

## NOTICE OF PREPARATION

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**To:** Responsible Agencies and Trustee Agencies/Interested Organizations and Individuals

**Subject:** Environmental Impact Report for the Liberty Groves Project

**Date:** December 20, 2024

<b>Lead Agency Name and Address:</b> Madera County 200 W. 4 <sup>th</sup> Street Madera, CA 93637	<b>Contact Person and Phone Number:</b> Samuel Rashe Senior Planner (559) 675-7821 Ext. 3222
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Madera County will be the Lead Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Proposed Liberty Groves Project (Project). The County Community and Economic Development Department, Planning Division, will prepare the EIR and is requesting information as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR from any interested parties. If you represent an agency with statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project, your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by Madera County when considering issuance of permits or other approvals for the Project.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your written response to this Notice of Preparation must be sent at the earliest possible date but no later than 45 days after receipt of this notice. The response deadline is February 5, 2025. Please send your response in writing to Samuel Rashe, Senior Planner, at the Lead Agency address shown above or via email at [Samuel.rashe@maderacounty.com](mailto:Samuel.rashe@maderacounty.com).

A scoping meeting will be conducted by the County to receive public and agency input on the scope of environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on January 16, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in person., at the Madera County Government Center 200 W 4th Street, Madera, Third Floor Hearing Room. Participation in the scoping meeting will also be available via teleconference/webinar at 6:00 p.m. on January 16, 2025 using the following website or phone number:

**Website:** [https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting\\_ZmJhNGU4MjYtY2ZhZS00YjQ2LWI1YmUtOTIjMzFjOTBjMDgy%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%226e47272b-0f04-4e02-99ca-053508f0d2b5%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%228988100a-326d-40f0-8e05-0e1a2f810c24%22%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ZmJhNGU4MjYtY2ZhZS00YjQ2LWI1YmUtOTIjMzFjOTBjMDgy%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%226e47272b-0f04-4e02-99ca-053508f0d2b5%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%228988100a-326d-40f0-8e05-0e1a2f810c24%22%7d)

