lucia dwarf rush (*Juncus luciensis*), and shining navarretia (*Navarretia nigelliformis* ssp. *radians*) (CNPS 2022).

Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for special status plants, potential significant impacts associated with the Project's construction could include inability to reproduce, direct mortality, and habitat modification.

The subject parcel is bordered by a stream along the northern and eastern perimeters, and grasslands to the west, which may provide suitable habitat for special status plant

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species. As a result, ground-disturbing activities have the potential to significantly impact special status plant species.

To evaluate potential impacts to special status plant species, CDFW recommends conducting the following evaluation of the subject parcel and its vicinity and implementing the following mitigation measures.

- CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of Project implementation to determine if special status plant species or their habitats are present on or in the vicinity of the Project and propose appropriate mitigation measures to avoid impacts to those resources.
- If suitable habitat is present, CDFW recommends that the Project site be surveyed for special status plants by a qualified botanist following the "*Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities*" (CDFW, 2018). This protocol, which is intended to maximize detectability, includes identification of reference populations to facilitate the likelihood of field investigations occurring during the appropriate floristic period.
- CDFW recommends special status plant species be avoided whenever possible by delineation and observing a no-disturbance buffer of at least 50 feet from the outer edge of the plant population(s) or specific habitat type(s) required by special status plant species. If buffers cannot be maintained, then consultation with CDFW is warranted to determine appropriate minimization and mitigation measures for impacts to special status plant species.
- If buffers cannot be maintained, then consultation with CDFW is warranted to determine appropriate minimization and mitigation measures for impacts to special status plant species.

Please note that if suitable habitat is present and species surveys are warranted, some protocols require specific seasons and/or an extended period of time (e.g., CBB, BUOW). Frequently recommended survey and monitoring protocols can be found at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols>. CDFW is also available for consultation about survey methods and mitigation measures prior to completion of the EIR.

Editorial Comments and Suggestions

Nesting birds

CDFW encourages that Project implementation occur during the bird non-nesting season; however, if ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities must occur

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during the breeding season (February through mid-September), the Project applicant is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Codes as referenced above.

To evaluate Project-related impacts on nesting birds, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct pre-activity surveys for active nests no more than 10 days prior to the start of ground or vegetation disturbance to maximize the probability that nests that could potentially be impacted are detected. CDFW also recommends that surveys cover a sufficient area around the Project site to identify nests and determine their status. A sufficient area means any area potentially affected by the Project. In addition to direct impacts (i.e., nest destruction), noise, vibration, and movement of workers or equipment could also affect nests. Prior to initiation of construction activities, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a survey to establish a behavioral baseline of all identified nests. Once construction begins, CDFW recommends having a qualified biologist continuously monitor nests to detect behavioral changes resulting from the Project. If behavioral changes occur, CDFW recommends halting the work causing that change and consulting with CDFW for additional avoidance and minimization measures.

If continuous monitoring of identified nests by a qualified biologist is not feasible, CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors. These buffers are advised to remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or on-site parental care for survival. Variance from these no-disturbance buffers is possible when there is compelling biological or ecological reason to do so, such as when the construction area would be concealed from a nest site by topography. CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist advise and support any variance from these buffers and notify CDFW in advance of implementing a variance.

Biological Surveys: Acceptable species-specific survey procedures should be developed in consultation with CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where necessary. For CDFW "Survey and Monitoring Protocols and Guidelines" visit <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols>. Note that CDFW generally considers biological field assessments for wildlife and plants to be valid for a **one-year** period, except when significant environmental changes occur, such as disturbance resulting from urbanization or wildfire. Surveys should be conducted during wildlife's active season when the wildlife species is most likely to be detected and plant surveys conducted during the species blooming/flowering period. Some aspects of the proposed Project may warrant periodic updated surveys for certain sensitive taxa, particularly if the Project is proposed to occur over a protracted time frame, or in phases, or if surveys are completed during periods of drought.

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Cannabis-Specific Impacts on Biological Resources

There are many impacts to biological resources associated with cannabis cultivation, whether indoor or outdoor cultivation (i.e., pesticides, fertilizers/imported soils, water pollution, groundwater depletion, vegetation clearing, construction and other development in floodplains, fencing, roads, noise, artificial light, dams and stream crossings, water diversions, and pond construction). CDFW recommends that the County of San Luis Obispo consider cannabis-specific impacts to biological resources that may result from the Project activities.

