State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Central Region
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, California 93710
(559) 243-4005
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director

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Jesse Franco
Civil Engineering Manager
Modesto Irrigation District
Water Operations
Post Office Box 4060
Modesto, California 95352
jesse.franco@mid.org

Subject: Draft Program Environmental Impact Report
State Clearinghouse No. 2018092056, Stanislaus County

Dear Jesse Franco:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) regarding the Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (Project) from the Modesto Irrigation District (Modesto ID) for the above-referenced Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.[1]

We applaud Modesto ID taking a Districtwide programmatic approach to CEQA and appreciate the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding Project activities that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

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 the 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). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

[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.

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 as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed 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.), related authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code will be required.

Bird Protection: 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 that protect birds, their eggs, and nests include section 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession, or needless destruction of the nest 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).

Water Rights: The capture of unallocated stream flows to artificially recharge groundwater aquifers is subject to appropriation and approval by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) pursuant to Water Code section 1200 et seq. CDFW, as Trustee Agency, is consulted by SWRCB during the water rights process to provide terms and conditions designed to protect fish and wildlife prior to appropriation of the State's water resources. Certain fish and wildlife are reliant upon aquatic and riparian ecosystems, which in turn are reliant upon adequate flows of water. CDFW therefore has a material interest in assuring that adequate water flows within streams for the protection, maintenance, and proper stewardship of those resources. CDFW provides, as available, biological expertise to review and comment on environmental documents and impacts arising from Project activities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Lead Agency: Modesto ID

Description: Modesto ID conducted an evaluation of its water resources, on-farm systems, land use patterns and projections, infrastructure, and finances. As a result of this assessment, Modesto ID has developed and intends to implement the Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (Project) to address Modesto ID's long-term customer and water management goals, and the specific infrastructure and operational needs throughout the Modesto ID irrigation conveyance system. The Project supports Modesto ID's goals through approximately 2040.

The draft PEIR includes approximately 100 activities grouped into the following five overall categories:

- **Three Regulating Reservoirs** – new structures to meet future water delivery demands for customers and increase operational flexibility.

- **Canal, Lateral, and Tunnel Improvements** – to ensure canal, lateral, and tunnel operational reliability.

- **Flow Control** – to provide operational reliability necessary to maintain a high level of customer service.

- **Groundwater Management** – including well testing, maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacing existing wells for conjunctive use.

- **Measurement and Automation** – minimizing operational spills and service interruptions, replacing aging supervisory control and data acquisition infrastructure, and achieving SB X7-7, Water Conservation Act of 2009, compliance.

The Project includes several activities that are well defined and others that are currently more conceptual in nature.

Location: The Project area includes the Modesto ID service area and locations outside the Modesto ID service area, including lands within unincorporated Stanislaus County and the Cities of Modesto, Riverbank, and Waterford.

Objectives and Needs: Although this document is being prepared to satisfy CEQA requirements, Modesto ID has developed a purpose and need that can be used for subsequent documentation, as necessary, to complete future, potential National Environmental Policy Act requirements. As the lead agency under CEQA, Modesto ID's primary objectives include the following:

- Provide a high level of customer services and meet customer's evolving water delivery needs

- Ensure compliance with Senate Bill (SB) X7-7, Water Conservation Act of 2009

- Implement irrigation infrastructure improvements for the stewardship of Modesto ID's water resources and increased operational reliability

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Biological Resources

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist the Modesto ID in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife, i.e., biological resources.

Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the document. Based on a review of the Project description, a review of California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) records, and a review of aerial photographs of the Project boundary and surrounding habitat several special-status species could potentially be impacted by Project activities, particularly those that involve construction activities or diversion and/or modification of stream flows. Project-related construction activities within the Project boundary, including but not limited to construction and operation of water recharge facilities and introduction of surface water flows for storage could impact the special-status plant and wildlife species and habitats known to occur in the area.

The following special status species and habitats are known to occupy the Project area, including the State and federal endangered least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) and riparian brush rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani riparius*); the federal endangered and State species of special concern riparian (San Joaquin Valley) woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes riparia*); the State threatened Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) and tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*); the State fully-protected white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*); the State and federal threatened California tiger salamander – central California Distinct Population Segment (DPS) (*Ambystoma californiense* pop. 1); the federal endangered vernal pool tadpole shrimp (*Lepidurus packardi*) and Conservancy fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta conservation*); the federal threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*); the State candidate endangered crotch bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*); the State and federal endangered and California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) 1B.1 Hartweg's golden sunburst (*Pseudobahia bahifolia*) and hairy Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia pilosa*); the State endangered, federal threatened, and CRPR 1B.2 succulent owl's-clover (*Castilleja campestris* var. *succulenta*); the State endangered and CRPR 1B.1 Delta button celery (*Eryngium racemosum*); the State endangered, federal threatened, and CRPR 1B.1 Colusa grass (*Neostapfia colusana*); the federal threatened and CRPR 1B.2 Hoover's spurge (*Euphorbia hooveri*); the CRPR 1A Hoover's cryptantha (*Cryptantha hooveri*); the CRPR 1B.1 alkali-sink goldfields (*Lasthenia chrysantha*) and lesser saltscale (*Atriplex minuscula*); the CRPR 1B.2 California alkali grass (*Puccinellia simplex*) and Sanford's arrowhead (*Sagittaria sanfordii*); the CRPR 2B.2 dwarf downingia (*Downingia pusilla*); and the State species of special concern burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), Northern California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*), Blainville's horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*), Merced kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys heermanni dixoni*), Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*), western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*), western red bat (*Lasiurus blossevillii*), western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*), and western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*). Suitable habitat for the rare and endemic obscure bumble bee (*Bombus caliginosus*) and Morrison bumble bee (*Bombus morrisoni*) occurs in the Project vicinity. Other species of birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, fish, and plants also compose the local ecosystem within the Project boundary.

The Tuolumne, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Rivers are adjacent to the Modesto ID service area boundary, which overlaps the Project area. These rivers support the federal threatened Central Valley steelhead DPS (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus* pop. 11), and the State species of special concern fall-run Central Valley Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawyscha*). The San Joaquin River supports the nonessential experimental population of spring run Central Valley Chinook salmon, for which the San Joaquin River Restoration Program goal is to restore a self-sustaining fishery. Additionally, CDFW documented the presence of the experimental spring-run Chinook salmon in the Tuolumne and Stanislaus Rivers during 2021 escapement surveys, documenting the San Joaquin River as a migratory corridor for spring/fall Chinook and steelhead and likely providing rearing habitat. Other special status fish species known to occur within one or more of the three river systems include the federal threatened green sturgeon – southern DPS (*Acipenser medirostris* pop. 1), and the State species of special concern hardhead (*Mylopharodon conocephalus*) and white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*).

Surface and ground water dependent ecosystems, including Great Valley Valley Oak Riparian Forest, Great Valley Mixed Riparian Forest, vernal pool, swale, riparian, wetland, and oak woodland habitats are present within the three watersheds and other areas within the Project boundary. The western area of the Project boundary is located in close proximity to Caswell Memorial State Park and the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge.

Please note that the CNDDB is populated by and records voluntary submissions of species detections. As a result, species may be present in locations not depicted in the CNDDB but where there is suitable habitat and features capable of supporting species. A lack of an occurrence record in the CNDDB does not mean a species is not present. In order to adequately assess any potential Project-related impacts to biological resources, surveys conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist/botanist during the appropriate survey period(s) and using the appropriate protocol survey methodology are warranted in order to determine whether or not any special status species are present at or near the Project area.

I. Mitigation Measure or Alternative and Related Impact Shortcoming

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 United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)?

COMMENT 1: Least Bell's Vireo (LBV)

Issues and Impacts: LBV occurrences have been documented within the Project area and suitable riparian habitat for nesting occurs in the Project vicinity (CDFW 2022a). Suitable LBV habitat includes rivers and streams with dense riparian

vegetation. Review of aerial imagery indicates that suitable habitat for LBV occurs within the Project area.

Breeding habitat loss resulting from urban development, water diversion, and spread of agricultural is the primary threat to LBV, and the primary cause of decline for this species has been the loss and alteration of riparian woodland habitats (USFWS 2006). Fragmentation of their preferred habitat has also increased their exposure to brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) parasitism (Kus and Whitfield 2005). Current threats to their preferred habitat include colonization by non-native plants and altered hydrology (diversion, channelization, etc.) (USFWS 2006). Suitable nesting habitat is present within or adjacent to the Project site. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures, potential significant impacts associated with Project activities may include nest abandonment, reduced reproductive success, and reduced health and vigor of eggs and/or young.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: LBV Habitat Assessment
CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of any Project construction activities, to determine where the Project site or its immediate vicinity contains suitable habitat for LBV. Although LBV inhabit riparian woodlands, the species has also been found to benefit from non-riparian systems including brushy fields, second-growth forest or woodland, scrub oak, coastal chaparral, and mesquite brushlands (Kus et al. 1989).

Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: Focused LBV Surveys
CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys following the survey methodology developed by USFWS (2001) prior to initiation of Project construction within the Project area and a 500-foot buffer around the Project area. In addition, if Project construction will take place during the species' nesting season (April 1 through August 31), CDFW recommends that additional preconstruction surveys for active nests be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 10 days prior to the start of Project activities such as construction or habitat removal.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: LBV Nest Avoidance Buffers
If an LBV nest is found during protocol or preconstruction surveys, CDFW recommends maintaining a minimum 500-foot no-disturbance buffer until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest site or parental care.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 4: LBV Habitat Mitigation
CDFW recommends that impacts to known nest trees be avoided at all times of year. Regardless of nesting status, if potential or known LBV nesting habitat is removed, CDFW recommends that it be replaced with appropriate native tree species, planted at a ratio of 3:1 (replaced to removed), in an area that will be protected in perpetuity, to offset the loss of nesting habitat.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 5: LBV Take Authorization
If a 500-foot no-disturbance nest buffer is not feasible, consultation with CDFW is warranted and acquisition of an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for LBV may be necessary prior to project implementation, to avoid unauthorized take, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b). Alternatively, the applicant can assume presence of LBV within the Project area and obtain an ITP.

COMMENT 2: Swainson's Hawk (SWHA)

Issues and Impacts: SWHA have been documented in areas of suitable habitat within the Project vicinity (CDFW 2022a). Undeveloped and agricultural land in the surrounding area provide suitable foraging habitat for SWHA, and any trees in or near the Project area may also provide suitable nesting habitat. SWHA exhibit high nest-site fidelity year after year and lack of suitable nesting habitat limits their local distribution and abundance (CDFW 2016). Approval of the Project may lead to subsequent ground-disturbing activities that involve noise, groundwork, construction of structures, and movement of workers that could affect nests and has the potential to result in nest abandonment and loss of foraging habitat. In addition, conversion of undeveloped and agricultural land can directly influence distribution and abundance of SWHA, due to the reduction in foraging habitat. Groundwater pumping, surface water diversion, and habitat conversion may result in loss of riparian habitat and subsequent loss of nesting habitat.

Mitigation Measure MM-BR-1c states that if active Swainson's hawk nests are detected during preconstruction surveys, a no-disturbance buffer zone of 500 feet would be implemented during the nesting season Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for SWHA, potential significant impacts that may result from Project activities include nest abandonment, loss of nest trees, loss of foraging habitat that would reduce nesting success (loss or reduced health or vigor of eggs or young), and direct mortality.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 6: Focused SWHA Surveys
CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys for nesting SWHA following the entire survey methodology developed by the SWHA Technical Advisory Committee (SWHA TAC 2000) prior to any Project construction activities.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 7: SWHA Avoidance
CDFW recommends that if Project-specific construction activities will take place during the SWHA nesting season (i.e., March 1 through September 15) and active SWHA nests are present, a minimum ½-mile no-disturbance buffer be delineated and maintained around each nest, regardless of when or how it was detected, until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 8: SWHA Take Authorization
CDFW recommends that in the event an active SWHA nest is detected, and a ½-mile no-disturbance buffer is not feasible, consultation with CDFW occur to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b) is necessary to comply with CESA. Alternately, the applicant can assume presence of SWHA and obtain an ITP.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 9: Loss of SWHA Foraging Habitat
CDFW recommends compensation for the loss of SWHA foraging habitat as described in the CDFW *Staff Report Regarding Mitigation for Impacts to Swainson's Hawks* (Staff Report) (CDFG 1994) to reduce impacts to foraging habitat to less than significant. The Staff Report recommends that mitigation for habitat loss occur for any project proposed within 10 miles from known nest sites.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 10: SWHA Tree Removal
CDFW recommends that the removal of known SWHA nest trees, even outside of the nesting season, be replaced with appropriate native tree species planting at a ratio of 3:1 at or near the Project area or in another area that will be protected in perpetuity, to offset the local and temporal impacts of nesting habitat loss.

COMMENT 3: White-tailed Kite:

This species occurs in the vicinity of the Project boundary. Mitigation Measure MM-BR-1c states that if active white-tailed kite nests are detected during preconstruction surveys, a no-disturbance buffer zone of 500 feet will be implemented during the nesting season (March 1 through September 15). Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for white-tailed kite, potential significant impacts that may result from Project activities include nest abandonment, loss of nest trees, loss of foraging habitat that would reduce nesting success (loss or reduced health or vigor of eggs or young), and direct mortality. Due to its fully protected status, take of white-tailed kite cannot be authorized and would be a violation of Fish and Game Code.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 11: White-Tailed Kite Surveys
To avoid potential Project-related impacts, CDFW recommends that prior to commencing Project-related construction activities, a qualified avian biologist conduct surveys for nesting white-tailed kites within areas of Project activity and a ¼-mile buffer.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 12: White-Tailed Kite Avoidance:
CDFW recommends that a minimum no-disturbance buffer of ¼ mile be delineated around active nests of white-tailed kites until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival. CDFW advises the Lead Agency

not to allow reductions in no-disturbance buffer size for white-tailed kites or any fully protected bird of prey species absent a compelling biological or ecological reason to do so. In the event that nesting white-tailed kites are detected during surveys, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss Project implementation and take avoidance.

COMMENT 4: Tricolored Blackbird (TRBL)

Issues and Impacts: TRBL are known to occur in the Project area (CDFW 2022a), and review of aerial imagery indicates that suitable habitat types within the Project area includes wetlands, ponds, and flood-irrigated agricultural land, which is an increasingly important nesting habitat type for TRBL (Meese et al. 2017).

TRBL aggregate and nest colonially, forming colonies of up to 100,000 nests (Meese et al. 2014), and approximately 86% of the global population is found in the San Joaquin Valley (Kelsey 2008, Weintraub et al. 2016). For these reasons, disturbance to nesting colonies can cause entire nest colony site abandonment and loss of all unfledged nests (Meese et al. 2014). Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for TRBL, potential significant impacts include nesting habitat loss, nest and/or colony abandonment, reduced reproductive success, and reduced health and vigor of eggs and/or young.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 13: TRBL Surveys
CDFW recommends that Project construction activities be timed to avoid the avian nesting season of February 1 through September 15. If Project activity that could disrupt nesting must take place during that time, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for nesting TRBL no more than 10 days prior to the start of implementation to evaluate presence or absence of TRBL nesting colonies in proximity to Project activities and to evaluate potential Project-related impacts.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 14: TRBL Colony Avoidance:
If an active TRBL nesting colony is found during surveys, CDFW recommends implementation of a minimum 300-foot no-disturbance buffer, in accordance with CDFW's (2015) *Staff Guidance Regarding Avoidance of Impacts to Tricolored Blackbird Breeding Colonies on Agricultural Fields in 2015*, until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that nesting has ceased and the young have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the colony or parental care.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 15: TRBL Take Authorization
In the event that a TRBL nesting colony is detected during surveys, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss whether the Project can avoid take and, if take avoidance is not feasible, to acquire an ITP pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), prior to any Project activities.

COMMENT 5: Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat

Issues and Impacts: Historically, riparian brush rabbit is known to have occurred in riparian forests along the San Joaquin River and Stanislaus rivers in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties, and probably also streamside communities along the other tributaries of the San Joaquin River on the valley floor. Today, the largest remaining fragment of habitat and only extant population are found along the Stanislaus River in Caswell Memorial State Park, Dos Rios Ranch, and San Joaquin National Wildlife Refuge. Riparian brush rabbits inhabit dense, brushy areas of Valley riparian forests, marked by extensive thickets of wild rose (*Rosa* spp.), blackberries (*Rubus* spp.), and willows (*Salix* spp.). Thriving mats of low-growing vines and shrubs serve as ideal living sites where they build tunnels under and through the vegetation. Suitable existing habitat for riparian brush rabbits is characterized by an abundance of woody ground litter and fewer willows, signifying areas of higher ground not subject to regular or heavy flooding.

Lack of suitable habitat above the level of regular floods where the animals could find food and cover for protection from weather and predators poses the greatest threat to the species (ESRP 2022a). Other factors include wildfire threats due to long-term fire suppression in the Caswell State Park, diseases common to rabbits in California, and competition with the more fecund and vagile desert cottontail.

The riparian woodrat is the only subspecies of dusky-footed woodrat found on the floor of the Central Valley and is restricted today to small remnant patches of riparian forest along the Stanislaus River, with highest densities often encountered in willow thickets with an oak overstory. Loss and fragmentation of habitat are the principal reasons for the decline of the riparian woodrat, due largely to construction of large dams and canals that diverted water and altered hydrology, as well as from cultivation of the river bottoms. Thick undergrowth that is particularly important to woodrats, is sensitive to trampling and browsing and grazing by livestock (ESRP 2022b). A review of aerial imagery shows the presence of riparian woodland habitat along the San Joaquin River and Stanislaus River adjacent to the Project area. Known occurrences for both species have been documented adjacent to the Project boundary (CDFW 2022a).

Recommended Mitigation Measure 16: Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat Habitat Assessment
Prior to Project construction activities occurring in riparian habitat in proximity to the San Joaquin River or Stanislaus River, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct protocol level surveys in accordance with the USFWS (2022) *Draft Habitat Assessment Guidelines & Survey Protocol for the Riparian Brush Rabbit and the Riparian Woodrat* at the appropriate time of year to determine the existence and extent of these species. If through surveys it is determined that riparian brush rabbit or riparian woodrat are occupying or have the potential to occupy the Project site,

consultation with CDFW is warranted to determine appropriate avoidance and minimization measures including implementation of no-disturbance buffers.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 17: Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat Take Authorization
If riparian brush rabbit occupies the Project area, and if take cannot be avoided, take authorization may be warranted prior to initiating Project activities by acquiring an ITP pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), before Project ground or vegetation disturbing activities occur. Alternatively, in the absence of protocol surveys, the applicant can assume presence and obtain an ITP.

COMMENT 6: California Tiger Salamander (CTS)

Issues and Impacts: CTS are known to occur in the Project area and its vicinity (CDFW 2022a), and review of aerial imagery indicates the presence of several wetland features. In addition, the Project area or its immediate surroundings may support small mammal burrows, a requisite upland habitat feature for CTS. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for CTS, potential significant impacts associated with any construction or ground disturbing activity include burrow collapse; inadvertent entrapment; reduced reproductive success; reduction in health and vigor of eggs, larvae and/or young; and direct mortality of individuals. In addition, depending on the design of any activity, the Project has the potential to result in creation of barriers to dispersal.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 18: CTS Habitat Assessment
CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment well in advance of Project construction, to determine if any Project area or its vicinity contains suitable habitat (upland or breeding) for CTS.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 19: Focused CTS Surveys
If the Project area does contain suitable habitat for CTS, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist evaluate potential Project-related impacts to CTS prior to ground-disturbing activities using the USFWS (2003) *Interim Guidance on Site Assessment and Field Surveys for Determining Presence or a Negative Finding of the California Tiger Salamander*. CDFW recommends that the survey include a 100-foot buffer around the areas in wetland and upland habitats that could support CTS.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 20: CTS Avoidance
CDFW advises that avoidance for CTS include a minimum 50-foot no disturbance buffer delineated around all small mammal burrows and a minimum 250-foot no-disturbance buffer around potential breeding pools within and adjacent to the Project

area. CDFW also recommends avoiding any impacts that could alter the hydrology or result in sedimentation of breeding pools.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 21: CTS Take Authorization
If CTS occupy the Project area and if take cannot be avoided, take authorization would be warranted prior to initiating Project activities, by acquiring an ITP pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), before Project ground or vegetation disturbing activities occur. Alternatively, in the absence of protocol surveys, the applicant can assume presence of CTS within the Project area and obtain an ITP.

COMMENT 7: Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp, Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp, Conservancy Fairy Shrimp

Issues and Impacts: Occurrences of these species have been noted within the Project boundary (CDFW 2022a). These small, freshwater crustaceans complete their entire lifecycle within a variety of vernal pool habitats and temporary waters between November and early May. Vernal pool fairy shrimp have been documented within grassland, agricultural, silvicultural, and aquacultural settings throughout California (USFWS 2007). Review of aerial imagery indicates the presence of several depressional features in the Project area that have the potential to support Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp, Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp, Conservancy Fairy Shrimp.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 22: Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp, Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp, Conservancy Fairy Shrimp Habitat Assessment
In advance of any Project construction or modified hydrology occurring in non-cultivated areas, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct protocol level surveys in accordance with the USFWS (2017) *Survey Guidelines for the Listed Large Branchiopods* at the appropriate time of year to determine the existence and extent of fairy shrimp and tadpole shrimp. If through surveys it is determined that these species are occupying or have the potential to occupy the Project site, consultation with CDFW is warranted to determine appropriate avoidance and minimization measures including adequate implementation of no-disturbance buffers.

COMMENT 8: Special-Status Plants

Issues and Impacts: Section 3.4.3.3 states that some Project impacts to special-status plant species would be unavoidable and potentially significant. State- and federal listed, and other special-status plant species meeting the definition of rare or endangered under CEQA section 15380, are known to occur throughout the Project boundary and surrounding area, including the species listed above (CDFW 2022a).

Many of the plant species listed above are threatened by grazing and agricultural, urban, and energy development, and many historical occurrences of these species

are presumed extirpated (CNPS 2021). Though new populations have recently been discovered, impacts to existing populations have the potential to significantly impact populations of plant species. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for special-status plants, potential significant impacts associated with subsequent Project-specific activities include loss of habitat, loss or reduction of productivity, and direct mortality.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 23: Special-Status Plant Surveys
CDFW recommends that individual Project sites where construction activities will occur be surveyed for special-status plants by a qualified botanist following the *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities* (CDFG 2018). This protocol, which is intended to maximize detectability, includes the identification of reference populations to facilitate the likelihood of field investigations occurring during the appropriate floristic period. Note that due to variations in annual rainfall that CDFW recommends plant surveys be conducted over one season (Spring through Fall) and repeated over two separate seasons to maximize detection of special-status plants.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 24: Special-Status Plant Avoidance
CDFW recommends that special-status plant species be avoided whenever possible by delineating and observing a no-disturbance buffer of at least 50 feet from the outer edge of the plant population(s) or specific habitat type(s) required by special-status plant species. If buffers cannot be maintained, then consultation with CDFW may be warranted to determine appropriate minimization and mitigation measures for impacts to special-status plant species.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 25: Listed Plant Species Take Authorization
If a State-listed plant species is identified during botanical surveys, consultation with CDFW is warranted to determine if the Project can avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization is warranted. Take authorization would occur through issuance of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b).

COMMENT 9: Burrowing Owl (BUOW)

Issues and Impacts: BUOW inhabit open grassland containing small mammal burrows, a requisite habitat feature used for nesting and cover. BUOW may also occur in some agricultural areas, ruderal grassy fields, vacant lots, and pastures if the vegetation structure is suitable and there are useable burrows and foraging habitat in the area (Gervais et al. 2008). BUOW occurrences have been documented in the Project vicinity, and habitat both within and bordering the Project site supports suitable habitat for BUOW (CDFW 2022a).

BUOW rely on burrow habitat year-round for their survival and reproduction. The Project and vicinity contain remnant undeveloped land but is otherwise intensively

managed for agriculture. Potentially significant impacts to nesting and non-nesting BUOW can also occur as a result of ground-impacting activity, such as grading and flooding within active and fallow agricultural areas, and as a result of noise, vibration, and other disturbance caused by equipment and crews. Potential impacts associated with Project activities and land conversion include habitat loss, burrow collapse, inadvertent entrapment, nest abandonment, reduced reproductive success, reduction in health and vigor of eggs and/or young, and direct mortality of individuals.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 26: BUOW Habitat Assessment
CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of implementation of Project construction activities, to determine if the Project area or its vicinity contains suitable habitat for BUOW.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 27: BUOW Surveys
Where suitable habitat is present on or in the vicinity of the Project area, CDFW recommends assessing presence or absence of BUOW by having a qualified biologist conduct surveys following the California Burrowing Owl Consortium (1993) *Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines* and the CDFG (2012) *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation*. Specifically, these documents suggest three or more surveillance surveys conducted during daylight, with each visit occurring at least three weeks apart during the peak breeding season of April 15 to July 15, when BUOW are most detectable. CDFW advises that surveys include a minimum 500-foot survey radius around the Project area.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 28: BUOW Avoidance
CDFW recommends that no-disturbance buffers, as outlined by CDFG (2012), be implemented prior to and during any ground-disturbing activities, and specifically that impacts to occupied burrows be avoided in accordance with the following table unless a qualified biologist approved by CDFW verifies through non-invasive methods that either: 1) the birds have not begun egg laying and incubation; or 2) that juveniles from the occupied burrows are foraging independently and are capable of independent survival.

Location	Time of Year	Level of Disturbance		
		Low	Med	High
Nesting sites	April 1-Aug 15	200 m*	500 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Aug 16-Oct 15	200 m	200 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Oct 16-Mar 31	50 m	100 m	500 m

* meters (m)

Recommended Mitigation Measure 29: BUOW Eviction and Mitigation
If BUOW are found within these recommended buffers and avoidance is not possible, CDFG (2012) states that evicting birds from burrows is considered a

potentially significant impact under CEQA. If it is necessary for Project implementation, CDFW recommends that burrow exclusion be conducted by qualified biologists and only during the non-breeding season, before breeding behavior is exhibited and after the burrow is confirmed empty through non-invasive methods, such as surveillance. CDFW then recommends mitigation in the form of replacement of occupied burrows with artificial burrows at a minimum ratio of one burrow collapsed to one artificial burrow constructed (1:1) to mitigate for evicting BUOW and the loss of burrows. BUOW may attempt to colonize or re-colonize an area that will be impacted; thus, CDFW recommends ongoing surveillance at a rate that is sufficient to detect BUOW if they return.

COMMENT 10: Special-Status Bat Species

Issues and Impacts: Townsend's big-eared bat have been documented to occur in the vicinity of the Project area (CDFW 2022a). The draft PEIR acknowledges that habitat features are present that have the potential to support western mastiff bat, Yuma myotis, hoary bat, and western red bat.

Western mastiff bat, Yuma myotis, and Townsend's big-eared bat are known to roost in buildings, caves, tunnels, cliffs, crevices, and trees. (CDFW 2022b, Lewis 1994, and Gruver 2006). Hoary bat and western red bat are highly associated with riparian habitat (Peirson et al. 2006 and CDFW 2022c). Project activities have the potential to affect habitat upon which special-status bat species depend for successful breeding and have the potential to impact individuals and local populations. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures, potential significant impacts resulting from ground- and vegetation-disturbing activities associated with Project activities include habitat loss, inadvertent entrapment, roost abandonment, reduced reproductive success, reduction in health and vigor of young, and direct mortality.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 30: Bat Roost Habitat Assessment
CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment well in advance of Project implementation to determine if the Project area or its immediate vicinity contains suitable roosting habitat for special-status bat species.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 31: Bat Roost Surveys
If suitable habitat is present, CDFW recommends assessing presence of special-status bat roosts by conducting surveys during the appropriate seasonal period of bat activity. CDFW recommends methods such as through evening emergence surveys or bat detectors to determine whether bats are present.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 32: Bat Roost Disturbance Minimization and Avoidance
If bats are present, CDFW recommends that a 100-foot no-disturbance buffer be placed around the roost and that a qualified biologist who is experienced with bats monitor the roost for signs of disturbance to bats from Project activity. If a bat roost

is identified and work is planned to occur during the breeding season, CDFW recommends that no disturbance to maternity roosts occurs and that CDFW be consulted to determine measures to prevent breeding disruption or failure.

COMMENT 11: Western Pond Turtle (WPT)

Issues and Impacts: WPT are documented in the Project area (CDFW 2022a), and a review of aerial imagery shows requisite habitat features that WPT utilize for nesting, overwintering, dispersal, and basking occur in the Project area. These features include aquatic and terrestrial habitats such as rivers, lakes, reservoirs, ponded areas, irrigation canals, riparian and upland habitat. WPT are known to nest in the spring or early summer within 100 meters of a water body, although nest sites as far away as 500 meters have also been reported (Thomson et al. 2016). Noise, vegetation removal, movement of workers, construction, and ground disturbance as a result of Project activities have the potential to significantly impact WPT populations. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for WPT, potentially significant impacts associated with Project activities could include nest reduction, inadvertent entrapment, reduced reproductive success, reduction in health or vigor of eggs and/or young, and direct mortality.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 33: WPT Surveys
CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for WPT within 10 days prior to Project construction activities. In addition, CDFW recommends that focused surveys for nests occur during the egg-laying season of March through August.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 34: WPT Avoidance and Minimization
CDFW recommends that any WPT nests that are discovered remain undisturbed with a no-disturbance buffer maintained around the nest until the eggs have hatched and neonates are no longer in the nest or Project areas. If WPT individuals are discovered at the site during surveys or Project activities, CDFW recommends that they be allowed to move out of the area of their own volition without disturbance.

COMMENT 12: Crotch Bumble Bee (CBB), Morrison Bumble Bee (MBB), and Obscure Bumble Bee (OBB)

Issues and Impacts: The draft PEIR acknowledges that CBB, MBB, and OBB have been documented within the Project area (CDFW 2022a). Suitable habitat includes areas of grasslands and upland scrub that contain requisite habitat elements, such as small mammal burrows. These bumble bee species primarily nest in late February through late October underground in abandoned small mammal burrows but may also nest under perennial bunch grasses or thatched annual grasses, underneath brush piles, in old bird nests, and in dead trees or hollow logs, and in structures (Williams et al. 2014, Hatfield et al. 2015). Overwintering sites utilized by

mated queens include soft, disturbed soil (Goulson 2010), or under leaf litter or other debris (Williams et al. 2014).

CBB, OBB, and MBB have each experienced range-wide declines in abundance and range restrictions, including historic areas of California's Central Valley (Hatfield et al. 2014a, Hatfield et al. 2014b, Central Valley Xerces Society et al. 2018). Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures, potentially significant impacts associated with ground- and vegetation-disturbing activities associated with construction of the Project include loss of foraging plants, changes in foraging behavior, burrow collapse, nest abandonment, reduced nest success, reduced health and vigor of eggs, young and/or queens, in addition to direct mortality.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 35: CBB, MBB, and OBB Surveys and Avoidance
CDFW recommends that all small mammal burrows and thatched/bunch grasses be surveyed for the species and their nests during the optimal flight period of April 1 through July 31 during the peak blooming period of preferred plant species prior to Project implementation. Avoidance of detected queens or workers is encouraged to allow CBB, MBB, and OBB to leave the Project site of their own volition. Avoidance and protection of detected nests prior to or during Project implementation is encouraged with delineation and observance of a 50-foot no-disturbance buffer.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 36: CBB Take Authorization
Any detection of CBB prior to or during Project implementation warrants consultation with CDFW to discuss how to avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization would be warranted through issuance of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b).

COMMENT 13: Other State Species of Special Concern

Issues and Impacts: American badger, Merced kangaroo rat, California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, and western spadefoot are known to inhabit grassland and upland shrub areas with friable soils (Williams 1986, Thomson et al. 2016). These species have been documented to occur in the vicinity of the Project, which supports requisite habitat elements for these species (CDFW 2022a). Habitat loss threatens all of the species mentioned above (Williams 1986, Thomson et al. 2016). Habitat within and adjacent to the Project represents some of the only remaining undeveloped land in the vicinity, which is otherwise intensively managed for agriculture. Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for these species, potentially significant impacts associated with ground disturbance include

habitat loss, nest/den/burrow abandonment, which may result in reduced health or vigor of eggs and/or young, and direct mortality.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 37: Habitat Assessment
CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment in advance of Project construction activities to determine if Project areas or their immediate vicinity contain suitable habitat for the species mentioned above.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 38: Surveys
If suitable habitat is present, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for applicable species and their requisite habitat features to evaluate potential impacts resulting from ground and vegetation disturbance.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 39: Avoidance
Avoidance whenever possible is encouraged via delineation and observance of a 50-foot no-disturbance buffer around dens of mammals like the American badger as well as the entrances of burrows that can provide refuge for small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

COMMENT 14: Fisheries Impacts:

Section 3.4 states that several Project components are adjacent to, but not in, the Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers. Figure 2a, and other figures in the Draft PEIR show locations of some of the Project structures located in or adjacent to the rivers. CDFW recommends that the draft PEIR or documents tiering off of the PEIR further clarify whether the Project will result in diversion and conveyance of surface flow from streams and any related impacts to fisheries in the San Joaquin, Tuolumne, and/or Stanislaus Rivers and their tributaries.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 40: Fish Screening
As stated above, the Tuolumne, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Rivers support several special status fish species including the Central Valley steelhead and the fall-run Central Valley Chinook salmon. CDFW is concerned that diversion of surface flow from these river systems may have the potential to harm, injure, or kill salmonids or other fish from entrainment into or impingement on screens. Smolt-sized fish are most vulnerable to these operational impacts. For diversions and canal returns potentially accessible to native/anadromous fish on the Tuolumne, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus Rivers, CDFW recommends that the draft PEIR and any documents tiering off of the PEIR include mitigation measures requiring the diversion structure to be fitted with fish screens meeting criteria outlined in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS 1997) *Fish Screening Criteria for Anadromous Salmonids*, to prevent removal, entrainment, or impingement of fish and other wildlife as water is drafted. This screening recommendation does not apply to main canals in the La Grange Reservoir.

Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS?

COMMENT 15: Wetland, Vernal Pool, and Riparian Habitats

Issues and Impacts: The Project area contains numerous waterways and wetland features, including vernal pools and swales within an agricultural landscape mosaic that also maintains undeveloped habitats. Project activities such as water recharge and any associated ground disturbances have the potential to involve temporary and permanent impacts to these habitat features. Project activities have the potential to result in temporary and permanent impacts to these features through groundwater pumping, habitat conversion, grading, fill, conveyance and infrastructure construction, and related development. Riparian and associated floodplain and wetland areas are valuable for their ecosystem processes such as protecting water quality by filtering pollutants and transforming nutrients; stabilizing stream banks to prevent erosion and sedimentation/siltation; and dissipating flow energy during flood conditions, thereby spreading the volume of surface water, reducing peak flows downstream, and increasing the duration of low flows by slowly releasing stored water into the channel through subsurface flow. Vernal pools provide unique wetland habitat for many special status and endemic plant and aquatic wildlife species. The Fish and Game Commission policy regarding wetland resources discourages development or conversion of wetlands that results in any net loss of wetland acreage or habitat value. Habitat conversion, construction, grading, and fill activities within these features also has the potential to impact downstream waters as a result of Project site impacts leading to erosion, scour, and changes in stream morphology.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 41: Stream and Wetland Mapping
CDFW recommends that formal stream mapping and wetland delineation be conducted by a qualified biologist or hydrologist, as warranted, to determine the baseline location, extent, and condition of streams (including any floodplain) and wetlands within and adjacent to the Project area. Please note that while there is overlap, State and federal definitions of wetlands differ, and complete stream mapping commonly differs from delineations used by the United States (U.S.) Army Corps of Engineers specifically to identify the extent of Waters of the U.S. Therefore, it is advised that the wetland delineation identify both State and federal wetlands in the Project area as well as the extent of all streams including floodplains, if present. CDFW advises that site map(s) depicting the extent of any activities that may affect wetlands, lakes, or streams be included with any Project site evaluations, to clearly identify areas where stream/riparian and wetland habitats could be impacted from Project activities.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 42: Stream and Wetland Habitat Mitigation CDFW recommends that the potential direct and indirect impacts to stream/riparian and wetland/vernal pool habitat be analyzed according to each Project activity. Based on those potential impacts, CDFW recommends that the draft PEIR and any subsequent documents tiering off of the PEIR include measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate those impacts. CDFW recommends that impacts to riparian habitat, including biotic and abiotic features, take into account the effects to stream function and hydrology from riparian habitat loss or damage, as well as potential effects from the loss of riparian habitat to special-status species already identified herein. CDFW recommends that losses to vernal pools, swales, and other wetland or riparian habitats be offset with corresponding habitat restoration incorporating native vegetation to replace the value to fish and wildlife provided by the habitats lost from Project implementation. If on-site restoration to replace habitats is not feasible, CDFW recommends offsite mitigation by restoring or enhancing in-kind riparian or wetland habitat and providing for the long-term management and protection of the mitigation area, to ensure its persistence.

Editorial Comments and/or Suggestions

Water Rights: The Project proposes the construction of three 200 acre-foot regulating reservoirs, and other Project structures located in proximity to the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and San Joaquin Rivers. As stated previously, the capture of unallocated stream flows to artificially recharge groundwater aquifers is subject to appropriation and approval by the SWRCB pursuant to Water Code section 1200 et seq. The draft PEIR states in Section 3.10.3.3 that the Project operation would not require new or expanded water rights, and no additional water would be required beyond quantities currently managed by Modesto ID, but no additional details regarding existing water rights are provided. CDFW recommends that the draft PEIR include a detailed description of the water rights and water entitlements that would pertain to the Project and address any applications or change petitions that may be filed. CDFW, as Trustee Agency, is consulted by the SWRCB during the water rights process to provide terms and conditions designed to protect fish and wildlife prior to appropriation of the State's water resources. Given the potential for impacts to sensitive species and their habitats, it is advised that required consultation with CDFW occur well in advance of the SWRCB water right application process.

Lake and Streambed Alteration: Project activities that have the potential to substantially change the bed, bank, and channel of streams and associated wetlands or divert surface flow may be subject to CDFW's regulatory authority pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq. Fish and Game Code section 1602 requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may (a) substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream, or lake; (b) substantially change or use any material from the bed, bank, or channel of any river, stream, or lake (including the removal of riparian vegetation): (c) deposit debris, waste or other materials that could

pass into any river, stream, or lake. “Any river, stream, or lake” includes those that are ephemeral or intermittent as well as those that are perennial. CDFW is required to comply with CEQA in the issuance of a Lake or Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement; therefore, if the CEQA document approved for the Project does not adequately describe the Project and its impacts, a subsequent CEQA analysis may be necessary for LSA Agreement issuance. Additional information on notification requirements is available through the Central Region LSA Program at (559) 243-4593 or R4LSA@wildlife.ca.gov, and the CDFW website: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/LSA.

Nesting birds: CDFW has jurisdiction over actions with potential to result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections that protect birds, their eggs and nests include sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nest 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).

CDFW encourages that Project construction activities occur during the bird non-nesting season; however, if Project construction must occur during the breeding season (i.e., February through mid-September), the Project applicant is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Code sections as referenced above.

To evaluate Project-related impacts to nesting birds, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct preconstruction surveys for active nests no more than 10 days prior to the start of ground disturbance to maximize the probability that nests that could potentially be impacted by the Project are detected. CDFW also recommends that surveys cover a sufficient area around the work site to identify nests and determine their status. A sufficient area means any area potentially affected by the Project. In addition to direct impacts (i.e., nest destruction), noise, vibration, and movement of workers or equipment could also affect nests. Prior to initiation of construction activities, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a survey to establish a behavioral baseline of all identified nests. Once construction begins, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist continuously monitor nests to detect behavioral changes resulting from the Project. If behavioral changes occur, CDFW recommends that the work causing that change cease and that CDFW be consulted for additional avoidance and minimization measures.

If continuous monitoring of identified nests by a qualified biologist is not feasible, CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors. These buffers are advised to remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival. Variance from these no-disturbance buffers is possible when there is compelling biological or

ecological reason to do so, such as when the construction area would be concealed from a nest site by topography. CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist advise and support any variance from these buffers.

Endangered Species Act Consultation: CDFW recommends consultation with the USFWS well in advance of Project implementation, due to potential impacts to Federal listed species. Take under the federal Endangered Species Act is more stringently defined than under CESA and may also include significant habitat modification or degradation that could result in death or injury to a listed species, by interfering with essential behavioral patterns such as breeding, foraging, or nesting. Similarly, for potential effects to steelhead and its critical habitat, CDFW recommends consultation with NMFS.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database that 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 the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). The CNDDB field survey form can be obtained at the following link: https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB/Submitting-Data. The completed form can be mailed electronically to CNDDB at the following email address: CNDDB@wildlife.ca.gov. The types of information reported to CNDDB can be found at the following link: https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB/Plants-and-Animals.

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of 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 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 draft PEIR and is looking forward to working proactively with Modesto ID on any desired early consultation for future projects which will rely on and/or tier off of the PEIR. If you have questions regarding this letter or would like to consult with CDFW regarding future PEIR projects, please

contact Annette Tenneboe, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), at (559) 580-3202 or by email at Annette.Tenneboe@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
FA83F09FE08945A...

Julie A. Vance
Regional Manager

ec: Patricia Cole
Division Chief, San Joaquin Valley Division
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Patricia_Cole@fws.gov

Gretchen Murphey
Steve Tsao
Annette Tenneboe
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Attachment 1

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM (MMRP)

PROJECT: Modesto Irrigation District Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE No.: 2018092056

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	STATUS/DATE/INITIALS
Before Project Activity	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: LBV Habitat Assessment	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: Focused LBV Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: LVB Nest Avoidance Buffers	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 4: LBV Habitat Mitigation	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 5: LVB Take Authorization	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 6: Focused SWHA Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 7: SWHA Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 8: SWHA Take Authorization	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 9: Loss of SWHA Foraging Habitat	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 10: SWHA Tree Removal	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 11: White-Tailed Kite Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 12: White-Tailed Kite Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 13: TRBL Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 14: TRBL Colony Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 15: TRBL Take Authorization	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 16: Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat Habitat Assessment	

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	STATUS/DATE/INITIALS
Recommended Mitigation Measure 17: Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat Take Authorization	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 18: CTS Habitat Assessment	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 19: Focused CTS Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 20: CTS Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 21: CTS Take Authorization	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 22: Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp, Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp, Conservancy Fairy Shrimp Habitat Assessment	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 23: Special-Status Plant Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 24: Special-Status Plant Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 25: Listed Plant Species Take Authorization	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 26: BUOW Habitat Assessment	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 27: BUOW Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 28: BUOW Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 29: BUOW Eviction and Mitigation	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 30: Bat Roost Habitat Assessment	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 31: Bat Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 32: Bat Roost Disturbance Minimization and Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 33: WPT Surveys	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 34: WPT Avoidance and Minimization	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 35: CBB, MBB, and OBB Surveys and Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 36: CBB Take Authorization	

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	**STATUS/DATE/INITIALS**
Recommended Mitigation Measure 37: Habitat Assessment – – American badger, Merced kangaroo rat, California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, and western spadefoot.	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 38: Surveys – American badger, Merced kangaroo rat, California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, and western spadefoot.	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 39: Avoidance – American badger, Merced kangaroo rat, California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, and western spadefoot.	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 40: Fish Screening	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 41: Stream and Wetland Mapping	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 42: Stream and Wetland Habitat Mitigation	
During Project Activity	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: LVB Nest Avoidance Buffers	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 4: LBV Habitat Mitigation	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 7: SWHA Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 12: White-Tailed Kite Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 14: TRBL Colony Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 20: CTS Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 24: Special-Status Plant Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 28: BUOW Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 32: Bat Roost disturbance Minimization and Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 34: WPT Avoidance and Minimization	

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	STATUS/DATE/INITIALS
Recommended Mitigation Measure 35: CBB, MBB, and OBB Surveys and Avoidance	
Recommended Mitigation Measure 39: Avoidance – American badger, California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, Merced kangaroo rat, and western spadefoot.	