Exhibit A

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

McCourtney Road Transfer Station Renovation Project

Prepared for:

County of Nevada

December 10, 2020

DOUGLAS ENVIRONMENTAL

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

McCourtney Road Transfer Station Renovation Project

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December 10, 2020

DOUGLAS ENVIRONMENTAL

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Pursuant to Division 6, Title 14, Chapter 3, Article 6, Sections 15070 and 15071 of the California Administrative Code, Nevada County does cause to be filed with the State of California, this Mitigated Negative Declaration.

1. **Title and Short Description of Project:** McCourtney Road Transfer Station Renovation Project

The proposed project includes the expansion of the site entrance road and installation of new scale facilities, construction of an approximately 48,000 square foot transfer station building, installation of approximately 170,000 square feet of new or repaved asphalt surfaces, increases in the permitted hours of operation and daily waste acceptance limits, increase in the permitted vehicle limit, and other operational changes necessary to accommodate local waste processing demands. The proposed project would employ a phased construction approach to allow current operations to continue throughout the construction process.

2. **Location of Project:** The proposed project is located at 14741 Wolf Mountain Road in unincorporated Nevada County, California.

3. **Project Proponent:** County of Nevada, 950 Maidu Avenue, Nevada City, CA 95959

4. **Said project will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:**

   Based on the analysis included in the attached Initial Study, the McCourtney Road Transfer Station Renovation Project has the potential to cause adverse environmental impacts. However, with implementation of the mitigation measures identified below, the impacts associated with the proposed project would remain less than significant.

   Mitigation Measure AIR-1

   The construction contractor shall submit to the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) for approval an Off-Road Construction Equipment Emission Reduction Plan prior to ground breaking demonstrating the following:

   - All off-road equipment (portable and mobile) meets or is cleaner than Tier 2 engine emission specifications unless prior written approval for any exceptions is obtained from the NSAQMD. Note that all off-road equipment must meet all applicable state and federal requirements.

   - Emissions from on-site construction equipment shall comply with NSAQMD Regulation II, Rule 202, Visible Emissions.

   - The primary contractor shall be responsible to ensure that all construction equipment is properly tuned and maintained.

   - Idling times shall be minimized either by shutting equipment off when not in use or reducing the maximum idling time to 5 minutes when not in use (as required by California airborne toxics control measure Title 13, Section 2485 of the California Code of Regulations). Clear signage shall be provided

for construction workers at all access points.

- All construction equipment shall be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with manufacturers' specifications. All equipment shall be checked by a certified mechanic and determined to be running in proper condition prior to operation.

- Existing power sources (e.g., power poles) or clean fuel generators shall be utilized rather than temporary power generators (i.e. diesel generators), where feasible.

- Deliveries of construction materials shall be scheduled to direct traffic flow to avoid the peak hours on local roadways of 7:00–9:00 AM and 4:00–6:00 PM.

- The primary contractor shall use architectural coatings for the proposed structure that have a volatile organic compound (VOC) content no greater than 50 grams per liter of VOC.

Mitigation Measure AIR-2

To reduce impacts of short-term construction, the County shall obtain NSAQMD approval of a Dust Control Plan (DCP) which shall include, but not be limited to, the standards provided below to the satisfaction of the NSAQMD. Prior to issuance of grading permits, the County shall include the requirements of the DCP as notes on all construction plans. The County Building Department shall verify that the requirements of the DCP are being implemented during grading inspections.

Alternatives to open burning of vegetation material on the project site shall be used unless deemed infeasible to the Air Pollution Control Officer (APCO). Among suitable alternatives is chipping, mulching, or conversion to biomass fuel.

- The County shall implement all dust control measures in a timely manner during all phases of project development and construction.

- All material excavated, stockpiled or graded shall be sufficiently watered, treated or converted to prevent fugitive dust from leaving the property boundaries and causing a public nuisance or a violation of an ambient air standard. Watering should occur at least twice daily, with complete site coverage.