**Phone:** 1-323-488-2458, Phone Conference ID: 567748454#

**Meeting ID:** 292 063 321 522

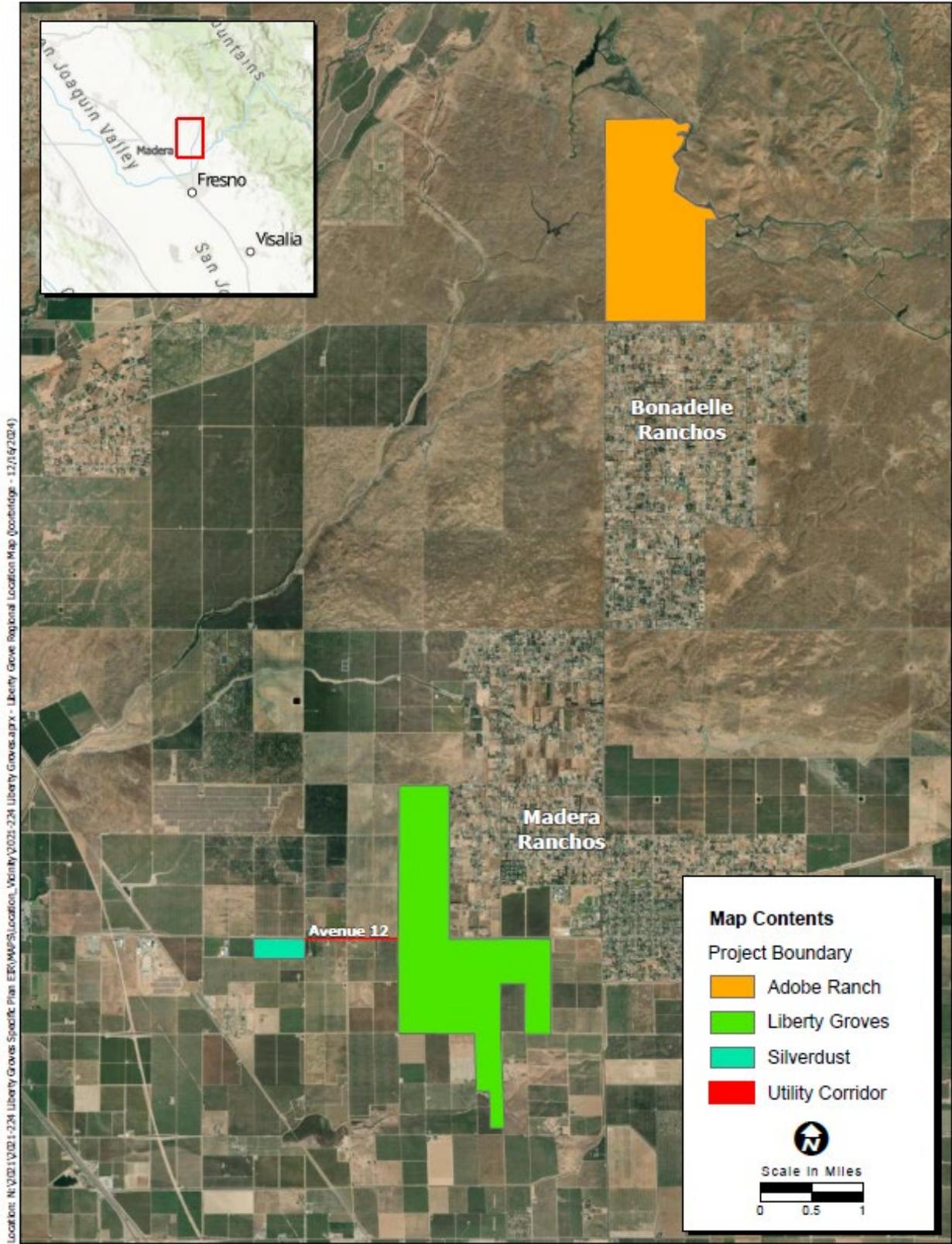
**Passcode:** Yc6sn7hr

**Project Title:** Liberty Groves Project

**Location:** The Liberty Groves Project Site is composed of the Liberty Groves planning area and Silverdust planning area comprising a total of approximately 1,460 acres in southcentral unincorporated Madera County as shown on Figure 1.

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Figure 1. Regional Location Map



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The Liberty Groves planning area is further differentiated as Liberty Groves North and Liberty Groves South in reference to areas north and south of Avenue 12, as shown on Figure 1. The Liberty Groves planning area is approximately 1,460 acres and is located about 6 miles southeast of the City of Madera to the west and southwest of the unincorporated Bonadelle Ranchos-Madera Ranchos community, and approximately 3.5 miles east of State Route (SR) 99 and approximately 6 miles west of SR 41. Avenue 12 bisects the Liberty Groves planning area portion of the Project with Liberty Groves North and Liberty Groves South. The Silverdust planning area is located approximately 1 mile west of the Liberty Groves planning area and is composed of approximately 62 acres south of Avenue 12 between Road 32 ½ and Road 33. Additionally, the Project would permanently preserve an approximately 1,136-acre area referred to as Adobe Ranch located north of State Route 145. The Project would also involve installation of utilities within an approximately 4,858-foot-long corridor along the south side of Avenue 12 between the Liberty Groves and Silverdust planning areas. Utilities within the corridor between Silverdust and Liberty Groves would include a 12-inch water main and 3-inch force wastewater main within the Avenue 12 right-of-way.

Table 1 lists the Assessor’s Parcel Numbers that comprise the three primary portions of the Project Site, including the Liberty Groves planning area, Silverdust planning area, and Adobe Ranch. Additional areas of potential temporary and/or permanent disturbance include utility installation within the utility corridor discussed above as well as additional potential offsite utility infrastructure and road improvement areas to be further defined during the environmental review process.

**Table 1. Project Assessor’s Parcel Numbers**

<i>Liberty Groves Planning Area</i>				
<i>Liberty Groves North</i>	<i>Liberty Groves South</i>		<i>Silverdust Planning Area</i>	<i>Adobe Ranch</i>
034-223-004	047-190-001	047-190-017	047-140-003	052-174-001 052-182-001
034-224-005	047-190-003	047-190-018		
034-224-006	047-190-010	047-190-019		
	047-190-011	047-190-020		
	047-190-012	047-271-008		
	047-190-013	047-271-009		
	047-190-015	047-271-014		

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**Project Summary:** Liberty Groves, LLC, is the Project applicant and requests that the County of Madera amend the Madera County General Plan to incorporate New Growth Areas for Liberty Groves North, Liberty Groves South, and Silverdust, adopt the proposed Liberty Groves Area Plan, adopt the proposed Liberty Groves Specific Plan, enter into a Development Agreement, and grant additional entitlements as necessary to allow for development of residential, community commercial, and industrial land uses consistent with the proposed land uses for the Project planning areas.

The Project planning areas and proposed land uses are shown on Figure 2. Although not within the proposed Liberty Groves Area Plan area, the Project also includes an approximately 5,000-foot-long utility corridor along the south side of Avenue 12 between the Liberty Groves and Silverdust planning areas and the Adobe Ranch, which is an approximately 1,136-acre area north of SR 145 that would be permanently preserved from development and with restrictions on groundwater use as a component of the Project's proposed water supply.

