

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO:

Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Trinity County Clerk
11 Court Street
P.O. Box 1215
Weaverville, CA 96093

FROM:

Junction City Elementary School District
430 Red Hill Road
Junction City, CA 96048

Project Title: Junction City Elementary School Water Filtration and Treatment System Upgrade Project

Project Location: The proposed project is located within the unincorporated community of Junction City in Trinity County. As shown in **Figure 1**, project improvements would occur in Section 12, Township 33N, Range 11W of the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Junction City 7.5-minute quadrangle. The school is located at 430 Red Hill Road (Trinity County Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 012-120-028). As shown in **Figure 2**, improvements would occur to the north of the main school facilities.

City: Junction City (unincorporated)

County: Trinity

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Junction City Elementary School District (JCESD) water system provides potable water to approximately 80 students and staff during the school year. Water demand increases during special events and on occasions when the school serves as an emergency relief staging area during wildland fires. The existing water treatment and filtration system was constructed in 1990 and is over 30 years old. The water source for the school are two wells located immediately adjacent to the Trinity River; therefore, the water source is considered to be a surface water source, and is treated using a conventional filtration process and then disinfected using a solution of sodium hypochlorite. The treated water is stored in a 12,000-gallon welded steel water storage tank and then booster pumped using a hydropneumatic tank to maintain pressure throughout the school.

The JCESD does not currently have an emergency power generator on site for the water treatment plant (WTP). Additionally, there are several components of the water treatment system that have failed or are at the end of their useful service life and risk failing soon. The purpose of the proposed project is to provide potable drinking water to the students, staff, and others that use the facilities.

As shown in **Figure 3**, proposed improvements to the JCESD water filtration and treatment system include retrofitting and upgrading the WTP by replacing filtration media, pumps, and appurtenances; recoating the interior and exterior of the WTP unit and the 12,000-gallon storage tank; installing a new concrete pad, 150-kilowatt propane-fueled emergency power generator, automatic transfer switch, two 1,000-gallon propane tanks, and fencing around the equipment; and constructing a concrete or block (concrete masonry unit) retaining wall. Temporary water filtration and storage tanks would be installed during construction to supply the school with a water supply. The temporary water filtration process would be removed upon project completion, or it could remain in place as a permanent backup filtration process in the case of an emergency.

Staging of materials and construction equipment would occur at the project site. Site grading and removal of two trees would be required to facilitate the installation of the generator and propane tanks.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Junction City Elementary School District

Name of Agency Carrying out the Project: Junction City Elementary School District

Local Agency Contact Person: Christine Camara, Superintendent/Principal, 530.623.6381

Exempt Status: Categorical Exemption:

California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 (CEQA Guidelines):

Class 1, §15301 (Existing Facilities)

Class 3, §15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures)

Reason Why Project Is Exempt:

Class 1 covers the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. Class 3 covers the construction of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures and installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures.

The project is consistent with the categorical exemptions noted above because work would consist of retrofitting and upgrading the WTP; recoating the interior and exterior of the WTP unit and the 12,000-gallon storage tank; installing a new concrete pad, emergency power generator, automatic transfer switch, two propane tanks, and fencing around the equipment; and constructing a concrete or block (concrete masonry unit) retaining wall. No expansion of the District's water system would occur.

As documented in **Attachment A**, the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; would not result in damage to scenic resources within a scenic highway; is not located on a hazardous waste site pursuant to §65962.5 of the Government Code; would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource; and would not result in cumulative impacts.

Signature: _____

Camara

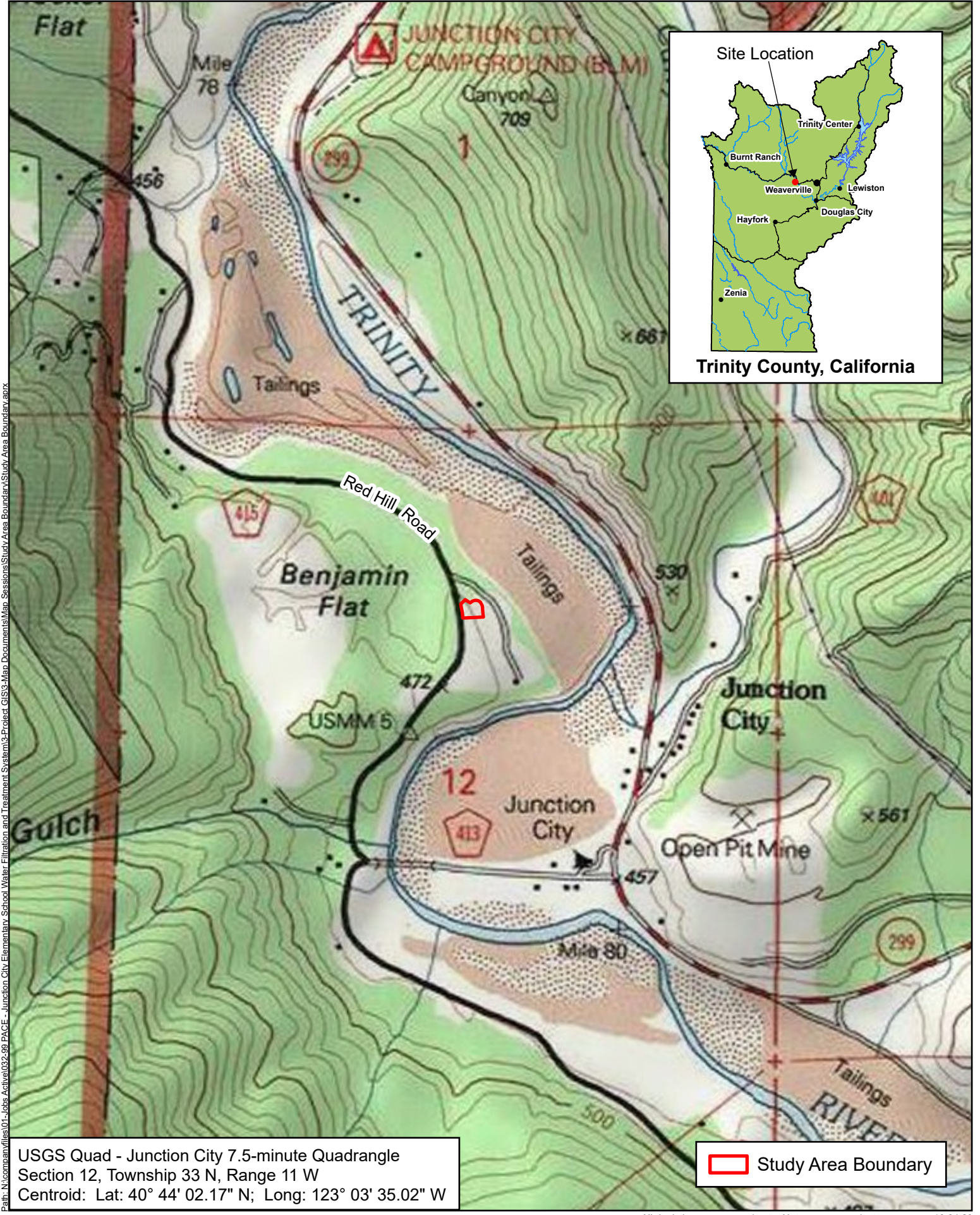
Date: _____

4.11.24

Christine Camara, Superintendent/Principal
Junction City Elementary School District

Attachments:

- Figure 1: Project Location and Vicinity
- Figure 2: Project Site
- Figure 3: Proposed Improvements
- Attachment A: Documentation in Support of a Categorical Exemption



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USGS Quad - Junction City 7.5-minute Quadrangle
 Section 12, Township 33 N, Range 11 W
 Centroid: Lat: 40° 44' 02.17" N; Long: 123° 03' 35.02" W

Study Area Boundary

All depictions are approximate. Not a survey product.

10.24.23



Figure 1

Project Location and Vicinity





Figure 2
Project Site

 Study Area Boundary

All depictions are approximate. Not a survey product. 03.18.24

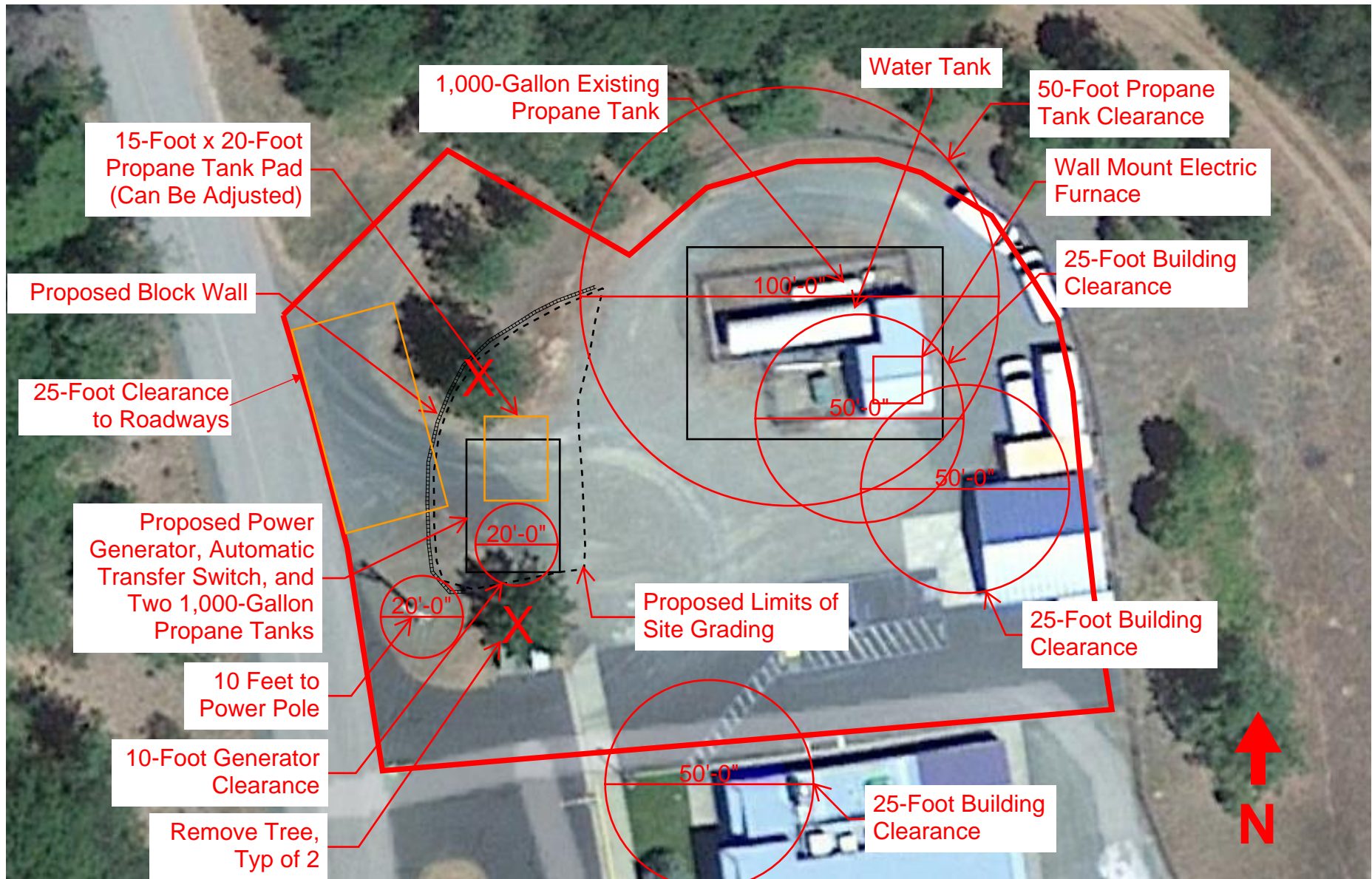


Figure 3

Project Improvements

ATTACHMENT A
Documentation in Support of a Categorical Exemption
Junction City Elementary School District
Water Filtration and Treatment System Upgrade Project

As described in the Notice of Exemption (NOE), the proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to §15301 (Class 1-Existing Facilities) and §15303 (Class 3-New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) of the CEQA Guidelines. CEQA Guidelines §15300.2 identifies exceptions that override a lead agency's ability to use a categorical exemption. These exceptions are listed below, followed by documentation of why each exception does not apply to the proposed project.

1. Location. *Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.*

The proposed project is supported in part by a Class 3 exemption. As documented below, no evidence has been found to suggest that the project location is particularly sensitive. Further, the project is not expected to affect an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern. Therefore, the Class 3 exemption is applicable to the proposed project.

2. Cumulative Impact. *All exemptions are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time, is significant.*

The proposed project would include improvements to the Junction City Elementary School District's (JCESD) existing water treatment and filtration system that are necessary to repair failing infrastructure and provide safe and reliable water to students, staff, and others that use the facilities. No successive improvements to these systems are proposed. Impacts associated with construction are temporary and would cease upon completion of the project. Therefore, the project's impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

3. Significant Effect. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

An "unusual circumstance" exists if the project's circumstances differ from the general circumstances of projects covered by the applicable exemption, and, if so, whether there is a reasonable possibility of a significant effect on the environment *due to* the unusual circumstances. As documented below, there are no unusual circumstances that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Aesthetics:

The proposed improvements would be visually consistent with the existing improvements on the property and would not conflict with the existing visual character of the area. Although installation of these features would require the removal of two trees, this would be a minimal visual change. Additionally, the project site is not in an area of unique scenic vistas and temporary visual impacts during construction due to excavation and staging activities would cease upon the completion of the improvements; no unusual circumstances apply and no significant impacts would occur.

Agriculture and Forest Resources:

The project is located in a previously disturbed area on the school property. According to the Trinity County Land Use Element and Junction City Community Plan, the General Plan designation for the project site is Rural Residential (RR); zoning is RR 2.5 Acre Minimum (RR2.5), which does not allow commercial-scale agricultural uses.

Project implementation would result in the removal of two trees; however, the majority of the site is already developed and tree removal would not result in a significant impact on forest land. There are no unusual circumstances associated with agricultural lands or forest resources that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions/Energy:

The proposed project would result in the temporary generation of ROG, NOx, PM₁₀, and other regulated pollutants during construction. ROG and NOx emissions are associated with employee vehicle trips, delivery of materials, and construction equipment exhaust. PM₁₀ would be generated during site preparation, excavation, and from exhaust associated with construction equipment. Due to the limited scope of the project and temporary nature of the work, impacts during construction would be minimal.

Electrical improvements would not increase energy use because the old electrical components would be replaced with newer, more efficient models. Emissions would be generated with the use of the propane generator; however, the generator would be used only in an emergency. The project does not include any other components that would result in a long-term increase in emissions. There are no unusual circumstances associated with air quality, GHGs, or energy use that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Biological Resources:

As documented below, there are no unusual circumstances associated with special-status species, nesting birds, or other biological resources that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Special-Status Species

The evaluation of potential impacts to special-status species and sensitive habitats was based on a records search and field observations.

Records reviewed for the evaluation consisted of California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) records for special-status plants, animals, and natural communities; California Native Plant Society (CNPS) records for special-status plants in the Junction City 7.5-minute quadrangle; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) records for federally listed, proposed, and candidate plant and animal species under jurisdiction of the USFWS; and USFWS records for Birds of Conservation Concern.

Field evaluations were completed by an ENPLAN biologist on February 23, 2024. Some of the special-status species potentially occurring in the project site would not have been evident at the time the fieldwork was conducted; however, determination of their potential presence could readily be made based on observed habitat characteristics.

Special-Status Plants

Review of the USFWS species list did not identify any federally listed plant species as potentially occurring in the project site. The project site does not contain designated critical habitat for federally listed plant species.

A review of CNDDDB records showed that no special-status plants have been reported in the project site. Two special-status plants have been reported within an approximate five-mile radius of the project site: Heckner's lewisia (California Rare Plant Rank [RPR] 1B.2) and Canyon Creek stonecrop (RPR 1B.3). One non-status plant species, elongate copper moss (RPR 4.3), has been reported within an approximate five-mile radius of the project site.

CNPS records did not identify additional special-status plant species reported in the Junction City 7.5-minute quadrangle. Two additional non-status plant species were reported in the Junction City 7.5-minute quadrangle: Nelson's stringflower (RPR 4.3) and Siskiyou onion (RPR 4.3).

No special-status plant species or habitats capable of supporting such species were observed during the field surveys.

Special-Status Wildlife

Review of the USFWS species list identified the following federally listed wildlife species as potentially being present in the project area: conservancy fairy shrimp (Federally Endangered [FE]), gray wolf (FE), monarch butterfly (Federal Candidate [FC]), North American wolverine (Federally Threatened [FT]), northern spotted owl (FT), northwestern pond turtle (Federally Proposed Threatened [FPT]), vernal pool fairy shrimp (FT), vernal pool tadpole shrimp (FE), and yellow-billed cuckoo (FT). The USFWS species list does not identify designated critical habitat in the study area for any federally listed wildlife species.

A review of CNNDDB records showed that no special-status wildlife species have been reported on the project site. The following special-status wildlife species have been reported within an approximate five-mile radius of the project site: chinook salmon – upper Klamath and Trinity rivers Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU) (FC, State Threatened [ST], State Species of Special Concern [SSSC]), Fisher (SSSC), foothill yellow-legged frog (SSSC), Pacific tailed frog (SSSC), Trinity bristle snail (ST), and western pond turtle (SSSC). Two non-status wildlife species have also been mapped within the search radius: hooded lancetooth and Trinity shoulderband.

No special-status wildlife species or habitats capable of supporting such species were observed during the field surveys.

Natural Communities

The majority of the project site is heavily disturbed and is currently developed with a gravel parking lot and water treatment system infrastructure. Project implementation would result in the removal of two trees to accommodate the improvements. No wetlands, streams, other Waters of the State or United States, or sensitive natural communities are present on or adjacent to the project site.

Nesting Migratory Birds

The USFWS identified the following Birds of Conservation Concern as potentially being present in the project area: bald eagle, evening grosbeak, oak titmouse, olive-sided flycatcher, *Poecile rufescens*, Rufous hummingbird, and wren-tit.

Project implementation would result in the removal of two trees to facilitate construction of the proposed improvements. The potential for adversely affecting nesting birds will be minimized by conducting construction activities outside of the nesting season (between September 1 and January 31), or conducting pre-construction nesting surveys in accordance with existing standard construction measures if work is conducted during the nesting season. There are no unusual circumstances associated with nesting birds or other biological resources that preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Geology and Soils:

According to the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map for Trinity County, the project is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Special Study Zone. The nearest Alquist-Priolo Special Study Zones to the project area are the Hydesville Fault Zone and Mad River Fault Zone, located ± 50 miles west of the project site. The California Geologic Survey (CGS) does not identify any potentially active faults in the project vicinity.

Soil on the project site is mapped by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as Jafa gravelly loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes. This soil type is found throughout the project area and is not unique to the project site. There are no unique circumstances related to geology and soils that would result in more significant impacts than other similar construction projects in the area.

Hydrology and Water Quality:

Construction activities would result in the temporary disturbance of soil and would expose disturbed areas to potential storm events, which could generate accelerated runoff, localized erosion, and sedimentation. However, this is a temporary impact during construction activities, and no long-term impacts would occur.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) for erosion/sediment control would be implemented during earth-disturbing activities in accordance with standard construction practices, which would minimize potential impacts to surface and groundwater quality.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (Panel 06105C1006F, 07/20/2016, Not Printed), the project site is not located within a designated flood hazard zone; the project does not include any components that would impede or redirect flood flows or otherwise adversely affect the natural value and functions of the floodplain.

Land Use and Planning:

The project would not physically divide an established community or cause an environmental impact due to a conflict with a land use plan, policy, or regulation.

Mineral Resources:

The California Geological Survey (CGS) identified two active mines near the project site: the Smith Pit Phase 2 (91-53-0015) and the La Grange Mine (91-53-0007). The Smith Pit is located approximately ±0.25 miles north of the project site and the La Grange Mine is located ±1.8 miles east. Due to the distance from the project site, the project would have no impact on existing mining operations.

Noise:

Construction activities would generate noise and would temporarily increase noise levels in the project area; however, this is a temporary impact that would cease upon completion of the project. The project includes installation of a propane-fueled emergency power generator adjacent to the existing water treatment plant. However, the generator would be used only in the event of an emergency and for limited times during monthly testing. Therefore, an increase in ambient noise due to use of the generator would be less than significant. There are no unusual circumstances associated with noise that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Population and Housing:

The purpose of the project is to provide the JCESD students, staff, and others that use the facilities with safe and reliable water. Because the project would not increase the capacity of the JCESD's water system, the project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in the area. There are no unusual circumstances associated with population or housing that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Public Services/Recreation:

Because the project would not induce population growth, the project would not generate a demand for additional fire protection, police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, or other public services.

Transportation/Traffic:

Because the project would not induce population growth, the project would not directly or indirectly result in a permanent increase in traffic or vehicle miles traveled (VMT). There would be short-term increases in traffic in the area associated with construction; however, this is a temporary impact and would cease upon completion of the project.

Utilities and Service Systems:

The project would not require the relocation of sewer lines, electric facilities, storm drains, natural gas, or other utility infrastructure. Because the project would not induce population growth, no increased demand for water supply, wastewater treatment, or solid waste disposal services would occur.

Wildfire:

The proposed project does not include any development or improvements that would increase the long-term risk of wildland fires or expose people or structures to wildland fires. There are no unique

circumstances associated with the proposed project that would result in more significant impacts than other similar projects in the area.

4. Scenic Highways. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a State Scenic Highway.*

According to the California Scenic Highway Mapping System, there are no officially designated State Scenic Highways in the project area; therefore, there would be no impact.

5. Hazardous Waste Sites. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to §65962.5 of the Government Code.*

The following databases were reviewed to locate "Cortese List" sites.

- List of Hazardous Waste and Substances sites from the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) EnviroStor database.
- SWRCB GeoTracker Database.
- List of solid waste disposal sites identified by SWRCB with waste constituents above hazardous waste levels outside the waste management unit.
- List of active Cease and Desist Orders and Clean-Up and Abatement Orders from the SWRCB.

The records search revealed that the project is not located on a hazardous waste site. There are no active clean-up sites or hazardous waste sites within a one-mile radius of the project area.

6. Historical Resources. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.*

There are no known historical resources in the project site. According to the USDA NRCS, one soil type, Jafa gravelly loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes, is found in the project site. Jafa gravelly loam dates to the Older Pleistocene (1.9 my to 25,000 BP). Older Pleistocene-age soils have a very low potential for harboring buried cultural resources (Meyer, 2013). However, because there is always some potential for previously unknown cultural resources to be encountered during site excavation, the following standard construction measures would be included in construction contracts for the project to address the inadvertent discovery of cultural resources and human remains:

1. In the event of any inadvertent discovery of cultural resources (i.e., burnt animal bone, midden soils, projectile points or other humanly modified lithics, historic artifacts, etc.), all work within 50 feet of the find shall be halted until a professional archaeologist can evaluate the significance of the find in accordance with PRC §21083.2(g) and §21084.1, and CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(a). If any find is determined to be significant by the archaeologist, the Junction City Elementary School District shall meet with the archaeologist to determine the appropriate course of action. If necessary, a Treatment Plan prepared by an archaeologist outlining recovery of the resource, analysis, and reporting of the find shall be prepared. The Treatment Plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Junction City Elementary School District prior to resuming construction.
2. In the event that human remains are encountered during construction activities, the Junction City Elementary School District shall comply with §15064.5 (e) (1) of the CEQA Guidelines and PRC §7050.5. All project-related ground disturbance within 100 feet of the find shall be halted until the County coroner has been notified. If the coroner determines that the remains are Native American, the coroner will notify the NAHC to identify the most likely descendants of the deceased Native Americans. Project-related ground disturbance in the vicinity of the find shall not resume until the process detailed in §15064.5 (e) has been completed.

DOCUMENTATION:

- California Air Resources Control Board.** 2022. Area Designations Maps—State and National. <http://www.arb.ca.gov/desig/adm/adm.htm>. Accessed October 2023.
- California Department of Conservation.** 2023. Alquist Priolo Fault Zones Map. <https://cadoc.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?useExisting=1&layers=29d2f0e222924896833b69ff1b6d2ca3>. Accessed October 2023.
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- California Environmental Protection Agency.** 2023. Cortese List Data Resources. <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/>. Accessed October 2023.
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- Federal Emergency Management Agency.** National Flood Hazard Map (06105C1006F, 07/20/2016). <https://hazards-fema.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8b0adb51996444d4879338b5529aa9cd>. Accessed October 2023.
- Meyer, Jack.** 2013. A Geoarchaeological Overview and Assessment of Northeast California: Cultural Resources Inventory of Caltrans District 2 Rural Conventional Highways: Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity Counties, Vols. 1-2. Far Western Anthropological Research Group, Inc. Report on file at Caltrans District 2 Office, Redding.
- Trinity County.** 1998. Trinity County Land Use Element. <https://www.trinitycounty.org/node/1901>. Accessed October 2023.
- _____. 1987. Junction City Community Plan. <https://www.trinitycounty.org/node/1901>. Accessed October 2023.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service.** 2022. Web Soil Survey. <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>. Accessed October 2023.
- _____. 1998. Soil Survey of Trinity County, California, Weaverville Area. <https://nrcs.app.box.com/s/33gxkiz34ss3pbvcerixev0wz547r0u0/folder/167182007713>. Accessed October 2023.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.** List of Threatened and Endangered Species. Accessed March 2024.