- All areas (including unpaved roads) with vehicle traffic shall be watered or have dust palliative applied as necessary for regular stabilization of dust emissions.

- All land clearing, grading, earth moving, or excavation activities on a project shall be suspended as necessary to prevent excessive windblown dust when winds are expected to exceed 20 mph.

- All on-site vehicle traffic shall be limited to a speed of 15 mph on unpaved roads.

- All inactive disturbed portions of the development site shall be covered, seeded or watered until a suitable cover is established. Alternatively, the construction contractor shall be responsible for applying non-toxic soil stabilizers to all inactive construction areas.

- All material transported off-site shall be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent public nuisance.

- Paved streets adjacent to the project shall be swept or washed at the end of each day, or as required to removed excessive accumulation of silt and/or mud which may have resulted from activities at the project site.

- If serpentine or ultramafic rock is discovered during grading or construction, the NSAQMD must be notified no later than the next business day and the California Code of Regulations, Title 17, Section 9315 applies.

Mitigation Measure AIR-3

To avoid significant generation of VOCs, all architectural coatings shall utilize low-VOC paint (no greater than 50g/L VOC). Prior to building permit issuance, the County shall submit their list of low-VOC coatings to the NSAQMD for review and approval. Finally, all building plans shall include a note documenting which low-VOC architectural coatings will be used in construction.

Mitigation Measure AIR-4

The County shall obtain an Authority to Construct Permit from NSAQMD for any source of air contaminants that exist after construction that is not exempt from District permit requirements. All requirements of this permit shall be incorporated into standard operating procedure manuals or materials for the project.

Mitigation Measure AIR-5

The County shall develop and implement an Odor Impact Minimization Plan (OIMP) prior to repurposing the PRA as an organics building. The OIMP shall identify the specific operational procedures that will be implemented to ensure that offsite sensitive receptors are not regularly exposed to offensive odors associated with site operations. These operational procedures shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Prioritize the processing and offsite transportation of food waste and organics to minimize the potential for odor generation at the site.

- Treat odiferous food waste and organics with commercially available odor neutralizing compounds that will be applied using a commercial misting system.

- Ensure all food waste is removed from the transfer station by the end of each day.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1

The following mitigation measure shall be implemented prior to the initiation of project construction activities:

- A qualified biologist shall be retained to conduct mandatory contractor/worker awareness training for construction personnel. The awareness training would be provided to all construction personnel, or

personnel entering the project sites, to brief them on the locations of sensitive biological resources, how to identify species most likely to be present, required avoidance and minimization measures for biological resources, and to brief them on the penalties for not complying with biological mitigation requirements. If new personnel are added to the project, the contractor would be required to receive the mandatory training before starting work.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2

The following measures shall be conducted prior to any work conducted in and within 100 feet of mapped chaparral areas. Work areas more than 100 feet away from the chaparral communities do not apply.

- Prior to construction, a qualified botanist shall be retained to perform focused surveys for the rare plants determined to have the potential to occur at the project site (in or within 100 feet of chaparral). These surveys shall serve to document the presence/absence of these species in and adjacent to (within 100 feet, where appropriate) proposed impact areas, including temporary construction areas. These surveys shall be conducted at the proper time of year when target species are both evident and identifiable. Surveys shall be scheduled to coincide with known blooming periods, and/or during appropriate developmental periods that are necessary to identify the plant species of concern. Surveys should be done within two years of construction. This will result in survey findings that are close enough to construction start to be considered valid while leaving enough time prior to construction to obtain necessary permits and/or develop a mitigation plan, if necessary.

- Any rare plant species that are identified in or adjacent to the project sites, but not proposed to be disturbed, shall be protected by flagging, signage, orange construction fence, and/or silt fence as appropriate based on site conditions to limit the effects of project-related activities and material stockpiles on any special-status plant species.

- If state-listed plant species (Stebbins' morning-glory or Pine Hill flannelbush) are identified in the project site and avoidance is not possible, then the CDFW shall be consulted to determine a mitigation strategy and/or if an Incidental Take Permit is necessary[1].