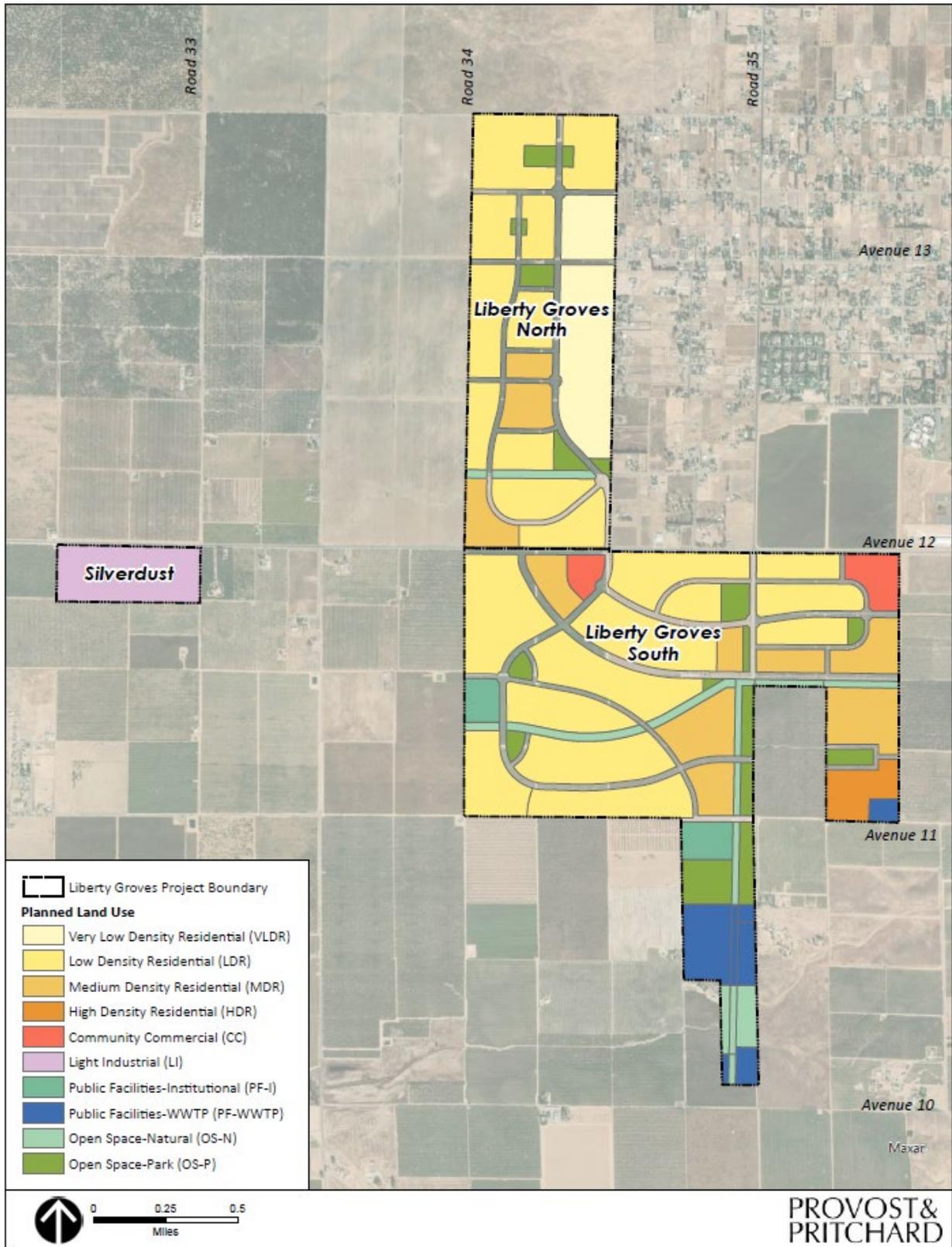
The proposed Liberty Groves Specific Plan would serve as a planning document that implements the goals and policies of the Madera County General Plan and the proposed Liberty Groves Area Plan. The proposed Liberty Groves Specific Plan would guide and regulate development within its boundaries by establishing zoning regulations and development and design standards specifically applicable to properties within the Liberty Groves planning areas.

**Liberty Groves Area Plan and Specific Plan:** The Liberty Groves planning area is organized into five residential neighborhoods including two commercial/ employment centers, and one neighborhood planned for recreation and public facilities uses on the south end. The neighborhoods within the Liberty Groves planning area would be interconnected by the proposed street and open space networks, which include activity centers, commercial centers, and schools. The Silverdust planning area is proposed to serve as an employment center planned to accommodate a variety of economic uses, including offices and light industrial uses. Figure 2 shows the various proposed land uses within the Liberty Groves and Silverdust planning areas.

