State of California – Natural Resources Agency DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE Bay Delta Region 2825 Cordelia Road, Suite 100 Fairfield, CA 94534 (707) 428-2002

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



May 15, 2024

www.wildlife.ca.gov

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

May 15 2024

Dezire Perez-Barbante, Associate Civil Engineer City of Santa Rosa 69 Stony Circle Santa Rosa, CA 95401 DPerezbarbante@srcity.org

STATE CLEARING HOUSE

Subject: Samuel L. Jones Hall Homeless Shelter Improvements Project, Mitigated

Negative Declaration, SCH No. 2024040844, City of Santa Rosa,

Sonoma County

Dear Ms. Perez-Barbante:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received a Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) from the City of Santa Rosa (City) for the Samuel L. Jones Hall Homeless Shelter Improvements Project (project) pursuant the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.¹

CDFW is submitting comments on the MND to inform the City, as the Lead Agency, of our concerns regarding potentially significant impacts to biological resources associated with the project.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is a **Trustee Agency** with responsibility under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15386 for commenting on projects that could impact fish, plant, and wildlife resources. CDFW is also considered a Responsible Agency if a project would require discretionary approval, such as permits issued under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), the Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Program, or other provisions of the Fish and Game Code that afford protection to the state's fish and wildlife trust resources.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: City of Santa Rosa

Objective: The project proposes to enhance the existing permanent shelter complex at the project site to accommodate the recent increase in occupants and the quality of the community services provided. The proposed Project includes exterior improvements

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

such as ornamental landscaping features and groundwater planting/bio-retention areas, community service facilities, additional asphalt parking and a new dedicated entrance driveway, concrete pathways, curb and gutter improvements, pedestrian sidewalks and associated facilities, and modular shower and restroom structures. The site currently consists of a mixture of undeveloped and developed land. Vegetation on-site consists of annual grasslands, ornamental vegetation and seasonal wetlands.

Location: The 2.50-acre project site is located at 4020 Finley Avenue (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 035-141-013) in the City of Santa Rosa and is located in Section 29, Township 7 North, Range 8 West as depicted on the Mount Diablo Meridian U.S. Geological Survey 7.5' quadrangle map, at approximately Latitude 38.419405°N, Longitude 122.766453° °W.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

California Endangered Species Act

Please be advised that a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) must be obtained if the project has the potential to result in "take" of plants or animals listed under CESA, either during construction or over the life of the project. The project has the potential to result in take of California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*), which is CESA listed as threatened, and Sonoma sunshine (*Blennosperma bakeri*), Sebastopol meadowfoam (*Limanthes vinculans*), and Burke's goldfields (*Lasthenia burkei*), which are CESA listed as endangered, as further described below. Thank you for including a requirement for the project to obtain a CESA ITP for take of California tiger salamander. Issuance of a CESA ITP is subject to CEQA documentation; the CEQA document must specify impacts, mitigation measures, and a mitigation monitoring and reporting program. If the project will impact CESA listed species, early consultation is encouraged, as significant modification to the project and mitigation measures may be required in order to obtain a CESA ITP.

CEQA requires a Mandatory Finding of Significance if a project is likely to substantially restrict the range or reduce the population of a threatened or endangered species. (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21001, subd. (c) & 21083; CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15380, 15064, & 15065.). Impacts must be avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels unless the CEQA Lead Agency makes and supports Findings of Overriding Consideration (FOC). The CEQA Lead Agency's FOC does not eliminate the project proponent's obligation to comply with CESA.

Lake and Streambed Alteration

CDFW requires an LSA Notification, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq., for project activities affecting lakes or streams and associated riparian habitat. Notification is required for any activity that may substantially divert or obstruct the

natural flow; change or use material from the bed, channel, or bank including associated riparian or wetland resources; or deposit or dispose of material where it may pass into a river, lake or stream. Work within ephemeral streams, washes, watercourses with a subsurface flow, and floodplains are subject to notification requirements. The project would fill two roadside drainages supporting wetlands which may constitute streams, therefore an LSA Notification may be required, as further described below. CDFW will consider the CEQA document for the project and may issue an LSA Agreement. CDFW may not execute the final LSA Agreement (or ITP) until it has complied with CEQA ags a Responsible Agency.