- If other rare plant species (such as chaparral sedge) are identified in the project site and project-related activities would result in the loss of greater than 10% of a population or occupied habitat for that species, a mitigation plan shall be developed that describes a program to transplant, salvage, cultivate, and re-establish the species at suitable sites. The plan shall include means and methods to propagate affected rare plants via vegetative or reproductive means (e.g., harvesting of seed or seed bank through topsoil collection, salvaging and transplanting or collecting of cuttings), as appropriate for the species, and transplant at suitable receiving sites as close to the existing population as possible. Propagation and transplantation shall occur prior to construction. The receiving location would be evaluated and chosen based on similarity to conditions at the transplant source location, to the extent feasible. Site conditions to consider when choosing a receiving site include aspect, substrate, hydrology, associated species, and canopy cover. The transplanted plants shall be monitored for at least one year following construction.

1 Per Section 2081 subdivision (b) of the California Fish and Game Code

Mitigation Measure BIO-3

The following mitigation measure shall be implemented prior to the initiation of project construction activities:

- When possible, conduct all vegetation and/or structure clearing outside of the nesting season. If clearing and/or construction activities would occur during the nesting season (March 1 to August 31), then preconstruction surveys to identify active migratory bird and/or raptor nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist within 7 days prior to construction initiation. Focused surveys must be performed by a qualified biologist for the purposes of determining the presence or absence of active nest sites in and within 100 feet of active construction areas.

- If active nest sites are identified within 100 feet of the project site, a no-disturbance buffer shall be established prior to commencement of any project-related activities to avoid disturbances to nesting activities. A no-disturbance buffer constitutes a zone in which project-related activities such as vegetation removal, earth moving, and construction cannot occur. The size of no-disturbance buffers would be determined by a qualified biologist based on the species, activities in the vicinity of the nest, and topographic and other visual barriers.

Mitigation Measure CUL-1

The following mitigation measures shall be implemented during project construction activities:

- If potential Native American prehistoric, historic, archaeological or cultural resources including midden soil, artifacts, chipped stone, exotic rock (non-native), or unusual amounts of baked clay, shell or bone are uncovered during any on-site construction activities, all work must immediately stop in the area. Work shall cease within 100 feet of the find regardless of whether the construction is being actively monitored by a cultural resources specialist, professional archaeologist, or representative from a culturally-affiliated Native American Tribe. Following discovery, a professional archaeologist, in consultation with any culturally-affiliated Native American Tribes, will make recommendations to Nevada County for further evaluation and treatment, as appropriate.

- In the event that Native American prehistoric, historic, archaeological or cultural deposits or isolates found to be ineligible for inclusion in the California Historic Register of Historical Resources are identified within the project area, culturally appropriate treatment and disposition shall be determined following coordination with any culturally-affiliated Native American Tribes as appropriate. Culturally appropriate treatment may be, but is not limited to, processing materials in a lab for reburial, minimizing handling of cultural objects, leaving objects in place within the landscape, or returning objects to a location within the project area where they will not be subject to future impacts.

Mitigation Measure CUL-2

The following mitigation measure shall be implemented during project construction activities:

- If articulated or disarticulated human remains are discovered during construction activities, all work shall

cease with 100 feet of the find and the Nevada County Coroner shall be contacted immediately. Upon determination by the Nevada County Coroner that the find is Native American in origin, the Native American Heritage Commission will be contacted and will assign the Most Likely Descendent who will work with Nevada County to define appropriate treatment and disposition of the burials. Following a review of the find and consultation with the Native American Tribe and appropriate experts, if necessary, Nevada County may authorize work to proceed but it may be accompanied by the additional requirements or special conditions that provide for protection of the site and/or additional measures necessary to address the unique or sensitive nature of the site. Work in the area of the cultural resource discovery may only proceed after authorization is granted by Nevada County following coordination with tribal representatives and cultural resource experts, if necessary and as appropriate.

