



State of California – Natural Resources Agency

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Bay Delta Region

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October 8, 2024

Justin Meek, Assistant Community Development Director  
City of Watsonville, Community Development Department  
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Subject: Watsonville 2050 General Plan Environmental Impact Report, Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report, SCH No. 2024090440, City of Watsonville, Santa Cruz County

Dear Mr. Meek:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has reviewed the City of Watsonville, Community Development Department's Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Watsonville 2050 General Plan Environmental Impact Report (Project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

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

CDFW is providing the City of Watsonville, Community Development Department, as the lead agency, with specific detail about the scope and content of the environmental information related to CDFW's area of statutory responsibility that must be included in the EIR (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15082, subd. (b)).

## **CDFW ROLE**

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 2 of 14

environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting comments as a **Responsible Agency** under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority over the Project pursuant to the Fish and Game Code. For example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority, if the Project impacts the bed, channel or bank of any river, stream or lake within the State (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent the Project may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), the project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

## **REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

### **California Endangered Species Act**

A California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Incidental Take Permit (ITP) must be obtained from CDFW 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. Under CESA, "take" means "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill." (Fish & G. Code, § 86). CDFW's issuance of an ITP is subject to CEQA and to facilitate permit issuance, any project modifications and mitigation measures must be incorporated into the CEQA document analysis, discussion, and 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 Permit.

CEQA requires a mandatory finding of significance if a project is likely to substantially impact threatened or endangered species (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21001, subd. (c) & 21083; CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15380, 15064 & 15065). In addition, pursuant to CEQA, the lead agency cannot approve a project unless all impacts to the environment are avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels, or the lead agency makes and supports findings of overriding consideration for impacts that remain significant despite the implementation of all feasible mitigation. Findings of consideration under CEQA, however, do not eliminate the Project proponent's obligation to comply with the Fish and Game Code.

### **Lake and Streambed Alteration**

CDFW requires a Lake or Streambed Alteration (LSA) Notification, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq., for Project activities affecting river, lakes or streams and associated riparian habitat. Notification is required for any activity that may

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 3 of 14

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, drainage ditches, washes, watercourses with a subsurface flow, and floodplains is generally subject to notification requirements. In addition, infrastructure installed beneath such aquatic features, such as through hydraulic directional drilling, is also generally subject to notification requirements. Therefore, any impact to the mainstems, tributaries, or floodplains or associated riparian habitat caused by the proposed Project will likely require an LSA Notification. CDFW may not execute a final LSA Agreement until it has considered the final EIR and complied with its responsibilities as a responsible agency under CEQA.

### **Migratory Birds and Raptors**

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

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION SUMMARY**

**Proponent:** City of Watsonville

**Objective:** The City of Watsonville is preparing a comprehensive update of the Watsonville 2005 General Plan in response to changes in conditions in the City and new state laws enacted since the preparation of the existing General Plan. The projected growth in the 2050 General Plan envisions the addition of up to 5,980 new residential units and 1.725 million square feet of non-residential development. The 2050 General Plan will include goals, policies, and implementation actions – developed with extensive community input – to advance the City’s vision and community priorities, including: revitalizing Downtown Watsonville; introducing a range of new housing choices, both single-family and multi-family; attracting new employment and revenue-generating uses; maintaining the existing character of the City’s residential neighborhoods, preserving the City’s natural open spaces, especially the sloughs; improving the City’s existing parks and community facilities, and introducing new ones; accommodating planned passenger rail service, including a station in Downtown Watsonville; implementing complete streets improvements; and rerouting truck routes around town.

**Location:** The Project encompasses the City of Watsonville including five areas on noncontiguous land at the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Plant, Buena Vista

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 4 of 14

Landfill, Pinto Lake, Corralitos Water Filter Plant, and Browns Valley in Santa Cruz County.

**Timeframe:** 2050

The CEQA Guidelines (§§15124 & 15378) require that the draft EIR incorporate a full project description, including reasonably foreseeable future phases of the Project, and that contains sufficient information to evaluate and review the Project's environmental impact. Please include a complete description of the following Project components in the Project description including but not limited to the below information.

