



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Northern Region
601 Locust Street
Redding, CA 96001
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



Governor's Office of Planning & Research

November 22, 2022

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STATE CLEARING HOUSE

Chrissy Meeds
City of Corning
794 Third Street
Corning, CA 96021

SUBJECT: Post-Field Review Comments and Recommendations for Laurel Ag & Water Storage Yard Expansion, State Clearing House Number 2022090549, Tehama County

Dear Chrissy Meeds,

On October 27, 2022, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) submitted a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) comment letter pertaining to a review of the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND) dated September 19, 2022, for the above-referenced project (Project). On November 14, 2022, the Department, the City of Corning, and the Project proponent met onsite to review the comments stated in the CEQA letter and to refine recommendations. The Department offers the following post-field review comments and recommendations in our role as a trustee and responsible agency pursuant to CEQA, California Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.

Project Description

The Project as described in the ISMND is as follows:

“Laurel Ag & Water (herein also referred to as “Applicant”) proposes to expand the storage of their existing irrigation material area onto an undeveloped 4.47-acre parcel (APN 087-040-073) that they have leased adjacent to and directly north of their current location. The additional area will be used not only for storing irrigation materials but also to accommodate the equipment and vehicles used by their construction crews. The existing storage yard is currently at capacity.”

Comments and Recommendations

The Department recognizes that the Project proponent has taken appropriate steps to identify and assess biological resources that have potential to occur

Chrissy Meeds
City of Corning
November 22, 2022
Page 2

within, or in-proximity to, the Project area.

Wetlands

The Department strongly discourages disturbance and/or development in wetlands; therefore, the Department concurs with the Project proponent to restrict the expansion of the storage yard to the south-western corner of the parcel, and the addition of the south-eastern corner of the parcel, to avoid impacting wetland features.

The IS MND indicates that through *“reconnaissance-level screening of the study area identified several seasonal wetlands that appear to be subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of the Army and/ State Water Board”* and *“To protect the wetland pools, they will remain in a natural state and fenced to create a 10-15 foot buffer from the wetland pools.”* Following the field review, the Department concurs with a 15-foot wetland buffer in lieu of protecting wetland features, as indicated in the IS MND.

In the event future Project expansion, as described in the ISMND, and/or development is proposed that may result in a permissible action, such as permanently impacting wetland features onsite, the Department strongly encourages a formal wetland delineation be conducted by a qualified biologist prior to land modification. Additional information regarding the Departments “no net loss” policy, and formal wetland delineation standards and processes are described in the CEQA comment letter dated October 27th, 2022.

Additionally, the IS MND states *“...provide a fenced buffer area around each pool to create a usable storage area.”* While the Department concurs with a 15-foot buffer between Project activities and wetland features, fencing around each wetland and utilizing the space between each wetland to store materials, is discouraged. Permanent fencing does not appear to be necessary and, as stated during the field review, some temporary fencing options are difficult to maintain and/or may cause wildlife entrapment. The Department encourages a buffer mechanism that is easily identifiable, easily maintained and can be feasibly replaced over time such as high-visibility indicators, pin flags or flagging tape. The buffer mechanism should be positioned at least 15-feet out from wetlands edge, maintained regularly and be in place during all Project activities. The Department also recommends that staff and construction crews involved in Project activities be made aware of the wetlands on site and how to maintain the wetland buffer.

The IS MND states *“The areas to be utilized for outside storage on the Project Site will be leveled, graded, and covered with approximately four inches of uniform road base and gravel.”* The Department concurs with the use of permeable surfaces and discourages the use of impervious surfaces due to the distance between equipment

Chrissy Meeds
City of Corning
November 22, 2022
Page 3

storage and wetlands.

Last, the ISMND states “*Wetlands will be avoided to the maximum degree feasible.*” The Department maintains its encouragement that the City of Corning remove vague and unenforceable language and incorporate more determinate language.


Special Status Wildlife and Rare Plants

Based on the November 14th field review, special status wildlife and/or rare plant survey recommendations are not warranted at this time.

Conclusion

The Department appreciates coordinated efforts between the City of Corning and the Project proponent to take appropriate actions in protecting sensitive resources. If you have any questions, please contact Erika Iacona, Environmental Scientist by email at R1CEQARedding@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Tina Bartlett, Regional Manager
Northern Region

cc: State Clearinghouse
State.Clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

Erika Iacona
R1CEQARedding@wildlife.ca.gov