Mitigation Measure GEO-1

The proposed project's geotechnical investigation identified the use of spread footings, mat foundation, partial fill overexcavation and recompaction, and deep dynamic compaction (DDC) as the measures necessary to minimize the potential for elastic settlement following project construction. For the overexcavation/recompaction and DDC, the report included the following detailed mitigation measures:

- Where proposed, relatively loose fill, within and a minimum of 4 feet below existing ground surface and 5 feet beyond the proposed structure footprints, shall be overexcavated and stockpiled onsite. The depth of the overexcavation should extend through all loose soil a minimum of 4 feet below finished grade or to competent native soil or rock, if shallower. Areas where new fill will exceed 3 feet in depth the overexcavation can be reduced to 2 feet, including proposed roadways.

- The extent and limits of overexcavation shall be observed and determined by the geotechnical engineer. The fill shall be replaced and compacted using the recommendations presented in the geotechnical report.

- In areas were overexcavation and recompaction is not proposed, DDC is recommended. DDC is a technique that involves using a crane to drop a heavy weight on the ground surface to densify loose soil. Densification occurs by performing repeated, controlled drops of the weight (typically 5-40 tons) at determined locations in a grid pattern.

- The drop weight is anticipated to be composed of an approximately 5-foot by 5-foot by 5-foot concrete block (approximately 18 tons), which would be dropped from a height of 20 to 30 feet. The depth of compaction is based on the soil type, density and moisture content. Based on published empirical calculations, the depth of densification is estimated to be on the order of 10 to 15 feet below the dynamic weight. The drop pattern should consist of a minimum grid spacing of 10 feet. At least two passes with the heavy weight should be performed, followed by a final low-energy contiguous tamping pass to compact the shallow near-surface soils disturbed during the heavy weight passes. Some areas at the project site may require grading or benching to provide an evenly distributed load on the ground surface.

- Once DDC is completed, the site shall be prepared and compacted in accordance with the recommendations included in the geotechnical report.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1

Prior to initiating construction of the proposed project, the Contractor shall submit a written safety program to Nevada County. This plan shall include (at a minimum):

- A fire or medical emergency response access plan.
- A police emergency response access plan.
- An access control plan to its staging and equipment storage areas.
- The name and contact information for the Safety Director/Manager responsible for managing the safety, health and environmental risk factors for the Contractor.
- Typical tailgate safety meeting agenda and frequency.
- Compliance or exceedance of applicable OSHA requirements including requiring all employees working in dangerous or noisy environments to wear personal protective equipment including noise protection gear.
- New hire safety orientation training.
- Maintenance procedures to be implemented including dust mitigation (i.e., indoor misters and water trucks) and the use of sweepers after project construction is complete.
- Any applicable job specific requirements or permits.
- If requested, Contractor shall provide safety training records for employees working on the project.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2

Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan (HMCP): The contractor shall prepare and submit to the County a contingency plan for handling hazardous materials, whether found or introduced on site during construction. The plan shall include construction measures as specified in local, state, and federal regulations for hazardous materials and removal of on-site debris. The plan must include the following measures at a minimum:

- If contaminated soils or other hazardous materials are encountered during any soil moving operation during construction (e.g. trenching, excavation, grading), construction shall be halted and the HMCP implemented.
- Instruct workers on recognition and reporting of materials that may be hazardous.
- Minimize delays by continuing performance of the work in areas not affected by hazardous materials operations.
- Identify and contact subcontractors and licensed personnel qualified to undertake storage, removal, transportation, disposal, and other remedial work required by, and in accordance with, laws and regulations.

- File requests for adjustments to contract time and contract price due to the finding of hazardous materials in the work site in accordance with conditions of the contract.

Mitigation Measure HYD-1

To avoid adversely affecting the water quality of local waterways, the following mitigation measures shall be implemented prior to and during construction:

- A storm water pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) shall be prepared for the proposed project with associated best managements practices (BMPs), consistent with Nevada County standards. The SWPPP shall be designed to protect water quality pursuant to the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater permit for construction activity (Order 99-08-DWQ, as amended). The SWPPP would identify and specify:
  - the use of erosion and sediment-control BMPs, including construction techniques that will reduce the potential for erosion, as well as other measures to be implemented during construction;
  - the means of waste disposal;
  - the implementation of approved local plans, non-stormwater-management controls, permanent post-construction BMPs, and inspection and maintenance responsibilities;
  - the pollutants that are likely to be used during construction that could be present in stormwater drainage and non-stormwater discharges, and other types of materials used for equipment operation;
  - spill prevention and contingency measures, including measures to prevent or clean up spills of hazardous waste and of hazardous materials used for equipment operation, and emergency procedures for responding to spills;
  - personnel training requirements and procedures that will be used to ensure that workers are aware of permit requirements and proper installation methods for BMPs specified in the SWPPP; and
  - The appropriate personnel responsible for supervisory duties related to implementation of the SWPPP.
- Where applicable, BMPs identified in the SWPPP shall be in place throughout all site work and construction. BMPs may include such measures as the following:
  - Implementing temporary erosion-control measures in disturbed areas to minimize discharge of sediment into nearby drainage conveyances. These measures may include silt fences, staked straw bales or wattles, sediment/silt basins and traps, geofabric, and sandbag dikes.
- All construction contractors shall retain a copy of the approved SWPPP on the construction site. The SWPPP shall be submitted to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) pursuant to NPDES requirements, and completed and implemented before the start of construction activities.

Mitigation Measure NOI-1

To avoid adversely affecting local residents during blasting activities, the following mitigation measures shall be implemented during any blasting activities:

- If blasting activities are necessary for site preparation, the contractor shall conduct the blasting activities in compliance with state and local regulations. The contractor shall obtain a blasting permit from Nevada County prior to commencing any on-site blasting activities. The permit application shall include a description of the work to be accomplished and a statement of the necessity for blasting, as opposed to other methods, and safety measures to be implemented such as blast blankets. The contractor shall coordinate any blasting activities with Police and Fire Departments to insure proper site access and traffic control, and public notification including nearby residents and businesses, as determined appropriate by police and fire departments. Blasting specifications and plans shall include a schedule that outlines the time frame in which blasting will occur in order to limit noise and traffic inconvenience. In addition, an on-site blasting expert shall be retained by the site contractor to ensure that the blasting activities, if necessary, result in the minimum offsite noise and vibration levels (i.e., less than 0.2 inches per second PPV).

5. **As a result thereof, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Division 13 of the Public Resources Code of the State of California) is not required.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Continued **Page**

Figures

Tables

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

This document is the Initial Study for the proposed McCourtney Road Transfer Station Renovation Project (proposed project) located approximately five miles southwest of Grass Valley in unincorporated Nevada County, California. This Initial Study has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq. and the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et seq. An Initial Study is prepared by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment. In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(a), an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared if there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment. A Negative Declaration is prepared if the lead agency determines that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment, and therefore, that it would not require the preparation of an EIR (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15070).

This Initial Study will be used to examine the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. In general, this document describes the proposed project, the existing environment that could be affected, potential impacts from the proposed project, and proposed mitigation measures in compliance with the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] 15000 et seq.).

The Initial Study is divided into four chapters: Chapter 1 includes this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a description of the project setting and characteristics; Chapter 3 includes an environmental evaluation/checklist that identifies the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the project and a discussion of checklist responses and findings; and Chapter 4 includes references used in the preparation of this report.

1.2 LEAD AGENCY

The lead agency is the public agency with primary responsibility over the proposed project. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15051(b)(1), “the lead agency will normally be the agency with general governmental powers, such as a city or county, rather than an agency with a single or limited purpose…” Because the project is being proposed by Nevada County, the County is the lead agency for the proposed project.