- Land use changes resulting from, for example, rezoning certain areas.
- Footprints of permanent Project features and temporarily impacted areas, such as staging areas and access routes.
- Area and plans for any proposed buildings/structures, ground disturbing activities, fencing, paving, stationary machinery, landscaping, and stormwater systems.
- Operational features of the Project, including level of anticipated human presence (describe seasonal or daily peaks in activity, if relevant), artificial lighting/light reflection, noise, traffic generation, and other features.
- Construction schedule, activities, equipment, and crew sizes.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

Sufficient information regarding the environmental setting is necessary to understand any potentially significant impacts on the environment of the proposed Project and any alternatives identified in the draft EIR (CEQA Guidelines, §§15125 & 15360). CDFW recommends the draft EIR provide baseline habitat assessments for special-status plant, fish and wildlife species located and potentially located within the Project area and surrounding lands, including all rare, threatened, and endangered species (CEQA Guidelines, §15380). The draft EIR should describe aquatic habitats, such as wetlands or waters of the U.S. or State, and any sensitive natural communities or riparian habitat occurring on or adjacent to the Project site (for sensitive natural communities see: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/NaturalCommunities#sensitive%20natural%20communities>), and any stream or wetland set back distances the City of Watsonville may require. Fully protected, threatened or endangered, candidate, and other special-status species or sensitive natural communities that are known to occur, or have the potential to occur in or near the Project site, include, but are not limited to:

Justin Meek  
 City of Watsonville  
 October 8, 2024  
 Page 5 of 14

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
California red-legged frog	<i>Rana draytonii</i>	FT
Santa Cruz tarplant	<i>Holocarpha macradenia</i>	FE, ST
Tricolored blackbird	<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	ST
Santa Cruz long-toed salamander	<i>Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum</i>	SP
Nesting birds		
Bats		
Rare plants		
Other aquatic and riparian species		

**Notes:**

FT = listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act; FE = listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act; ST = listed as threatened under CESA; SE = listed as endangered under CESA; SSC = state species of special concern; SP = state listed as fully protected; CRPR = California Rare Plant Bank.

Habitat descriptions and species profiles included in the draft EIR should include robust information from multiple sources: aerial imagery; historical and recent survey data; field reconnaissance; scientific literature and reports; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Information, Planning, and Consultation System; California Aquatic Resources Inventory; and findings from “positive occurrence” databases such as California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). Only with sufficient data and information can the City of Watsonville adequately assess which special-status species are likely to occur in the Project vicinity.

CDFW recommends surveys be conducted for special-status species with potential to occur, following recommended survey protocols if available. Survey and monitoring protocols and guidelines are available at: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocol>.

Botanical surveys for special-status plant species, including those listed by the California Native Plant Society (<http://www.cnps.org/cnps/rareplants/inventory/>), should also be conducted during the blooming period for all sensitive plant species potentially occurring within the Project area and include the identification of reference populations.

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 6 of 14

Please refer to CDFW protocols for surveying and evaluating impacts to rare plants available at: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Plants>.

## **IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

The CEQA Guidelines (§15126.2) necessitate the draft EIR discuss all direct and indirect impacts (temporary and permanent) that may occur with implementation of the Project. This includes evaluating and describing impacts such as:

- Land use changes that would reduce open space or agricultural land uses and increase residential or other land use involving increased development;
- Changes in hydrological conditions that could alter the timing and magnitude of streamflows both during construction and operation of the Project;
- Potential for impacts to special-status species;
- Loss or modification of breeding, nesting, dispersal and foraging habitat, including vegetation removal, alternation of soils and hydrology, and removal of habitat structural features (e.g., snags, roosts, overhanging banks);
- Permanent and temporary habitat disturbances associated with ground disturbance, noise, lighting, reflection, air pollution, traffic or human presence; and
- Obstruction of movement corridors, fish passage, or access to water sources and other core habitat features.
- Water quality impacts resulting from construction and operation of the Project;
- Impacts both from construction and operation of the Project;
- Impacts to bed, channel, bank, and riparian habitat, and the direct and indirect effects to fish, wildlife, and their habitat;

The CEQA document also should identify existing and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the Project vicinity, disclose any cumulative impacts associated with these projects, determine the significance of each cumulative impact, and assess the significance of the Project's contribution to each impact (CEQA Guidelines, §15355). Although a project's impacts may be insignificant individually, its contributions to a cumulative impact may be considerable; a contribution to a significant cumulative impact (e.g., reduction of available habitat for a listed species) should be considered cumulatively considerable without mitigation to minimize or avoid the impact.

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 7 of 14

The CEQA Guidelines direct the City of Watsonville, as the lead agency, to consider and describe in the draft EIR all feasible mitigation measures to avoid and/or mitigate potentially significant impacts of the Project on the environment based on comprehensive analysis of the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the Project (CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15021, 15063, 15071, 15126.2, 15126.4 & 15370). This should include a discussion of take avoidance and minimization measures for special-status species, which are recommended to be developed in early consultation with USFWS, the National Marine Fisheries Service and CDFW. These measures can then be incorporated as enforceable Project conditions to reduce potential impacts to biological resources to less-than-significant levels.

## **COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the information provided in the NOP, CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist the City of Watsonville in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and/or indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. These comments and recommendations are not an exhaustive list and CDFW may provide additional recommendations as more Project specific information is disclosed. The draft EIR must include a full Project Description, Environmental Setting, and Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures as outlined above. Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the document.

**General Conservation Planning Comment:** CDFW appreciates the 2050 General Plan will broadly include preserving the City's natural open spaces, especially the sloughs. While CDFW encourages and supports these goals, the Project has potential to significantly impact biological resources from Project related habitat loss in areas outside of open space and sloughs. Remaining riparian habitat along streams and tributaries to major sloughs and wetlands as well as uplands in the Project areas may provide important habitat and allow movement (connectivity) for a variety of special-status fish and wildlife species.

**Comment 1: Riparian Setbacks:** The Project has the potential to encroach into riparian vegetation (i.e., "riparian zone") from development. Encroachment into the riparian zone can adversely impact sensitive riparian and aquatic species through reduction of habitat and decreased water quality. Riparian zone encroachment also has the potential to increase flood risk in areas bordering the creek and accelerate erosion. Streambank stabilization activities are commonly needed in areas of riparian encroachment resulting in cumulative impacts over time.

**Evidence impact would be significant:** Riparian vegetation, and associated floodplains, provide many essential benefits to stream and aquatic species habitat, including thermal protection, cover, and large woody debris (Moyle 2002, CDFW 2007).

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 8 of 14

Development adjacent to the riparian zone can result in fragmentation of riparian habitat and decreases in native species abundance and biodiversity (Davies et al. 2001, Hansen et al. 2005, CDFW 2007). Riparian buffers help keep pollutants from entering adjacent waters through a combination of processes including dilution, sequestration by plants and microbes, biodegradation, chemical degradation, volatilization, and entrapment within soil particles. Narrow riparian buffers are considerably less effective in minimizing the effects of adjacent development than wider buffers (Castelle et al. 1992, Brososke et al. 1997, Dong et al. 1998, Kiffney et al. 2003, Moore et al. 2005).

**Mitigation Measure 1:** CDFW recommends the Project establish and the draft EIR incorporate riparian buffer zones along all rivers, lakes and streams to prohibit development and vegetation clearing to outside of and away from riparian areas. Riparian buffers should include all perennial, intermittent and ephemeral streams. CDFW is available to consult with the City to determine appropriate riparian buffers to reduce impacts to special-status species and riparian habitat to less-than-significant.

### **Comment 2: Santa Cruz Tarplant**

**Issue:** The Project has the potential to impact Santa Cruz tarplant (*Holocarpha macradenia*) with the development of new residential units and non-residential units in the new Urban Limit Line (ULL) in Buena Vista Area.

**Evidence the impact would be significant:** Santa Cruz tarplant is an endangered species under CESA (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.). Species listed under CESA may not be taken<sup>2</sup> at any time except under the provisions of a Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP), (Fish & G Code § 2081.7), a Memorandum of Understanding for scientific education or management purposes (Fish & G. Code §2081, subd. (a)), or an ITP (Fish & G. Code § 2081 (b)).

Santa Cruz tarplant is an annual species and the number of individuals recorded in a year is highly dependent on rainfall and other factors. Santa Cruz tarplant produces two types of seeds, ray achenes and disk achenes (USFWS 2014). Generally, the seeds fall within the vicinity of the plant and do not have a structural means for dispersal, although it is possible that some ray achenes may be dispersed long distances by animals (USFWS 2014). Ray achenes also form lasting seed banks with seeds that remain viable for an unknown amount of time, with seeds up to 15 years old successfully germinating (USFWS 2014). Surveys over consecutive seasons may be necessary to increase the likelihood of detection and account for variances in weather and other disturbances from year to year to determine the potential for take.

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<sup>2</sup> Take is defined in Fish & G. Code, § 86 as hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill.



Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 9 of 14

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 2 – Focused Survey:** Prior to commencement of construction activities on property with undeveloped areas or unmaintained landscaping, an experienced botanist, familiar with the native plant communities of Santa Cruz County shall conduct a focused Santa Cruz tarplant survey during the blooming period of the species, from June to October. The surveys shall occur throughout the entire Project where potential Santa Cruz tarplant habitat has been identified, prior to the initiation of construction and the results shall be included in the Project environmental document. Surveys shall be conducted according to: Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special-Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities (CDFW 2018), available at: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=18959&inline>.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 3 – Santa Cruz Tarplant Avoidance and Mitigation:** If Santa Cruz tarplant is detected or likely to occur within the Project area, additional measures may be needed to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate potential Project impacts. Measures may include work stoppage, flagging and avoidance of occurrences, collection of propagation material, and/or site restoration. In the event that State-listed plants cannot be avoided during construction, the Project proponent shall obtain an ITP pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b). (See cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §§ 783.4 & 786.9.) Information on the ITP process is available at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CESA/Permitting/Incidental-Take-Permits>. In addition, CDFW recommends continued coordination to develop additional measures.

### **Comment 3: Tricolored Blackbird (TRBL)**

**Issue:** Tricolored blackbirds have the potential to occur within or near the Project site with the development of new residential units and non-residential units in the ULL and tricolored blackbird have been documented to occur near the Project area at the Highway 1 Gateway Area (CNDDDB, 2011 & 2014). Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for TRBL, potential significant impacts include nest and/or colony abandonment, reduced reproductive success, and reduced health and vigor of eggs and/or young.

**Evidence impact would be significant:** TRBL aggregate and nest colonially, forming colonies of up to 100,000 nests (Meese et al. 2014). Increasingly, TRBL are forming larger colonies that contain progressively larger proportions of the species' total population (Kelsey 2008). In 2008, for example, 55% of the species' global population nested in only two colonies, which were located in silage fields (Kelsey 2008). In 2017, approximately 30,000 TRBL were distributed among only 16 colonies in Merced County (Meese 2017). Nesting can occur synchronously, with all eggs laid within one week (Orians 1961). For these reasons, depending on timing, disturbance to nesting colonies can cause abandonment, significantly impacting TRBL populations (Meese et al. 2014).

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 10 of 14

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 4 – TRBL Habitat Assessment:** CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment of the Project site in advance of Project implementation, to determine if the Project site or its vicinity contains suitable habitat for TRBL.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 5 - TRBL Surveys:** CDFW recommends that Project activities be timed to avoid the typical bird breeding season (February 1 through September 15). However, if Project activities must take place during that time, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys for nesting TRBL no more than 10 days prior to the start of implementation to evaluate presence/absence of TRBL nesting colonies in proximity to Project activities and to evaluate potential Project-related impacts.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 6 – TRBL Avoidance and Mitigation:** If an active TRBL nesting colony is found during pre-activity surveys, CDFW recommends implementation of a minimum 300-foot no-disturbance buffer in accordance with CDFW's "*Staff Guidance Regarding Avoidance of Impacts to Tricolored Blackbird Breeding Colonies on Agricultural Fields in 2015*" (<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=99310&inline>) (CDFW 2015b). CDFW advises that this buffer remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that nesting has ceased, the birds have fledged, and are no longer reliant upon the colony or parental care for survival. It is important to note that TRBL colonies can expand over time and for this reason, the colony may need to be reassessed to determine the extent of the breeding colony within 10 days prior to Project initiation. In the event that a TRBL nesting colony is detected during surveys, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take, or if avoidance is not feasible, to acquire an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2081(b), prior to any ground-disturbing activities.

#### **Comment 4: California Red-Legged Frog (CRLF)**

**Issue:** CRLF primarily inhabit ponds but can also be found in other waterways including marshes, streams, and lagoons, and the species will also breed in ephemeral waters (Thomson et al. 2016). The Project site contains habitat and CRLF have the potential to occur in the vicinity of the Project site. Avoidance and minimization measures are necessary to reduce impacts to CRLF to a level that is less-than-significant. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for CRLF, potentially significant impacts associated with the Project's activities include burrow collapse, inadvertent entrapment, reduced reproductive success, reduction in health and vigor of eggs, larvae and/or young, and direct mortality of individuals.

**Evidence impact would be significant:** CRLF populations throughout the State have experienced ongoing and drastic declines and many have been extirpated. Habitat loss

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 11 of 14

from growth of cities and suburbs, invasion of nonnative plants, impoundments, water diversions, stream maintenance for flood control, degraded water quality, and introduced predators, such as bullfrogs are the primary threats to CRLF (Thomson et al. 2016, USFWS 2017).

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 7 – CRLF Surveys:** CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys for CRLF in accordance with the USFWS “Revised Guidance on Site Assessment and Field Surveys for the California Red-legged Frog” (<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=83914&inline>) (USFWS 2005) to determine if CRLF are within or adjacent to the Project area.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 8 – CRLF Avoidance:** If any CRLF are found during pre-construction surveys or at any time during construction, consultation with CDFW is warranted to determine if the Project can avoid take. CDFW recommends that initial ground-disturbing activities be timed to avoid the period when CRLF are most likely to be moving through upland areas (November 1 and March 31). When ground-disturbing activities must take place between November 1 and March 31, CDFW recommends a qualified biologist monitor construction activity daily for CRLF.

#### **Comment 5: State Fully Protected Species within the Project Area**

**Issue:** Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum*) is a fully protected species that have the potential to occur within and in the vicinity the Project area.

Fully protected species, may not be taken or possessed at any time and no licenses or permits may be issued for their take except as follows:

- Take is for necessary scientific research;
- Efforts to recover a fully protected, endangered, or threatened species, live capture and relocation of a bird species for the protection of livestock; or
- They are a covered species whose conservation and management is provided for in a Natural Community Conservation Plan (Fish & G. Code, §§ 3511, 4700, 5050, & 5515).

Specified types of infrastructure projects may be eligible for an ITP for unavoidable impacts to fully protected species if certain conditions are met (Fish & G. Code §2081.15). Project proponents should consult with CDFW early in the Project planning process.

**Recommendation to minimize significant impacts:** CDFW recommends that the Project completely avoid impacts to fully protected species.

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 12 of 14

## ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

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

## ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FILING FEES


CDFW anticipates that the proposed Project, will 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 (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 NOP in order to assist the City of Watsonville in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources.

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Alexis Harrison, Environmental Scientist, at (707) 815-2779 or [Alexis.Harrison@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Alexis.Harrison@wildlife.ca.gov); or Wes Stokes, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory), at (707) 339-6066 or [Wesley.Stokes@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Wesley.Stokes@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
Erin Chappell  
Regional Manager  
Bay Delta Region

ec: Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, Sacramento

Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 13 of 14

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Justin Meek  
City of Watsonville  
October 8, 2024  
Page 14 of 14

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