Role of Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Program in Cannabis Cultivation Licensing

Business and Professions Code 26060.1 subsection (b)(3) includes a requirement that California Department of Food and Agriculture cannabis cultivation licensees demonstrate compliance with Fish and Game Code section 1602 through written verification from CDFW. CDFW recommends submission of a Lake and Streambed Alteration Notification to CDFW for the proposed Project prior to initiation of any cultivation activities. Cannabis cultivators may apply (notify) online for an LSA Agreement through EPIMS (Environmental Permit Information Management System; <https://epims.wildlife.ca.gov>) and learn more about permitting at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Cannabis/Permitting>.

Please note that CDFW has regulatory authority with regard to activities occurring in streams and/or lakes that could adversely affect any fish or wildlife resource. Pursuant to Fish and Game Code sections 1600 et seq., Section 1602(a) of the Fish and Game Code requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may (a) substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream, or lake; (b) substantially change or use any material from the bed, bank, or channel of any river, stream, or lake (including the removal of riparian vegetation); or (c) deposit debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream, or lake. "Any river, stream, or lake" includes features that are ephemeral or intermittent as well as those that are perennial. In addition, CDFW is required to comply with CEQA in the issuance of a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement.

CDFW recommends that staff within the Central Region Cannabis Permitting Program be contacted well in advance of construction so that impacts to streams and associated resources may be analyzed and, if appropriate, avoidance and minimization measures may be proposed.

Cannabis Water Use: Water use estimates for cannabis plants are not well established in literature and estimates from published and unpublished sources range between 3.8-liters and 56.8-liters per plant per day. Based on research and observations made

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by CDFW in northern California, cannabis grow sites have significantly impacted streams through water diversions resulting in reduced flows and dewatered streams (Bauer, S. et al. 2015). Groundwater use for clandestine cannabis cultivation activities have resulted in lowering the groundwater water table and have impacted water supplies to streams in northern California. CDFW recommends that CEQA document address the impacts to groundwater and surface water that may occur from Project activities.

Cannabis Lighting Use: Cannabis cultivation operations often use artificial lighting or “mixed-light” techniques in indoor operations to increase yields. If not disposed of properly, these lighting materials pose significant environmental risks because they contain mercury and other toxins (O’Hare et al. 2013). In addition to containing toxic substances, artificial lighting often results in light pollution, which has the potential to significantly and adversely affect fish and wildlife. Night lighting can disrupt the circadian rhythms of many wildlife species. Many species use photoperiod cues for communication (e.g., birdsong; Miller 2006), determining when to begin foraging (Stone et al. 2009), behavioral thermoregulation (Beiswenger 1977), and migration (Longcore and Rich 2004). Phototaxis, a phenomenon that results in attraction and movement toward light or away from light; therefore, wildlife species exposed artificial light may have a negative phototaxis response causing disorientation, entrapment, and temporarily blindness (Longcore and Rich 2004).

CDFW recommends that light should not be visible outside of any structure used for cannabis cultivation. Use blackout curtains where artificial light is used to prevent light escapement. Eliminate all non-essential lighting from cannabis sites and avoid or limit the use of artificial light during the hours of dawn and dusk, as these windows of time are when many wildlife species are most active. ensuring that lighting for cultivation activities and security purposes is shielded, cast downward, and does not spill over onto other properties or upwards into the night sky (see the International Dark-Sky Association standards at <https://www.darksky.org>. Use LED lighting with a correlated color temperature of 3,000 Kelvins or less, properly dispose of hazardous waste, and recycle all lighting that contains toxic compounds with a qualified recycler.

Pesticides, Including Fungicides, Herbicides, and Rodenticides: Cannabis cultivation sites (whether indoor or outdoor) often use substantial quantities of pesticides, including fungicides, herbicides, insecticides, and rodenticides. Wildlife, including beneficial arthropods, birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fish, can be poisoned by pesticides after exposure to a toxic dose through ingestion, inhalation, or dermal contact (Fleischli et al. 2004, Pimentel 2005, Berny 2007). They can also experience secondary poisoning through feeding on animals that have been directly exposed to the pesticides. (Even if used indoors, rodenticides may result in secondary poisoning through ingestion of sickened animals that leave the premises or ingestion of lethally poisoned animals disposed of outside.) Nonlethal doses of pesticides can

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negatively affect wildlife; pesticides can compromise immune systems, cause hormone imbalances, affect reproduction, and alter growth rates of many wildlife species (Pimentel 2005, Li and Kawada 2006, Relyea and Diecks 2008, Baldwin et al. 2009). CDFW recommends minimizing use of synthetic pesticides, and, if they are used, to always use them as directed by the manufacturer, including proper storage and disposal. Toxic pesticides should not be used where they may pass into waters of the state, including ephemeral streams, in violation of Fish and Game Code section 5650(6). For details, visit: <https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/cannabis/questions.htm>

Anticoagulant rodenticides and rodenticides that incorporate “flavorizers” that make the pesticides appetizing to a variety of species should not be used at cultivation sites. (Note that with the passage of AB 1788, signed by the governor on September 29, 2020, the general use of second-generation anticoagulants is now banned in California). Alternatives to toxic rodenticides may be used to control pest populations at and around cultivation sites, including sanitation (removing food sources like pet food, cleaning up refuse, and securing garbage in sealed containers) and physical barriers (e.g., sealing holes in roofs/walls). Snap traps should not be used outdoors as they pose a hazard to non-target wildlife. Sticky or glue traps should be avoided altogether; these pose a hazard to non-target wildlife and result in prolonged/inhumane death. California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) stipulates that pesticides must meet certain criteria to be legal for use on cannabis. For pest management practices visit: <https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/county/cacltrs/penfltrs/penf2015/2015atch/attach1502.pdf>.

Impacts of Cannabis Cultivation on Fish and Wildlife Resources: For more information on potential impacts to fish and wildlife resources as a result of cannabis cultivation visit: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=160552&inline>.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to CNDDDB. The CNDDDB field survey form can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The completed form can be mailed electronically to CNDDDB at the following email address: CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov. The types of information reported to CNDDDB can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plants-and-Animals>.

FILING FEES

If it is determined that the Project has the potential to impact biological resources, an assessment of filing fees will be necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of


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Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089).

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Project to assist the County of San Luis Obispo's Department of Planning and Building in identifying and mitigating the Project's impacts on biological resources.

More information on survey and monitoring protocols for sensitive species can be found at CDFW's website (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols>). If you have any questions, please contact Bonna Newell, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), at the address provided on this letterhead or by electronic mail at Bonna.Newell@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

FA83F09FE08945A...

Julie A. Vance
Regional Manager

Attachment

ec: State Clearinghouse
state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

Bonna Newell
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Attachment 1

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM
(MMRP)**

Project: City Boys Farms, Conditional Use Permit- DRC2017-00123

SCH No.: 2019089069

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURE	STATUS/DATE/INITIALS
<i>Before Disturbing Soil or Vegetation</i>	
Mitigation Measure: TRBL	
• TRBL Surveys	
• TRBL Take Authorization	
Mitigation Measure: LBV	
• LBV Habitat Assessment	
• LBV Surveys	
• LBV Take Authorization	
Mitigation Measure: SJKF	
• SJKF Habitat Assessment	
• SJKF Surveys	
• SJKF Take Authorization	
Mitigation Measure: CRLF	
• CRLF Habitat Assessment	
• CLRF Surveys	
Mitigation Measure: NCLL	
• NCLL Habitat Assessment	
• NCLL Surveys	
Mitigation Measure: CRN	
• CRN Habitat Assessment	
• CRN Surveys	
Mitigation Measure: WPT	
• WPD Habitat Assessment	
Mitigation Measure: Western spadefoot	
• Western Spadefoot Surveys	
Mitigation Measure: American Badger	
• American Badger Habitat Assessment	
• American Badger Surveys	
Mitigation Measure: BUOW	
• BUOW Habitat Assessment	
• BUOW Surveys	
Mitigation Measure: CBB	

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURE	STATUS/DATE/INITIALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBB Surveys 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBB Take Authorization 	
Mitigation Measure: SSP	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSP Habitat Assessment 	
<i>During Construction</i>	
Mitigation Measure: TRBL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRBL Avoidance Buffer 	
Mitigation Measure: LBV	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBV Avoidance Buffer 	
Mitigation Measure: NCLL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCLL Avoidance Buffer 	
Mitigation Measure: CRF	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRL Buffer Avoidance 	
Mitigation Measure: Western spadefoot	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western spadefoot Avoidance Buffer 	
Mitigation Measure: American Badger	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Badger Avoidance Buffer 	
Mitigation Measure: BUOW	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUROW Avoidance Buffer 	
Mitigation Measure: CBB	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance Buffer 	
Mitigation Measure: SSP	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance Buffer 	