The Project would result in the development of a maximum of 4,881 residential units within several residential neighborhood areas and 1,650,291 square feet of non-residential uses, resulting in an estimated population of 16,206 persons and 2,955 employees. For planning purposes, each Project neighborhood is assigned a maximum number of dwelling units and non-residential square footage. However, to provide flexibility in the face of fluctuating market conditions while still meeting overall planned buildout assumptions, the Project provides for the transfer of up to 10 percent of dwelling units and non-residential square footage among neighborhoods. Additional detail regarding proposed development and densities within the Project areas is described in the proposed Area Plan and Specific Plan available from the Madera County Planning Department as referenced above.

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Figure 2. Proposed Liberty Groves Area Plan Land Use Diagram



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**Entitlements Requested:** The Liberty Groves Project requires the following entitlement approvals from Madera County:

- **General Plan Amendment:** The Madera County General Plan would be amended through adoption of New Growth Area boundaries for the Project planning areas and through adoption of the proposed Liberty Groves Area Plan. Adoption of the Liberty Groves Area Plan would amend the General Plan land use designations within the Project planning areas and would redesignate Avenue 12 between Road 34 and Road 35 ½ from an Expressway to a Principal Arterial. Adoption of the proposed Liberty Groves Area Plan would also establish goals and policies applicable to the Liberty Groves planning areas.
- **Specific Plan Adoption:** The proposed Liberty Groves Specific Plan would be adopted to serve as the mechanism for implementing the goals and policies of the Liberty Groves Area Plan. The Liberty Groves Specific Plan identifies implementing zoning districts, circulation, and infrastructure and service needs for development within the Liberty Groves planning areas. Amendment of the Madera County zoning map to reflect the Liberty Groves Specific Plan zoning districts would also be approved concurrent with adoption of the Specific Plan.
- **Development Agreement:** The applicant proposes that a Liberty Groves Development Agreement pursuant to the provisions of California Government Code Sections 65864-65869.5 (the Development Agreement Statute) be negotiated and entered into between the County and Liberty Groves, LLC, for the purpose of providing the applicant and the County with long-term assurances of land use and to allow for flexibility in timing development. The proposed Development Agreement would also address the Project's financing, operation, and governance plans for public infrastructure and services required to serve the Proposed Project land uses. Specific terms of a proposed Development Agreement would be developed during the Project review process.

**Reviews and Approvals:** It is currently anticipated that the Liberty Groves Project would require the following approvals from Madera County:

- Certification of the Liberty Groves Project Final EIR, and adoption of CEQA Findings of Fact, a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and, if necessary due to significant and unavoidable environmental impacts, a Statement of Overriding Considerations;
- Adoption of a General Plan Amendment to approve New Growth Areas, to incorporate the Liberty Groves Area Plan, and to redesignate Avenue 12 between Road 34 and Road 35 ½ from an Expressway to a Principal Arterial;
- Adoption of the proposed Liberty Groves Area Plan;
- Adoption of the proposed Liberty Groves Specific Plan;
- Approval of Madera County zoning maps and zoning code text incorporating the Proposed Project zoning;

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- Approval of a Large Lot Tentative Map to establish the various large lot parcels within the Project planning areas;
- Approval of a Development Agreement for implementation of the Proposed Project;
- Adoption of a Water Supply Assessment for the Project verifying the adequacy of the Project's planned water supply;
- Approval of Infrastructure Master Plan

**Subsequent Actions That Would Rely on the EIR:** It is currently anticipated that development in the Project would involve additional subsequent actions including the following:

- Tentative Map Approval
- Approval of Grading Permit(s). Approval from the Public Works Department is required.
- Final Map(s) Approval and Recordation. Approval of Final Maps is required.
- Approval of Building Permits from the Building Division is required.
- Approval of Well Construction Permit(s) from the Environmental Health Department is required.
- Approval of Wastewater Treatment Facilities is required.

**Other Agencies Whose Approval May be Required:** Other governmental agencies from whom approvals for development of the Project may be required include:

**Local:**

- Madera Unified School District
- Golden Valley Unified School District
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

**State:**

- Local Agency Formation Commission
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Health Services
- California Department of Transportation
- California Public Utilities Commission
- Regional Water Quality Control Board

**Federal:**

- Army Corps of Engineers
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service

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**Environmental Issues to be Evaluated in the EIR:** Madera County has determined that an EIR will be prepared for the Project for compliance with CEQA. The following environmental topic areas will be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire