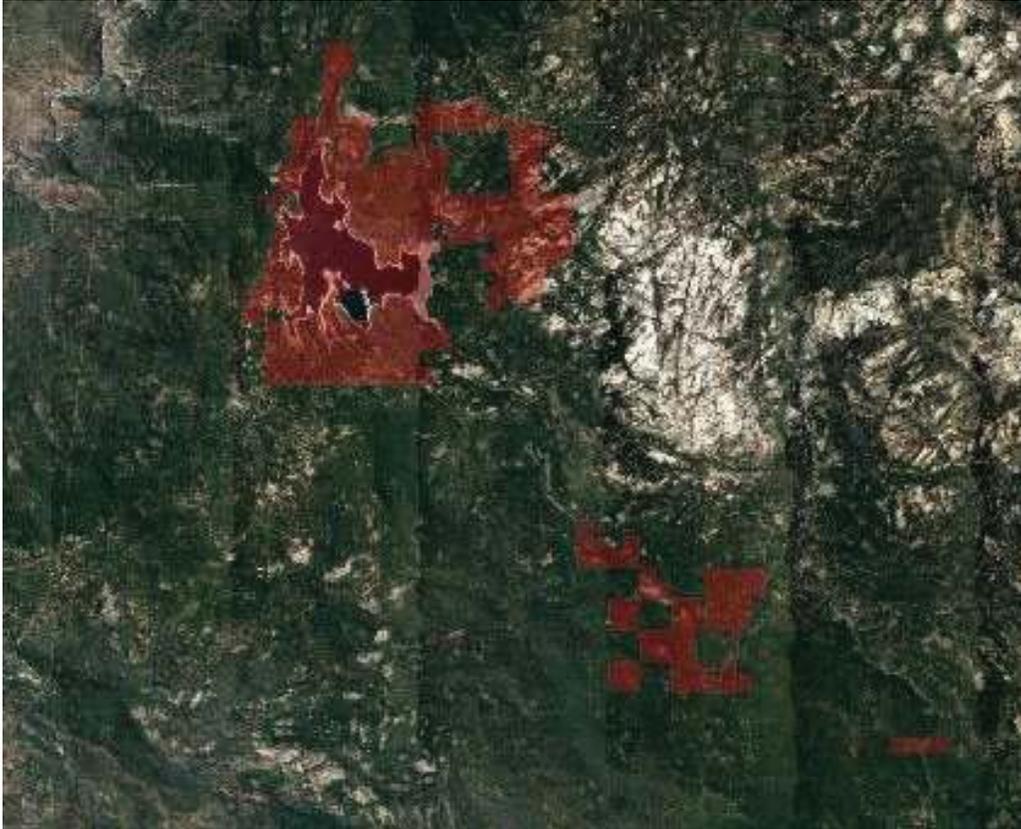


**Initial Study – Mitigated Negative Declaration
for the proposed
“SCE 2020” VMP (Rx-South-034-FKU)
Fresno County, California**



Prepared by:

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For

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August 11, 2020

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Determination

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) describes an environmental impact analysis conducted for the proposed Southern California Edison (“SCE”) 2020 Vegetation Management Program (VMP) project. This document was prepared by Vermilion Resource Management, Inc. staff utilizing information gathered from a number of sources including research and field review of the proposed project area and consultation with environmental planners and other experts on staff at other public agencies. Pursuant to Section 21082.1 of the California Environmental Quality Act, the Lead Agency, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, has independently reviewed and analyzed the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and finds that this document reflects its independent judgment. The lead agency further finds that the proposed project, which includes revised activities and mitigation measures designed to minimize environmental impacts, would not result in significant adverse effects on the environment.

I hereby authorize the distribution of this IS/MND for public review and comment:

Matthew Reischman

Dated: 12/11/2020

Matthew Reischman
Assistant Deputy Director
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Introduction and Regulatory Context

INTRODUCTION

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) describes the environmental impact analysis conducted for the proposed SCE 2020 Vegetative Management Project, located adjacent to the community of Shaver Lake in Fresno County. This document was prepared by Vermilion Resource Management, Inc. and CAL FIRE staff utilizing information gathered from a number of sources including research and field review of the proposed project area and consultation with environmental planners and other experts on staff at CAL FIRE and other public agencies. Pursuant to § 21082.1 of CEQA, the lead agency, CAL FIRE, has prepared, reviewed, and analyzed the IS/MND and declares that the statements made in this document reflect CAL FIRE’s independent judgment as lead agency pursuant to CEQA. CAL FIRE further finds that the proposed project, which includes revised activities and mitigation measures designed to minimize environmental impacts, will not result in significant adverse effects on the environment.

REGULATORY GUIDANCE

This IS/MND has been prepared by Vermilion Resource Management, Inc. and CAL FIRE to evaluate potential environmental effects that could result following approval and implementation of the SCE 2020 Vegetative Management Plan. This document has been prepared in accordance with current CEQA Statutes (Public Resources Code §21000 *et seq.*) and current CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations (CCR) §15000 *et seq.*).

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An Initial Study) 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. This IS/MND conforms to these requirements and to the content requirements of CEQA Guidelines §15071.

This IS/MND evaluates the environmental effects of the proposed 2020 SCE VMP project. The project coordinates with the 2018 SCE VMP to implement a property wide prescribed burn plan in Eastern Fresno County. The project will consist of fuels reduction projects that will utilize fire crew brush cutting, pile burning, and broadcast prescribed fire.

PURPOSE OF THE INITIAL STUDY

CAL FIRE has primary authority for carrying out the proposed SCE 2020 VMP 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. The beginning and ending dates of the 30-day public review period will be indicated on the Notice of Intent. Your views and comments on how the proposed project may affect the environment are welcomed. If you wish to submit written comments for CAL FIRE’s consideration, these must be postmarked on, or prior to, the date the public review period will close as indicated on the Notice of Intent.

Comments should be addressed to:

Len Nielson
Staff Chief, Prescribed Fire and Environmental Protection
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Resource Management – Environmental Protection Program
P.O. Box 944246
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
Phone: (559) 243-4126
Email: sacramentopubliccomment@fire.ca.gov

After comments are received from the public and reviewing agencies, CAL FIRE will consider those comments and may (1) adopt the mitigated negative declaration and approve the proposed project; (2) undertake additional environmental studies; or (3) abandon the project. If the project is approved, CAL FIRE may design and executed all or part of the project.

Project Description and Environmental Setting

Project Location

The SCE Project area is in Fresno County adjacent to Shaver Lake, California. The project area is owned by Southern California Edison. The Shaver project area is described as Sections 12, 13, 24, 26, 25, 35, 36 T9S R24E MDB&M; Sections 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 T9S R25E MDB&M; The Dinkey project area is further described as Sections 14, 23, 24, 25, 26 T10S R25E MDB&M; Sections 19, 30, 34 T10S R26E MDB&M.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

Southern California Edison (SCE) owns approximately 18,000 acres of second growth Timberland in the Shaver Lake and Dinkey Creek areas. The property was purchased from the Fresno Flume and Lumber Company in 1919 to facilitate the construction of Shaver Lake, a key component of the Big Creek Hydroelectric Project. The lands had been heavily logged prior to SCE acquisition and had no commercial timber value at the time. In the 1950s SCE began to implement an active forest management program aimed at restoring the forest. In the 1980s a long term Land Management Plan was developed to return the forest to its natural stand structure and species composition, while producing high quality timber, water, wildlife habitat and public recreation. Under this program, SCE has used prescribed fire as a vegetation management tool for the past 50 years.

While prescribed fire has been applied to many areas of the SCE property, some areas require additional equipment to be safely and effectively burned. Some areas of heavy fuels will require hand or mechanical pretreatment to be safely and effectively burned. The support of CAL FIRE in conducting prescribed burns on this forest would allow for more total acres to be treated annually, as well as the capacity to treat areas that would otherwise go untreated. In recent years, multiple fires have burned in the area, threatening the local communities and environment. CAL FIRE has recognized a need to reduce the threat of wildfire and protect the watershed values of the area.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Elimination of fuel ladder and reduction of fuel loading to provide a greater degree of fire protection to man-made assets and natural resource values associated with this overstocked mixed conifer stand.
2. To provide a location to conduct C-234 firing classes and other training opportunities.
3. To increase water yield through vegetation removal
4. To increase the quality of wildlife habitat through decadent brush removal.

All of the treatments indicated above will be utilized individually or in combination to create the final desired condition. The final desired condition will be an open and park like condition of larger diameter trees with enough of the understory vegetation removed to prevent vertical fire spread in the event of wildland fire or defensive wildland fire fighting operations. Tree species that will be favored for retention will be Ponderosa pine, sugar pine, and black oak.

In addition to the treatments and objectives above, treatment of understory and ladder fuels on this ownership will provide a greater degree of fire protection to the Providence Creek

Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Proposed SCE 2020 VMP

infrastructure and SRA lands east/south of the project. The Project provides additional fire protection buffers between federal lands in the Providence Creek drainage and the above mentioned private property. Potential exists for collaboration on future projects with Sierra National Forest.

All of the treatments that are proposed for the implementation of this project have been evaluated as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) with the preparation of a mitigated negative declaration. The CEQA documentation is on file with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Sacramento Headquarters Vegetation Management Program Manager's office.

PROJECT START DATE

The project start date is dependent on environmental conditions being within burn prescription. Project activities (the pretreatment of heavy fuels and the construction of control lines) are proposed to begin upon approval of this document.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The SCE 2020 VMP will utilize as many treatment methods as can be brought to bear to accomplish timber stand improvement and fuels reduction work throughout the entire project area. Broadcast burning, mechanical alteration e.g. mastication, piling by tractor and hand, and tree felling will be utilized to reduce fuel loading, install containment lines and eliminate ladder fuels. The entirety of the property is suitable for broadcast with the exception of areas containing infrastructure. Approximately 75% of the project area contains south and west facing aspects. These aspects contain brush understory which are the primary target for treatment. Broadcast burning and tractor piling are to be the primary treatment methods where slope and fuel loading dictate. Annual spring and fall broadcast entries may treat approximately 2000 acres annually. Depending on conditions, areas may be burned more than once during the 10-year life of the VMP. Treatment of burn piles may be accomplished on any San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (APCD) approved burn days.

Treatment methods may be combined where fuel loading dictates. Areas containing logging slash will be tractor piled and broadcast burned in successive entries. Hand crews will be utilized on areas too steep for equipment or in areas where equipment use is not feasible due to environmental protection issues, landowner concerns, or other unforeseen circumstances. Flexibility to the unit is desired to have a site where C-234 firing classes may be held. Fall and spring burning entries are desired with spring 2021 anticipated for the first entry. Project activities are anticipated to occur on the following schedule;

- Fall and spring broadcast burn entries
- Mechanical alterations, e.g. mastication
- Tractor pile creation
- Spring, fall and winter tractor pile treatment
- Potential for;
 - Fall/spring firing classes

Project objectives include;

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- Elimination of fuel ladder and reduction of fuel loading to provide a greater degree of fire protection to man-made assets and natural resource values associated with this overstocked mixed conifer stand.
- To provide a location to conduct C-234 firing classes.
- To increase water yield through vegetation removal
- To increase the quality of wildlife habitat through decadent brush removal.

In addition to the treatments and objectives above, treatment of understory and ladder fuels on this ownership will provide a greater degree of fire protection to the Providence Creek infrastructure and SRA lands east/south of the project. The Project provides additional fire protection buffers between federal lands in the Providence Creek drainage and the above mentioned private property. Potential exists for collaboration on future projects with Sierra National Forest. Fuels reduction activities generally creates potential to avoid damage from a high intensity wildfire to the natural resources associated with the mixed conifer plant forest type in which this project occurs. This project creates potential to reduce damage to air quality, water quality, biological resources and their habitats, soil, aesthetics, recreation, and man made assets.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING OF THE PROJECT REGION

The SCE 2020 VMP Project is in Eastern Fresno County on the west side of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The project is directly adjacent to the town of Shaver Lake, California. The project area drains into the following planning watersheds, tributaries to the San Joaquin River and the Kings River:

Musick Creek, Shaver Lake, Stevenson Creek, Ordinance Creek, Grouse Creek, Summit Creek, Providence Creek, Lost Creek, Exchequer Creek, Bear Meadow Creek and Lower Deer Creek.

The project area is owned by Southern California Edison, and is a component of approximately 18,000 acres of Sierra Nevada Mixed Conifer Forest managed by SCE Forestry. The ownership comprises two separate blocks, the Shaver Lands and the Dinkey Lands, both with scattered USFS and other private inholdings. The land is actively managed by SCE for water, wildlife, recreation and timber.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The 11,864 acre project area is best described as second growth Sierra Nevada Mixed Conifer forest consisting of ponderosa pine, sugar pine, white fir, incense cedar and oak overstory. Understory species consist primarily of manzanita, deer brush, and whitethorn. Slopes within the project area are variable, from nearly level topography to moderately steep (>50% slope). Elevation ranges from 4,000 to 7,500 feet. The aspect is variable, but is primarily south and west facing. Stevenson Creek, a Class I Watercourse, runs through a portion of the project area. The geology in the area is characterized as Sierra Nevada batholith.

CURRENT LAND USE AND PREVIOUS IMPACTS

The project area is owned by Southern California Edison and is actively managed by SCE for water, wildlife, recreation and timber. SCE purchased the these lands in July, 1919, from the Fresno Flume and Lumber Company for the purpose of building Shaver Lake Reservoir. The property had been heavily logged by the Fresno Flume and Lumber Company between 1892 and 1914, leaving very few mature trees on the landscape and resulting in an extreme change of stand structure and species composition.

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The influence of the past logging practices and naturally occurring fire sequences before SCE forest management must be understood as the basis of current conditions and policies. There was little or no regard paid to the effect on future timber stands or concern for efficient utilization. Past logging practices, suppression of wildfire, and the physiology of native species greatly influenced the composition and structure of the timber stands on the SCE lands. In 1950, SCE initiated a forestry program focused on the reforestation of the scattered brush fields around Shaver Lake. Protection from fire and other natural disasters, reforestation and limited timber harvesting were the major activities undertaken by SCE.

Public awareness, plus demand for renewable resource products, began to increase during the 1970's. SCE's land management program responded to higher timber values and the demand for multiple use management, resulting in a changed emphasis. The location of SCE lands in relation to the population centers and the increased demand for energy, recreation, wood products, as well as public concern for wildlife, dictated the need for sound land management. These factors led to the development and adoption of the first SCE Land Management Plan (LMP) in 1981. This plan focused on using a combination of single tree selective timber harvest, prescribed fire, tree planting and habitat improvement projects to restore the forest to its pre-European structure, with the goal of achieving improved ecosystem health and fire resiliency.

Between 1981 and 2010, over 170 million board feet of timber were removed under the guidance of this LMP. Approximately 90% of the property has been treated with selective logging, and 60% with managed fire. Approximately 900 acres of under- and unstocked lands have been planted with seedlings. In addition, about 500 acres of over-stocked lands have been thinned using biomass harvesting, small log processing, and woodcutting.

Beginning in 2012, the region experienced a series of winters with less than average precipitation. Extreme drought continued through 2015 serving as catalyst for extensive bark beetle tree mortality in the region that has continued through the present. While SCE has aggressively salvaged and cleaned up the impacts of this mortality on its own lands, the effects of this landscape level disturbance has dramatically changed the future of land management in the region.

Currently there is an overwhelming fire threat on the regional landscape, with limited options to address the buildup of these fuels. As a result of the significant reduction in stocking due to tree mortality, timber harvesting in the immediate future will play a much lesser role as a land management tool for SCE. The application of prescribed fire will become the most valuable and critical tool to address fuels buildup across the property.

MAPS AND FIGURES

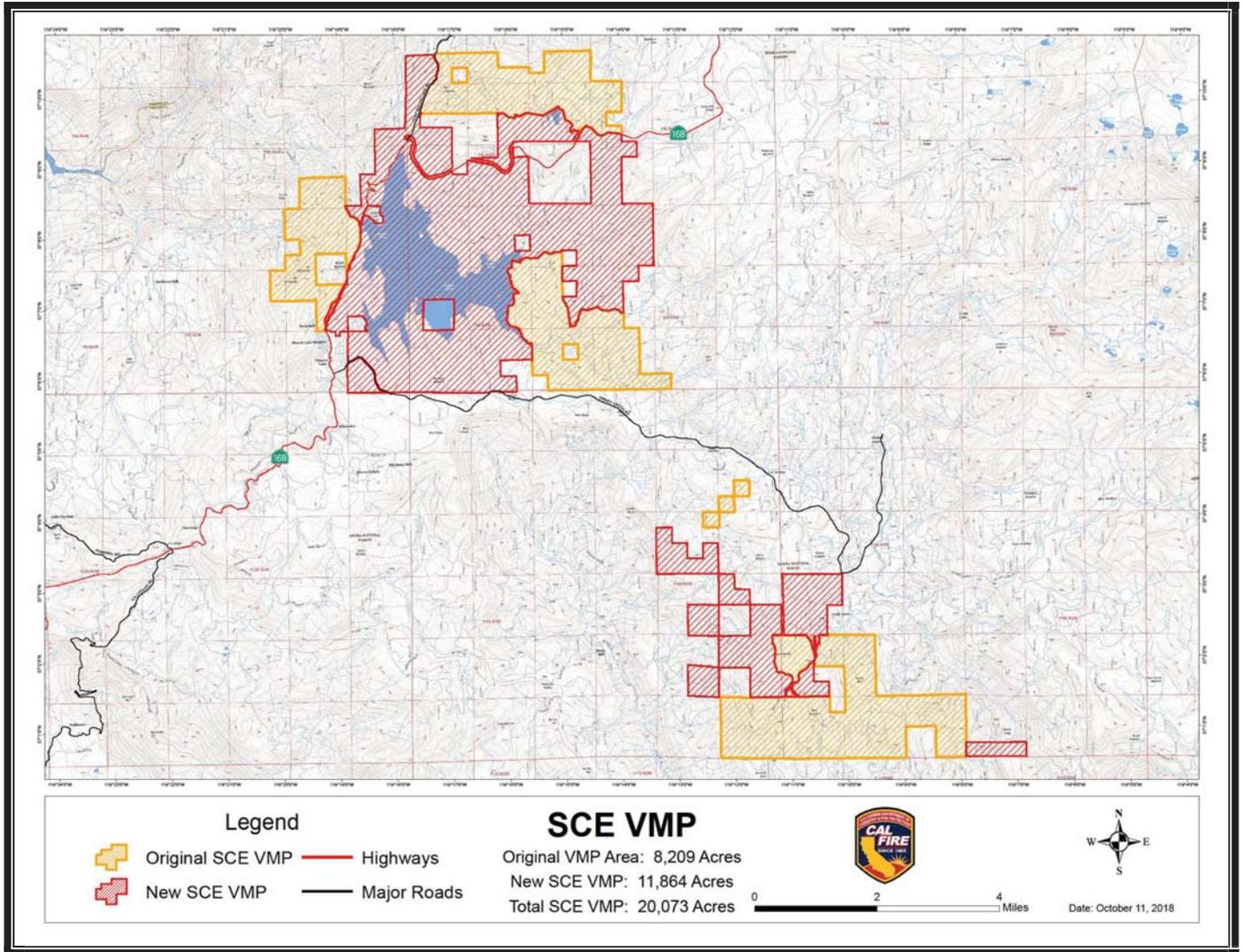


Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map showing location of proposed SCE 2020 VMP project (red) in relation to existing Edison VMP (yellow) and the community of Shaver Lake.

Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Proposed SCE 2020 VMP

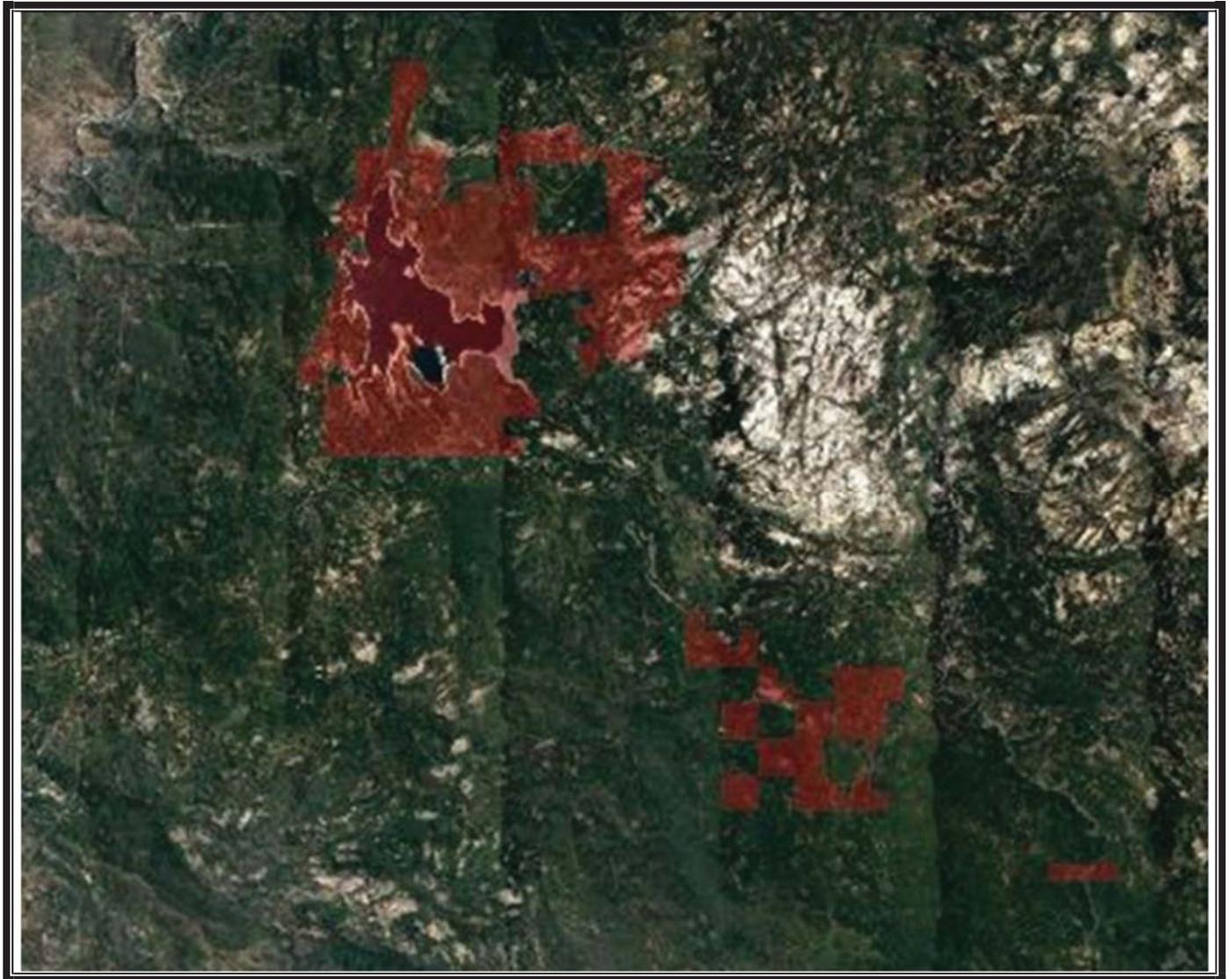


Figure 2. Project Vicinity Map (Aerial Imagery) Red area shows the approximate location of the project.

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Figure 5&6. Photos showing stands with heavy fuel loading on SCE lands

Conclusion of the Mitigated Negative Declaration

ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITS

The proposed project will not require any additional environmental permits.

MITIGATED MEASURES

Mitigation Measure #1: Biological:

Raptors

A Southern California Edison biologist will determine occupancy status for all CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Bald eagles and Goshawks nests known to occur within a ¼ mile of proposed VMP project activities prior to starting during the year of disturbance. If a nest is found to be occupied by brooding CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Osprey, Bald eagles and Goshawks than a disturbance buffer will be established around the nest.

- ¼ mile radius circle for CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Osprey, and Goshawks for the period of March 1 to September 15th.
- If breeding bald eagles are detected within the project activity area, a 1,320-foot no ignition buffer shall be established and smoke avoidance measures shall be enacted. Other distances to be determined by raptor response to proposed activities

If no occupied nest is found, then a protection zone will be established around the current activity center or the last known activity center. Protection zones will vary in size and shape based on the species associated with that activity center.

Fisher – West Coast DPS

- 20 known active or abandoned den sites exist within the project area.
 - If fisher denning is detected, project activities shall maintain a ¼ mile no-ignition buffer around the den, and a qualified biologist shall work with the project leader to ensure smoke is restricted from the den site.
 - Project treatments shall be conducted to retain sufficient overstory and habitat elements (e.g. live trees with cavities, broken tops, snags, platforms) to sustain or encourage occupancy by fishers.

Short-leaved hulsea

This CRPR 1B.2 perennial herb is endemic to California and is limited in distribution to the western slopes of the central & southern Sierra Nevada from 5,000' - 10,500'. This species blooms from May – August and can be found specifically on well drained, granitic or gravelly soils.

- Several populations are known to exist on or near the Project Area, within the Balsam Creek drainage. Limited additional habitat is likely to exist within the project area.
- If project activities will occur during this species blooming period, surveys will be completed by a biologist and/or a qualified RPF to determine if additional populations exist in the vicinity.

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- The populations will be protected by a 50' no disturbance buffer in project implementation is planned to occur within proximity of known populations during their blooming period.
- If additional populations are detected, a 50' no disturbance buffer will be assigned.

Watercourses

General Watercourse and Lake Protection Zone (WLPZ) protections include the following:

- The WLPZ shall be clearly identified on the ground by the RPF or supervised designee prior to the commencement of project activities within each unit.
- No heavy equipment shall be allowed to operate within the WLPZ.
- Fueling and servicing of vehicles and equipment shall not occur within the WLPZ or Equipment Exclusion Zone.
- Only dead and dying trees may be felled within the WLPZ. Trees to be felled shall be felled away from the watercourse.
- Burn piles shall not be placed within the WLPZ.

Class I waters shall receive a Watercourse and Lake Protection Zone (WLPZ) buffer of 75 feet where side slopes average less than 30%, 100 feet where side slopes average between 30% and 50%, and 150 feet where side slopes average greater than 50%.

Class II waters and wet meadows shall receive a WLPZ buffer of 50 feet where side slopes average less than 30%, 75 feet where side slopes average between 30% and 50%, and 100 feet where side slopes average greater than 50%. WLPZ buffers for wet meadows shall be measured from the watercourse transition line; the watercourse transition line for wet meadows shall be determined by the change in vegetation type from wetland species to upland vegetation.

Where heavy equipment use is planned adjacent to a Class III watercourse, an Equipment Exclusion Zone (EEZ) shall be established. The EEZ shall have a width of 25 feet where side slopes are less than 30%, and a width of 50 feet where side slopes are 30% or greater. Equipment use within the EEZ shall be limited to the following conditions:

- Dozer lines within the EEZ shall be inspected and flagged by the RPF prior to use. Areas of exposed soil shall be treated to the extent necessary to prevent the discharge of soil into the watercourse in amounts deleterious to the quality and beneficial uses of water.
- Equipment crossings shall be limited to crossings that are dry at the time of use. Crossings will be inspected and flagged by the RPF prior to use. Existing crossings will be utilized wherever feasible. Approaches to crossings will be hydrologically disconnected and bare soil treated before October 15th of the year of use. If an equipment crossing is identified for use within the project area, notification will be made to the Department of Fish and Wildlife pursuant to Fish and Game Code §1602.

Isolated springs shall be afforded protections on a site-specific basis. At a minimum, protection shall include an EEZ immediately surrounding the spring. Springs that are hydrologically connected shall be afforded the protections described above for Class II watercourses.

Mitigation Measure #2: Cultural:

- Cultural sites may be assigned an Equipment Exclusion Zones (EEZ), as determined in consultation

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with a CAL FIRE Archaeologist, to protect the integrity of the site.

- No ground disturbing operations of any kind (including hand construction of new fire control lines, burn piles, or windrows) shall occur within the EEZ of a cultural site.
- All sites will be flagged prior to operations.
- Trees/snags will be directionally felled away from sites.
- Use of heavy equipment within EEZ boundaries may include, but is not limited to, existing roads, tractor trails, and/or landings.
- All cultural site EEZ's shall be protected through construction of hand and/or tractor fire control lines where necessary to protect site attributes such as "historic wood features."
- Fire control lines shall not be located within the EEZ of a cultural site needing protection from prescribed burning.
- A CAL FIRE Archaeologist may approve additional or alternative site-specific protection measures prior to project activities occurring.
- Meeting between Registered Professional Forester or supervised designee familiar with on-site conditions and Prescribed Burning Supervisor will be conducted prior to start of prescribed burning operations.
- Project planners shall utilize site records to plan and designate fire control line placement to ensure adherence with prescribed protection measures.
- Contractors performing project fire control line construction shall be cautioned to protect the recorded sites described herein and any cultural resources uncovered during the project operations.
- If any cultural resources are found during project implementation, project activities within 100 ft. of the newly discovered cultural resource shall be immediately halted and notification given to landowner and RPF.
- The RPF shall initiate site review and notify and consult with CAL FIRE Archaeologist for site-specific protection measures, and site recording notification will be provided to the appropriate Native American tribal groups and Archaeologist.
- If human remains are discovered, the County Coroner and the State Archaeologist must be contacted within 24 hours. Work may not resume until clearance is granted by the CAL FIRE Archeologist.

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, recreation, hazards and hazardous materials, public services, and utilities and service systems.
2. The proposed project will have a less than significant impact on aesthetics, air quality, agriculture and forest resources, greenhouse gas emissions, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, noise, transportation and traffic.
3. Mitigation is required to reduce potentially significant impacts related to biological, cultural, and tribal or cultural resources.

Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Proposed SCE 2020 VMP

The Initial Study and 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, CAL FIRE has revised the project to eliminate impact or reduce environmental impacts to a less-than-significant level. CAL FIRE has found, in consideration of the entire record, that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project, as currently proposed, 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:	SCE 2020 VMP Project
2. Lead Agency Name and Address:	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection P.O. 944246 Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
3. Contact Person and Phone Number:	Len Nielson (559) 243-4126
4. Project Location:	Adjacent to Shaver Lake, CA, Fresno County
5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address:	N/A (CAL FIRE is project sponsor and lead agency)
6. General Plan Designation:	R: Resource
7. Zoning:	TPZ
8. Description of Project: See Pages 3-4 of this document	
9. Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:	Refer to page 4 of this document
10: Other public agencies whose approval may be required:	California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected and Determination

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project involving at least one impact that is a "potentially significant impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gas Emissions	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hydrology / Water Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Land Use / Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribal Cultural Resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Noise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wildfire
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geology / Soils	<input type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance

Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Proposed SCE 2020 VMP

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 would be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project COULD have a significant effect on the environment, there WOULD 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 would 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.

Matthew Reischman

Matthew Reischman, Assistant Deputy Director
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Resource Management – Environmental Protection Program

12/11/2020

Date

Environmental Checklist and Discussion

I. AESTHETICS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project is in a remote location and is not easily viewed from long range. No adverse impacts to scenic vistas are anticipated.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Would the project 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"/>

The project is in a remote location and cannot be viewed from a state scenic highway.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c) Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A short-term reduction in the visual character or quality of the area may be experienced immediately after treatment activities. Based upon experiences on previous projects with similar activities, the project area will likely respond with a more aesthetically pleasing appearance within one to two growing seasons.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
d) Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Not applicable.

II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

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

The project is compatible with agricultural use and the project will not convert the area's use.

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Would the project 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"/>

Project area is zoned TPZ, and the proposed project is compatible to this use.

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

Project area is zoned TPZ, and the proposed project is compatible to this use.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Project is developed and designed to help protect and preserve forest land.

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

Project is developed and designed to help protect and preserve forest land.

III. AIR QUALITY

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A Smoke Management Plan (SMP) will be obtained from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD, or "APCD"). Implementation of the SMP will prevent conflict or obstruction of the applicable air basin plan.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Would the project 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"/>

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A Smoke Management Plan will be obtained from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Burning on APCD permissive burn days and with the possession of a valid APCD permit will minimize short term smoke impacts.

c) Would 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)?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project is not expected to 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.

d) Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

No long-term impact on air quality will result from this project. Best available control measures will be utilized to minimize short term impacts of smoke emissions from the project. Burning on APCD permissive burn days and with the possession of a valid APCD permit will minimize short term smoke impacts.

e) Would the project create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

No long-term impact on air quality will result from this project. Best available control measures will be utilized to minimize short term impacts of smoke emissions from the project. Burning on APCD permissive burn days and with the possession of a valid APCD permit will minimize short term smoke impacts.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

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 Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

On June 18, 2019, a query of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) was conducted. 18 threatened or sensitive species were identified within the project area. On July 7, 2020, the CNDDDB query

was repeated to insure that additional species were not added to the list; there were no new special-status species in the report. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) was notified by mail, and was provided a description of the project and location maps. CDFW did not respond with any concerns or recommendations. A Biological Assessment was created by Julianne Stewart and Meghan Breniman to discuss protection measures and implementation of the proposed protection measures. Southern California Edison (SCE) Company has one full-time qualified biologist and several seasonal biology staff to perform protocol-level surveys. Species information on known individuals and habitat was provided by SCE as part of this biological evaluation. The 11,864 acres placed under VMP for this project has at one time been under an approved Timber Harvest Plan (THP). All 18 species were assessed for potential impacts as a result of project activities.

The project is not expected to have a substantial effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. The following measures will be adhered to:

Raptors

A Southern California Edison biologist will determine occupancy status for all CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Bald eagles and Goshawks nests known to occur within a ¼ mile of proposed VMP project activities prior to starting during the year of disturbance. If a nest is found to be occupied by brooding CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Osprey, Bald eagles and Goshawks than a disturbance buffer will be established around the nest.

- ¼ mile radius circle for CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Osprey, and Goshawks for the period of March 1 to September 15th.*
- If breeding Bald eagles are detected within the project activity area, a 1,320-foot no ignition buffer shall be established and smoke avoidance measures shall be enacted. Other distances to be determined by raptor response to proposed activities*

If no occupied nest is found, then a protection zone will be established around the current activity center or the last know activity center. Protection zones will vary in size and shape based on the species associated with that activity center.

Fisher – West Coast DPS

- 20 known active or abandoned den sites exist within the project area.*
- Per the “Southern Sierra Nevada Fisher Conservation Strategy¹” document prepared by the Conservation Biology Institute for the Fisher Interagency Leadership Team, the following Limited Operating Periods (LOP) will be utilized for this project:*
 - Prescribed fire (3/1 – 5/1)*
 - Pile burning (3/15 – 5/1)*
 - Hand thinning in stands with California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) diameter class 12 in or greater (3/15 – 5/1)*
- Project treatments shall be conducted to retain sufficient overstory and habitat elements to sustain or encourage occupancy by fishers.*

¹

https://d2k78bk4kdhbpr.cloudfront.net/media/content/files/Southern_Sierra_Nevada_Fisher_Conservation_Strategy_Version_1_0_February_2016.pdf

- **No impacts are expected to this species as a result of project activities**
 - **If fisher denning is detected, project activities shall maintain a ¼ mile no-ignition buffer around the den, and a qualified biologist shall work with the project leader to ensure smoke is restricted from the den site.**
 - **Project treatments shall be conducted to retain sufficient overstory and habitat elements (e.g. live trees with cavities, broken tops, snags, platforms) to sustain or encourage occupancy by fishers.**

Short-leaved hulsea

This CRPR 1B.2 perennial herb is endemic to California and is limited in distribution to the western slopes of the central & southern Sierra Nevada from 5,000'- 10,500'. This species blooms from May – August and can be found specifically on well drained, granitic or gravelly soils.

- **Several populations are known to exist on or near the Project Area, within the Balsam Creek drainage. Limited additional habitat is likely to exist within the project area.**
- **If project activities will occur during this species blooming period, surveys will be completed by a biologist and/or a qualified RPF to determine if additional populations exist in the vicinity.**
- **The populations will be protected by a 50' no disturbance buffer in project implementation is planned to occur within proximity of known populations during their blooming period.**
- **If additional populations are detected, a 50' no disturbance buffer will be assigned.**

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 Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The project is not expected to 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 Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. See Watercourses under Mitigation #1.

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

The project is not expected to 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. See Watercourses under Mitigation #1. Fuel reduction activities will occur within Watercourses Protection Zones (WLPZ's), however pile burning will only occur outside such zones. Broadcast burning ignitions will not be occur within WLPZ's, however broadcast prescribed fire will be allowed to back burn (creep) into WLPZ's.

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

The project is not expected to have a substantial effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on 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. The following measures will be adhered to:

Raptors

A Southern California Edison biologist will determine occupancy status for all CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Bald eagles and Goshawks nests known to occur within a ¼ mile of proposed VMP project activities prior to starting during the year of disturbance. If a nest is found to be occupied by brooding CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Osprey, Bald eagles and Goshawks than a disturbance buffer will be established around the nest.

- ***¼ mile radius circle for CA Spotted owls, Great Grey Owls, Osprey, and Goshawks for the period of March 1 to August 15th.***
- ***If breeding Bald eagles are detected within the project activity area, a 1,320-foot no ignition buffer shall be established and smoke avoidance measures shall be enacted. Other distances to be determined by raptor response to proposed activities***

If no occupied nest is found, then a protection zone will be established around the current activity center or the last know activity center. Protection zones will vary in size and shape based on the species associated with that activity center.

Fisher – West Coast DPS

- ***20 known active or abandoned den sites exist within the project area.***
 - ***If fisher denning is detected, project activities shall maintain a ¼ mile no-ignition buffer around the den, and a qualified biologist shall work with the project leader to ensure smoke is restricted from the den site.***
 - ***Project treatments shall be conducted to retain sufficient overstory and habitat elements (e.g. live trees with cavities, broken tops, snags, platforms) to sustain or encourage occupancy by fishers.***

Short-leaved hulsea

This CNPS 1B.2 perennial herb is endemic to California and is limited in distribution to the western slopes of the central & southern Sierra Nevada from 5,000’- 10,500’. This species blooms from May – August and can be found specifically on well drained, granitic or gravelly soils.

- ***Several populations are known to exist on or near the Project Area, within the Balsam Creek drainage. Limited additional habitat is likely to exist within the project area.***
- ***If project activities will occur during this species blooming period, surveys will be completed by a biologist and/or a qualified RPF to determine if additional populations exist in the vicinity.***
- ***If additional populations are detected, a 50’ no disturbance buffer will be assigned.***

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e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

No local policies or ordinances exist within or adjacent to the project area.

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

Not applicable.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

An archaeological records check was obtained on November 6, 2018. An Archaeological Survey Report completed by RPFs Julianne Stewart and Meghan Breniman to discuss protection measures and implementation of the proposed protection measures. This report was reviewed and approved by CAL FIRE Archaeologist Denise Ruzicka. The Archaeological Survey Report is attached. Implementation of protection measures within the ASR should prevent substantial adverse change to a historical resource. The following measure will be adhered to:

- ***Cultural sites may be assigned an Equipment Exclusion Zones (EEZ), as determined in consultation with a CAL FIRE Archaeologist, to protect the integrity of the site.***
- ***No ground disturbing operations of any kind (including hand construction of new fire control lines, burn piles, or windrows) shall occur within the EEZ of a cultural site.***
- ***All sites will be flagged prior to operations.***
- ***Trees/snags will be directionally felled away from sites.***
- ***Use of heavy equipment within EEZ boundaries may include, but is not limited to, existing roads, tractor trails, and/or landings.***
- ***All cultural site EEZ's shall be protected through construction of hand and/or tractor fire control lines where necessary to protect site attributes such as "historic wood features."***
- ***Fire control lines shall not be located within the EEZ of a cultural site needing protection from prescribed burning.***
- ***A CAL FIRE Archaeologist may approve additional or alternative site-specific protection***

measures prior to project activities occurring.

- *Meeting between Registered Professional Forester or supervised designee familiar with on-site conditions and Prescribed Burning Supervisor will be conducted prior to start of prescribed burning operations.*
- *Project planners shall utilize site records to plan and designate fire control line placement to ensure adherence with prescribed protection measures.*
- *Contractors performing project fire control line construction shall be cautioned to protect the recorded sites described herein and any cultural resources uncovered during the project operations.*
- *If any cultural resources are found during project implementation, project activities within 100 ft. of the newly discovered cultural resource shall be immediately halted and notification given to landowner and RPF.*
- *The RPF shall initiate site review and notify and consult with CAL FIRE Archaeologist for site-specific protection measures, and site recording notification will be provided to the appropriate Native American tribal groups and Archaeologist.*
- *If human remains are discovered, the County Coroner and the State Archaeologist must be contacted within 24 hours. Work may not resume until clearance is granted by the CAL FIRE Archeologist.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

An archaeological records check was obtained on November 6, 2018. The Native American consultation was completed. An Archaeological Survey Report completed by RPFs Julianne Stewart and Meghan Breniman to discuss protection measures and implementation of the proposed protection measures. This report was reviewed and approved by CAL FIRE Archaeologist Denise Ruzicka. The Archaeological Survey Report is attached. Implementation of protection measures within the ASR should prevent substantial adverse change to an archaeological resource. The following measures will be adhered to:

- *Cultural sites may be assigned an Equipment Exclusion Zones (EEZ), as determined in consultation with a CAL FIRE Archaeologist, to protect the integrity of the site.*
- *No ground disturbing operations of any kind (including hand construction of new fire control lines, burn piles, or windrows) shall occur within the EEZ of a cultural site.*
- *All sites will be flagged prior to operations.*
- *Trees/snags will be directionally felled away from sites.*
- *Use of heavy equipment within EEZ boundaries may include, but is not limited to, existing roads, tractor trails, and/or landings.*
- *All cultural site EEZ's shall be protected through construction of hand and/or tractor fire control lines where necessary to protect site attributes such as "historic wood features."*
- *Fire control lines shall not be located within the EEZ of a cultural site needing protection from prescribed burning.*
- *A CAL FIRE Archaeologist may approve additional or alternative site-specific protection measures prior to project activities occurring.*
- *Meeting between Registered Professional Forester or supervised designee familiar with on-site*

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- ***conditions and Prescribed Burning Supervisor will be conducted prior to start of prescribed burning operations.***
- ***Project planners shall utilize site records to plan and designate fire control line placement to ensure adherence with prescribed protection measures.***
- ***Contractors performing project fire control line construction shall be cautioned to protect the recorded sites described herein and any cultural resources uncovered during the project operations.***
- ***If any cultural resources are found during project implementation, project activities within 100 ft. of the newly discovered cultural resource shall be immediately halted and notification given to landowner and RPF.***
- ***The RPF shall initiate site review and notify and consult with CAL FIRE Archaeologist for site-specific protection measures, and site recording notification will be provided to the appropriate Native American tribal groups and Archaeologist.***
- ***If human remains are discovered, the County Coroner and the State Archaeologist must be contacted within 24 hours. Work may not resume until clearance is granted by the CAL FIRE Archeologist.***

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c) Would the project 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"/>

No known unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature exists within or adjacent to the project area.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
d) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The project is not expected disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries. Archaeological procedures for CAL FIRE projects were undertaken in the preparation of this project. An archaeological records check was obtained on November 6, 2018. The Native American consultation was completed. The following measures will be adhered to:

- ***If human remains are discovered, the County Coroner and the State Archaeologist must be contacted within 24 hours. Work may not resume until clearance is granted by the State Archeologist.***
- ***The RPF shall initiate site review and notify and consult with CAL FIRE Archaeologist for site-specific protection measures, and site recording notification will be provided to the appropriate Native American tribal groups and Archaeologist.***
- ***If any cultural resources are found during project implementation, project activities within 100 ft of the newly discovered cultural resource shall be immediately halted and notification given to landowner and RPF.***
- ***No ground disturbing operations of any kind (including hand construction of new fire control lines, burn piles, or windrows) shall occur within cultural sites.***

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- e) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?
- | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
-

The Native American consultation was completed, and one response was received concerning tribal cultural resources. The CAL FIRE Archaeologist Denise Ruzicka received a telephone message from Dirk Charley, Secretary for the Dunlap Band of Mono Indians, stating that the Dunlap Band of Mono Indians would not submit any written response and that the project was out of the Dunlap Mono's area of concern.

- f) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is: A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1?
- | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
-

The Native American consultation was completed, and one response was received concerning tribal cultural resources. The CAL FIRE Archaeologist Denise Ruzicka received a telephone message from Dirk Charley, Secretary for the Dunlap Band of Mono Indians, stating that the Dunlap Band of Mono Indians would not submit any written response and that the project was out of the Dunlap Mono's area of concern. The project is located on industrial timberland which has a long-term history of vegetation manipulation. There are no AB 52 groups present within Fresno County that would necessitate AB 52 Native American consultation. No adverse changes to a tribal cultural resource should result from this project.

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VI. ENERGY

a) Would the project result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Not applicable.</i>				
b) Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Not applicable.</i>				

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

a) Would the project expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42.)	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv) Landslides?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

No unstable areas or seismic related issues exist within the project area.

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The project is designed to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire which would result in significant erosion and risk to human life and property. Significant soil erosion will be prevented by installing erosion control on dozer lines, and avoidance of heavy equipment use on steep slopes or near watercourses. In addition, the duff must be dry enough to sustain ignitions but not enough to meet the definition of saturated soil conditions.

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

No geological unit or unstable soil type exists within the project area. This project should not result in any unstable soil.

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

Not applicable.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Not applicable.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
f) Would the project 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"/>

The project area is located on intensively managed industrial timberland, where ground disturbance activities have regularly occurred. This project will only result in vegetation being manipulated.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project 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"/>

Manzanita, whitethorn, saplings, and surface litter will be the primary fuels consumed, leaving intermediate, dominant, and co-dominant trees. Removal of competing vegetation in the understory is expected to increase growing space for residual trees, which should improve their ability to sequester carbon. The proposed burns are expected to make the residual stands more resistant to catastrophic, stand-replacing fires.

The project is not expected to generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment. On average, the combined aboveground carbon storage of California forests is about 40 tons/acre (Christensen et al. 2007). In California the largest forest carbon stock pools is in soil (45 percent), followed by biomass (30 percent), and forest floor and coarse woody debris (20 percent) (Birdsey and Lewis 2002). At some point the carbon stored in the above ground portion of the plants will be released through respiration, decay or combustion. Although some of the carbon will be added to the soil most will be released to the atmosphere.

Over time the carbon that is stored in vegetation will be released as part of the normal carbon cycle. Carbon will also be sequestered overtime as new vegetation grows if the land remains productive. Prescribed fire is a tool to help maintain those carbon stocks over time. By reducing the probability of catastrophic wildfire prescribed fire can increase the probability of survival of the overstory trees allowing them to continue to sequester carbon. The carbon released by the prescribed fire will be resequenced by the remaining living trees and new vegetation following the burn. This has the potential to reduce the massive increase in short term emissions from wildfire and spread the emissions over a longer period while allowing sequestration to occur in the remaining vegetation.

Prescribed burning is generally used to reduce the fuel load of the forest floor and coarse woody debris, as well as a portion of the above ground biomass. The purpose of the fire is to reduce the risk of large damaging fires by creating conditions that increase the effectiveness of fire suppression. Prescribed fire typically does not affect soil carbon due to lower burn temperatures than wildfire and limits carbon releases because it typically affects only understory plants and ladder fuels. Prescribed burning returns some carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and particulate matter to the atmosphere. Combustion generally is more complete than wildfire, which releases higher concentrations of the other greenhouse gasses and particulate matter (Mader 2007). Actively managed forests with fuels management generally exhibit below-average fire frequency (Eckert 2007)

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The project is designed to reduce the chance of a large catastrophic wildfire emitting large amounts of emissions. The project is not expected to conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Only small amounts of petroleum products will be transported for use on this project. No other hazardous materials will be transported or used.

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

Only small amounts of petroleum products will be transported for use on this project. By following the protections outlined in Mitigation #1 for watercourse and lake protection zones, no petroleum products should be introduced into waterways or ground water.

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

No school exists or is proposed in the area of the project.

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

The project is not located on or adjacent to any listed hazardous material site.

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

The project is not located on or adjacent to any airport.

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

The project is not located on or adjacent to any private airstrip.

g) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project is in a remote location. Multiple access roads exist within the project area, which in an emergency could be used as an alternative escape route.

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

The project is being designed and implemented to reduce the potential fire hazard in the area.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project will not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements. Anthony Toto of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board was notified of the project in a December 1, 2018 letter which included a project description and maps. No concerns have been expressed by the RWQCB.

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

Project may increase short-term ground water availability due to modification of understory vegetation.

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

The reduction of some water using vegetation may result in slightly greater ground water availability and runoff. Hydrophobic soil conditions may be avoided by utilizing a “cool” burn prescription. Adequate vegetation and forest debris will be retained to minimize surface runoff. The project is not expected to 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.

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

The reduction of some water using vegetation may result in slightly greater ground water availability and runoff. Hydrophobic soil conditions will be avoided by utilizing a “cool” burn prescription. Adequate vegetation and forest debris will be retained to minimize surface runoff. The project is not expected to substantially increase the existing drainage pattern of the site or area.

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

The project is located in a remote location with no structured stormwater drainage system. No significant change in runoff is anticipated.

f) Would the project otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Heavy equipment shall not be used within the standard width of a WLPZ along all watercourses except along existing roads. Where riparian habitat is identified that will likely benefit from low intensity fire, burning will be conducted within riparian areas with site specific objectives to reduce heavy fuels loads and reduce the effects of catastrophic wildfire on the riparian habitat. Where burning is used within the

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WLPZ buffer of a classified watercourse, a downhill backing fire will be the preferred firing method. This will assure retention of a functional filter strip. No degradation of water quality is expected from this project.

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

No housing development is proposed under this project.

h) Would the project place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures that would impede or redirect flood flows?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project is not located in a 100-year flood hazard area. No structures are proposed to be developed under this project.

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

Not applicable.

j) Would the project result in inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Not applicable.

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

a) Would the project physically divide an established community?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project is in a remote location and no affect will be made on adjacent communities.

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- | | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

The project will not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project.

- | | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) Would the project 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"/> |

The project should not affect any habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

- | | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

No known mineral resource exists within or adjacent to the project.

- | | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

No known mineral resource recovery site exists within or adjacent to the project.

XIII. NOISE

- | | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

The project is in a remote area where generally only personnel conducting the project should be exposed to noise, so no applicable local, state or federal standards should be violated.

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Would the project create exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Some minor groundborne vibration or noise levels may occur due to bulldozer operations during installation of control lines, and idling fire trucks during mop-up operations. The effects will be not be significant.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c) Would the project create a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

A short term increase in noise shall occur during operations. No permanent increase in ambient noise should occur.

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

Residents and visitors in the adjacent community of Shaver Lake may experience an increase in ambient noise during fireline construction and on days when burning is occurring. This increase will be temporary and should not be significant.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project is not on or adjacent to an airport land use plan.

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

The project is not on or adjacent to a private airstrip.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

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

The project will not induce population growth.

b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing homes, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

No homes exist within the project area.

c) Would the project displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

No residents exist within the project area.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

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:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?				

No governmental facilities are associated with, exist or will be necessary as a result of this project.

XVI. RECREATION

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

No neighborhood or regional parks are associated with the project area. The project should have no effect on Shaver Lake recreation visitor numbers.

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

The project does not propose or require the construction of recreational facilities.

XVII. TRANSPORTATION

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

The project as proposed will have no effect on a transportation circulation system.

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Would the project conflict with or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Not applicable.

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

The project as proposed should have no effect on air traffic patterns.

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

The project as proposed will not alter any road design feature or cause incompatible use.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project as proposed should not affect emergency access.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
f) Would the project conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project as proposed should not conflict with any alternative transportation programs.**XVIII. TRIBAL OR CULTURAL RESOURCES**

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resource Code 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resource Code section 5020.1(k) or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

An archaeological records check was obtained on November 6, 2018. An Archaeological Survey Report completed by RPFs Julianne Stewart and Meghan Breniman to discuss protection measures and implementation of the proposed protection measures. This report was reviewed and approved by CAL FIRE Archaeologist Denise Ruzicka. The Archaeological Survey Report is attached. Implementation of protection measures within the ASR should prevent substantial adverse change to a historical resource.

The Native American consultation was completed, and one response was received concerning tribal cultural resources. The CAL FIRE Archaeologist Denise Ruzicka received a telephone message from Dirk Charley, Secretary for the Dunlap Band of Mono Indians, stating that the Dunlap Band of Mono Indians would not submit any written response and that the project was out of the Dunlap Mono's area of concern.

The following measure will be adhered to:

- ***Cultural sites may be assigned an Equipment Exclusion Zones (EEZ), as determined in consultation with a CAL FIRE Archaeologist, to protect the integrity of the site.***
- ***No ground disturbing operations of any kind (including hand construction of new fire control lines, burn piles, or windrows) shall occur within the EEZ of a cultural site.***
- ***All sites will be flagged prior to operations.***
- ***Trees/snags will be directionally felled away from sites.***
- ***Use of heavy equipment within EEZ boundaries may include, but is not limited to, existing roads, tractor trails, and/or landings.***
- ***All cultural site EEZ's shall be protected through construction of hand and/or tractor fire control lines where necessary to protect site attributes such as "historic wood features."***
- ***Fire control lines shall not be located within the EEZ of a cultural site needing protection from prescribed burning.***
- ***A CAL FIRE Archaeologist may approve additional or alternative site-specific protection measures prior to project activities occurring.***
- ***Meeting between Registered Professional Forester or supervised designee familiar with on-site conditions and Prescribed Burning Supervisor will be conducted prior to start of prescribed burning operations.***

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- *Project planners shall utilize site records to plan and designate fire control line placement to ensure adherence with prescribed protection measures.*
- *Contractors performing project fire control line construction shall be cautioned to protect the recorded sites described herein and any cultural resources uncovered during the project operations.*
- *If any cultural resources are found during project implementation, project activities within 100 ft. of the newly discovered cultural resource shall be immediately halted and notification given to landowner and RPF.*
- *The RPF shall initiate site review and notify and consult with CAL FIRE Archaeologist for site-specific protection measures, and site recording notification will be provided to the appropriate Native American tribal groups and Archaeologist.*
- *If human remains are discovered, the County Coroner and the State Archaeologist must be contacted within 24 hours. Work may not resume until clearance is granted by the CAL FIRE Archeologist.*

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>No waste water treatment facilities will be affected by the project.</i>				
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>No water or waste water treatment facilities will be affected by the project. No new water or waste water treatment facilities will be necessary as a result of this project.</i>				
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>The project will not directly or indirectly affect storm water drainage facilities. No new storm water drainage facilities will be necessary as a result of this project.</i>				
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Only limited water use will be necessary for this project. No new water entitlements will be necessary.

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

Not applicable.

f) Would the project be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

No landfill accommodations will necessary for the implementation of this project.

g) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Not applicable.

XX. WILDFIRE

a) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project has been developed to reduce the fire hazard severity. The project should not impair any emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans.

b) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project, due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project has been developed to reduce the fire hazard severity. The project should not exacerbate wildfire risks or expose anyone to pollutant concentrations resulting from wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire.

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- | | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

The project is designed to reduce the fire hazard severity by reducing flammable fuels. No new roads, water sources, power lines or other utilities will be necessary as a result of this project.

- | | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| d) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides as a result of runoff, post-fire slope stability, or drainage changes? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

The project is in a remote location on fairly gentle slopes. No downslope or downstream flooding or landslides should result from this project. No immediate downstream or downslope infrastructure exists for the project area.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

- | | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

On June 18, 2019, a query of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) was conducted. 18 threatened or sensitive species were identified within the project area. On July 7, 2020, the CNDDDB query was repeated to insure that additional species were not added to the list; there were no new special-status species in the report. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife was notified by mail, and was provided a description of the project and location maps. CDFW did not respond with any concerns or recommendations. A Biological Assessment was created by Julianne Stewart and Meghan Breniman to discuss protection measures and implementation of the proposed protection measures. Southern California Edison (SCE) Company has 1 full time qualified biologist and several seasonal biology staff to perform protocol level surveys. Species information on known individuals and habitat was provided by

SCE as part of this biological evaluation. The 11,864 acres placed under VMP for this project has at one time been under an approved Timber Harvest Plan. All 18 species were assessed for potential impacts as a result of project activities. No negative impacts are anticipated.

An archaeological records check was obtained on November 6, 2018. The Native American consultation was completed. An Archaeological Survey Report was completed by RPFs Julianne Stewart and Meghan Breniman to discuss protection measures and implementation of the proposed protection measures. This report was reviewed and approved by CAL FIRE Archaeologist Denise Ruzicka. The Archaeological Survey Report is attached (as a confidential attachment) in the VMP package. Implementation of protection measures within the ASR should prevent substantial adverse change to a historical resource.

No substantial degradation to the environment, fish and wildlife habitat, fish or wildlife population, plant or animal community, endangered species, or cultural resource is expected to occur as a result of this project.

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

Cumulative effects are not anticipated between the Edison 2018 VMP and the SCE 2020 VMP. These projects were designed to be implemented in a complimentary fashion to allow the Lead Agency to coordinate treatments over an increasingly large area. Doing so allows CAL FIRE the flexibility to tailor treatments across the landscape versus being limited to the smaller footprint of the Edison 2018 VMP. These projects are not expected to be both burned on the same day. Burning activities are typically scheduled during normal working hours (7am – 5pm) so nocturnal animals would not be affected by activities and noise from project activities would detour wildlife from entering the project area. No impact would occur due to smoke since a verified Smoke Management Plan will be in place. Ultimately, the cumulative effects of both the 2018 and the 2020 SCE VMPs would benefit the environment by habitat improvement, and benefit the surrounding communities by the reduction of wildfire risk. This project is being prepared by a Registered Professional Forester. Consultation with resource professionals from Southern California Edison and CAL FIRE as part of the scoping process for this project to ensure that any negative cumulative effects are avoided.

c) Would the project have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Not applicable.

Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Proposed SCE 2020 VMP

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