Raptors and Other Nesting Birds

CDFW has jurisdiction over actions that may result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections protecting birds, their eggs, and nests include sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nests or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird). Migratory birds are also protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist the City in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Based on the project's avoidance of significant impacts on biological resources with implementation of mitigation measures, including those CDFW recommends below, CDFW concludes that an MND is appropriate for the project. **Attachment 1** includes CDFW's recommended mitigation measures in a Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

I. Mandatory Findings of Significance: Does the project have the potential to substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal?

COMMENT 1: MND Page 42, Environmental Setting and Related Impact Shortcoming

Issue: The MND indicates that wetlands within the site may support Sonoma sunshine, Sebastopol meadowfoam, and Burke's goldfields. Sebastopol meadowfoam has been documented 150 feet west of the project site (California Natural Diversity Database [CNDDB] Occurrence Number 2).

The Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy, Appendix D: Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Botanical Inventories for Federally Listed Plants on the

Santa Rosa Plain (https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/santa-rosa-plain-conservation-strategy) and CDFW's 2018 Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special-Status Native Plant Populations and Sensitive Natural Communities (https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols#377281280-plants) provide guidelines for acceptable survey documentation for protocol-level surveys for CESA and federally listed plants on the Santa Rosa Plain. According to the MND, protocol-level surveys were conducted in 2022 and 2023 with negative results. However, it is unclear if surveys covered adjacent wetlands that may be indirectly impacted or if indirect impacts to these wetlands were considered in the MND, in accordance with the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy and above CDFW 2018 protocols. In addition, the California Aquatic Resources Inventory (CARI) depicts the entire area west and south of the existing shelter as vernal pool habitat.

Specific impacts and why they may occur and be significant: If CESA and federally listed plants that may be directly or indirectly impacted by the project go undetected, the project may result in mortality of individuals from direct impacts or indirect impacts from degradation of habitat adjacent to ground disturbance due to altering hydrological conditions or other factors. CESA and federally listed plant mentioned above are considered endangered under CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15380. Therefore, if CESA and federally listed plants are present on or adjacent to the project site where they may be directly or indirectly impacted, the project may substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of these species, which would be a *mandatory finding of significance* pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15065, subdivision (a)(1).

Recommended Mitigation Measure: For an adequate environmental setting, to comply with CESA, and to reduce impacts to Sonoma sunshine, Sebastopol meadowfoam, and Burke's goldfields to less-than-significant, CDFW recommends including the following mitigation measure in the MND:

MM-BIO-1. The project shall submit to CDFW two years of completed botanical survey results and obtain CDFW's written approval of the results prior to project construction. The botanical survey results should follow CDFW's 2018 *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special-Status Native Plant Populations and Sensitive Natural Communities* and the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy, Appendix D: *Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Botanical Inventories for Federally Listed Plants on the Santa Rosa Plain.* If CDFW is unable to accept the survey results, the project shall conduct additional surveys prior to initiation of project activities or may assume presence of Sonoma sunshine, Burke's goldfields, and Sebastopol meadowfoam. Please be advised that for CDFW to accept the results, they should be completed in conformance with CDFW's 2018 *Protocols for Surveying and E/valuating Impacts to Special-*

Status Native Plant Populations and Sensitive Natural Communities and the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy, Appendix D: Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Botanical Inventories for Federally Listed Plants on the Santa Rosa Plain, including, but not limited to, conducting surveys during appropriate conditions, utilizing appropriate reference sites, and evaluating all direct and indirect impacts such as altering off-site hydrological conditions where the above species may be present. Surveys conducted during drought conditions may not be acceptable. If the botanical surveys result in the detection of the above CESA listed plants that may be impacted by the project, or the presence of these species is assumed, the project shall obtain a CESA ITP from CDFW prior to construction and comply with all requirements of the ITP. In addition, the project shall consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for any indirect impacts to suitable habitat for plants listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA, i.e., wetlands) and provide compensatory habitat mitigation as required.

II. 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 CDFW or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

COMMENT 2: MND Page 38, Environmental Setting and Related Impact Shortcoming

Issue: The project is within the wintering distribution of burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) and contains and is adjacent to grasslands that may be suitable wintering habitat for the species (Klute et al. 2003). Burrowing owl have been documented overwintering in the project vicinity (CNDDB Occurrence Number 564 and 2023 and Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird Database). The MND indicates that burrowing owl would not be impacted by the project because no suitably sized burrows or evidence of potential burrows are present on the project site. However, suitable burrows may be excavated within a single day by, for example, American badger (*Taxidea taxus*, Ministry of Environment Ecosystems 2007 as cited in Brehme et al. 2015). Additionally, burrowing owl can be impacted up to 500 meters or 1,640 feet away from a project from auditory and visual disturbances and may utilize burrow surrogates, such as culverts, piles of concrete rubble, piles of soil, burrows created along soft banks of ditches and canals, pipes, and similar structures (CDFW 2012). Therefore, the absence of natural burrows does not necessarily exclude the presence of burrowing owl.

Specific impacts and why they may occur and be significant: If burrowing owl that may be impacted by the project are not detected, the project may result in reduced health and vigor, or mortality, of owls from direct impacts to occupied wintering habitat or from wintering burrow abandonment caused by auditory and

visual disturbances. Burrowing owl is a California Species of Special Concern and protected under Fish and Game Code sections 3503 and 3503.5 and the federal MBTA. Therefore, if wintering burrowing owl are present on or within 1,640 feet of the project site, project impacts to burrowing owl would be potentially significant.

Recommended Mitigation Measure: For an adequate environmental setting and to reduce impacts to burrowing owl to less-than-significant, CDFW recommends including the following mitigation measure in the MND:

MM-BIO-2. If the project occurs during the burrowing owl wintering season from September 1 to January 31, prior to project activities a qualified biologist shall conduct a habitat assessment several months prior to the start of construction, and if habitat is present shall conduct surveys, in accordance with the California Department of Fish and Game (now CDFW) 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFW 2012 Staff Report, available here: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols#377281284-birds) habitat assessment and survey methodology. The habitat assessment and survey area shall encompass a sufficient buffer zone to detect owls nearby that may be impacted, which shall be a minimum of 1,640 feet where suitable habitat occurs, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW. Time lapses between surveys or project activities shall trigger subsequent surveys, as determined by a qualified biologist, including, but not limited to, a final survey within 24 hours prior to ground disturbance and before construction equipment mobilizes to the project area. If the habitat assessment does not identify suitable habitat and surveys are not conducted, an additional habitat assessment shall be conducted within 14 days prior to construction and if new refugia are present surveys shall be conducted as described above, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW. The qualified biologist shall have a minimum of two years of experience implementing the CDFW 2012 Staff Report survey methodology resulting in detections of burrowing owl.

Detected burrowing owl shall be avoided pursuant to the buffer zone prescribed in the CDFW 2012 Staff Report, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW, and any eviction plan shall be subject to CDFW review. Please be advised that CDFW does not consider eviction of burrowing owl (i.e., passive removal of an owl from its burrow or other shelter) as a "take" avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measure; therefore, off-site habitat compensation shall be included in the eviction plan. Habitat compensation acreages shall be approved by CDFW, as the amount depends on site-specific conditions, and completed before project construction unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW. It shall also include placement of a conservation easement and preparation, implementation, and funding of a long-term management plan prior to project construction.

III. 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 CDFW or USFWS?

COMMENT 3: MND Page 33, Environmental Setting and Related Impact Shortcoming

Issue: The project would permanently impact two roadside drainages supporting wetlands which may constitute streams under Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq., therefore such impacts may require the project to submit an LSA Notification to CDFW and obtain an LSA Agreement. Based on aerial imagery, these roadside drainages may provide flow into an unnamed blue-line stream identified in the CARI database approximately 0.33-mile south of the project.

Specific impacts and why they may occur and be potentially significant: The project may permanently impact roadside drainages which may constitute streams including substantial alteration of the bed, bank, and channel. Stream habitat including connected wetlands is of critical importance to protecting and conserving the biotic and abiotic integrity of an entire watershed. When stream habitat is substantially altered, riparian functions become impaired, thereby likely substantially adversely impacting aquatic and terrestrial species. Removing connected wetland habitat may also result in the degradation of stream habitat. Therefore, if the above impacts to stream habitat occur, project impacts to stream habitat would be potentially significant.

Recommended Mitigation Measure: For an adequate environmental setting and to reduce impacts to streams to less-than-significant, CDFW recommends including the following mitigation measure in the MND:

MM-BIO-3. The project shall consult with CDFW to determine if aquatic features that would be impacted are subject to Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq. For project activities that may substantially alter the bed, bank, or channel of any streams (including ephemeral or intermittent streams), an LSA Notification shall be submitted to CDFW pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1602 prior to project construction (See: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/LSA). If CDFW determines that an LSA Agreement is warranted, the project shall comply with all required measures in the LSA Agreement, including, but not limited to requirements to mitigate impacts to the streams and riparian habitat. Permanent impacts to the stream and associated riparian habitat shall be mitigated by restoration of riparian habitat at a 3:1 mitigation to impact ratio based on acreage and linear distance as close to the project area as possible and within the same watershed and year as the impact, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW. Temporary impacts shall be restored on-site in the same year as the

impact. Restoration shall include preparing a restoration plan, a minimum of five years of monitoring and maintenance, and achieving success criteria.

An LSA Agreement for this project, if issued, would likely include the above recommended mitigation measures, as applicable, and additional measures to protect fish and wildlife resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

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

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FILING FEES

The project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of environmental document filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the environmental document filing fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (See: Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.).

CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the MND to assist the City in identifying and mitigating project impacts on biological resources.

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Nick Wagner, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) at (707) 428-2075 or Nicholas.Wagner@wildlife.ca.gov; or Melanie Day, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory) at (707) 210-4415 or Melanie.Day@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Erin Chappell
Erin Chappell
Erin Chappell

Regional Manager Bay Delta Region

Attachment 1: Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

ec: Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse (SCH No. 2024040844) Vincent Griego, USFWS - Vincent Griego@fws.gov

REFERENCES

- Brehme, C.S., S.A. Hathaway, R. Booth, B.H. Smith and R.N. Fisher. 2015. Research of American Badgers in Western San Diego County, 2014. Data Summary prepared for California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the San Diego Association of Governments. 24pp. (42pp. with Appendix)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (formerly California Department of Fish and Game). 2012. Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation. Available online at: https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=83843&inline
- Klute, D. S., L. W. Ayers, M. T. Green, W. H. Howe, S. L. Jones, J. A. Shaffer, S. R. Sheffield, and T. S. Zimmerman. 2003. Status Assessment and Conservation Plan for the Western Burrowing Owl in the United States. U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Biological Technical Publication FWS/BTPR6001-2003, Washington, D.C.

ATTACHMENT 1 Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Biological Resources (BIO)				
Mitigation Measure (MM) Description	Implementation Schedule	Responsible Party		
MM-BIO-1. The project shall submit to CDFW two years of completed botanical survey results and obtain CDFW's written approval of the results prior to project construction. The botanical survey results should follow CDFW's 2018 Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special-Status Native Plant Populations and Sensitive Natural Communities and the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy, Appendix D: Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Botanical Inventories for Federally Listed Plants on the Santa Rosa Plain. If CDFW is unable to accept the survey results, the project shall conduct additional surveys prior to initiation of project activities or may assume presence of Sonoma sunshine, Burke's goldfields, and Sebastopol meadowfoam. Please be advised that for CDFW to accept the results, they should be completed in conformance with CDFW's 2018 Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special-Status Native Plant Populations and Sensitive Natural Communities and the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy, Appendix D: Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Botanical Inventories for Federally Listed Plants on the Santa Rosa Plain, including, but not limited to, conducting surveys during appropriate conditions, utilizing appropriate reference sites, and evaluating all direct and indirect impacts such as altering off-site hydrological conditions where the above species may be present. Surveys conducted during drought conditions may not be acceptable. If the botanical surveys result in the detection of the above CESA listed plants that may be impacted by the project, or the presence of these species is assumed, the project shall obtain a CESA ITP from CDFW prior to construction and comply with all requirements of the ITP. In addition, the project shall consult with the USFWS for any indirect impacts to suitable habitat for plants listed under the ESA (i.e., wetlands) and provide compensatory habitat mitigation as required.	Prior to and during ground disturbance	Project Applicant		
MM-BIO-2. If the project occurs during the burrowing owl wintering season from September 1 to January 31, prior to project activities a qualified biologist shall conduct a habitat assessment several months prior to the start of construction, and if habitat is present shall conduct surveys, in accordance with the California Department of Fish and Game (now CDFW) 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFW 2012 Staff Report, available here: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-	Prior to and during ground disturbance	Project Applicant		

Protocols#377281284-birds) habitat assessment and survey methodology. The habitat assessment and survey area shall encompass a sufficient buffer zone to detect owls nearby that may be impacted, which shall be a minimum of 1,640 feet where suitable habitat occurs, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW. Time lapses between surveys or project activities shall trigger subsequent surveys, as determined by a qualified biologist, including, but not limited to, a final survey within 24 hours prior to ground disturbance and before construction equipment mobilizes to the project area. If the habitat assessment does not identify suitable habitat and surveys are not conducted, an additional habitat assessment shall be conducted within 14 days prior to construction and if new refugia are present surveys shall be conducted as described above, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW. The qualified biologist shall have a minimum of two years of experience implementing the CDFW 2012 Staff Report survey methodology resulting in detections of burrowing owl.		
Detected burrowing owl shall be avoided pursuant to the buffer zone prescribed in the CDFW 2012 Staff Report, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW, and any eviction plan shall be subject to CDFW review. Please be advised that CDFW does not consider eviction of burrowing owl (i.e., passive removal of an owl from its burrow or other shelter) as a "take" avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measure; therefore, off-site habitat compensation shall be included in the eviction plan. Habitat compensation acreages shall be approved by CDFW, as the amount depends on site-specific conditions and completed before project construction unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW. It shall also include placement of a conservation easement and preparation, implementation, and funding of a long-term management plan prior to project construction.		
MM-BIO-3. The project shall consult with CDFW to determine if aquatic features that would be impacted are subject to Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq. For project activities that may substantially alter the bed, bank, or channel of any streams (including ephemeral or intermittent streams), an LSA Notification shall be submitted to CDFW pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1602 prior to project construction (see: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/LSA). If CDFW determines that an LSA Agreement is warranted, the project shall comply with all required measures in the LSA Agreement, including, but not limited to, requirements to mitigate impacts to the streams and riparian habitat. Permanent impacts to the stream and associated riparian habitat shall be mitigated by restoration of riparian habitat at a 3:1 mitigation to impact ratio based on acreage and linear distance as close to the project area as possible and within the same watershed and year as the impact, unless otherwise approved in writing by CDFW.	Prior to and during ground disturbance	Project Applicant

Temporary impacts shall be restored onsite in the same year as	
the impact. Restoration shall include preparing a restoration plan,	
a minimum of five years of monitoring and maintenance, and	
achieving success criteria.	
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