1.3 PROJECT LOCATION

The existing McCourtney Road Transfer Station is located on an approximately 142-acre site at 14741 Wolf Mountain Road, approximately five miles southwest of Grass Valley in unincorporated Nevada County (**Figure 1**). The site is located on a single parcel designated as Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) 025-120-012 and is located in Section 8 of Township 15 North, Range 8 East, based on the Mount Diablo Baseline and Meridian. The primary site entrance is provided from Wolf Mountain Road from McCourtney Road (**Figure 2**).

Figure 1 Vicinity Map

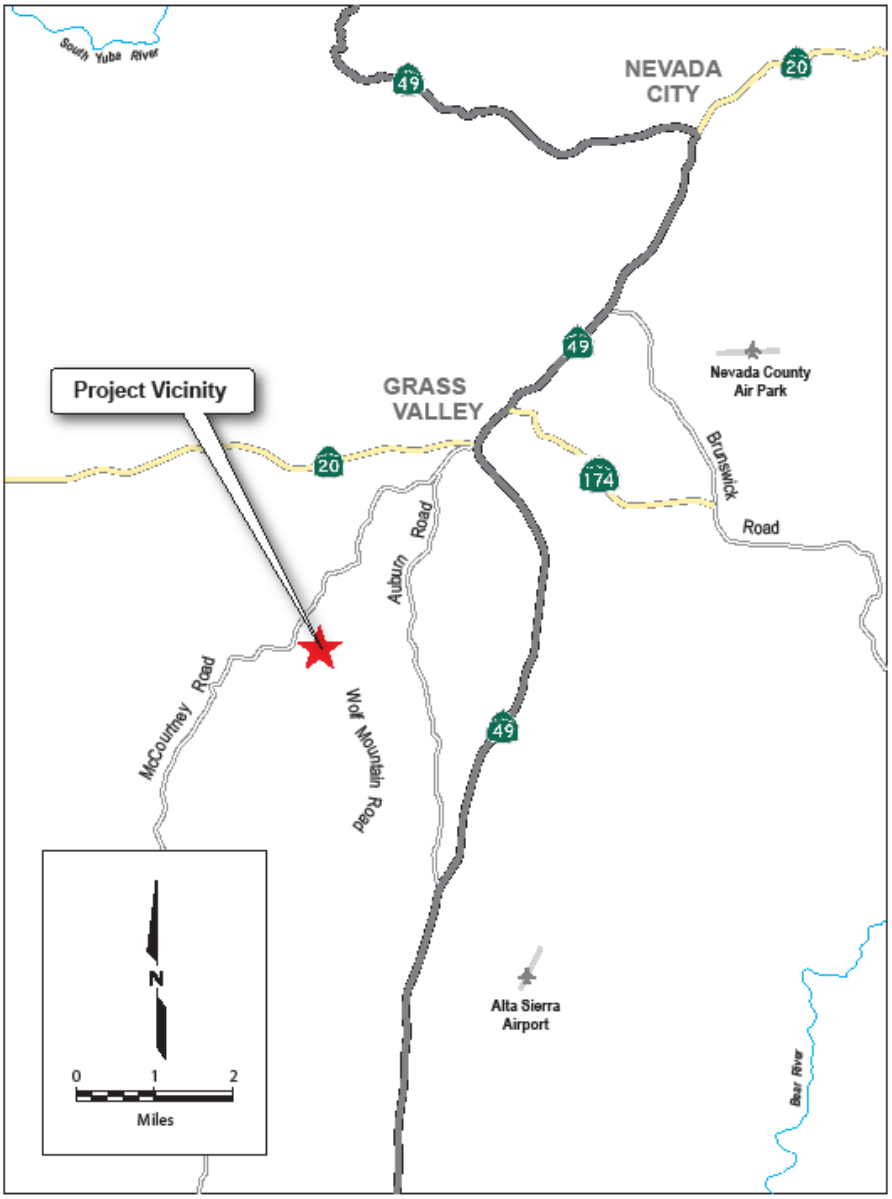
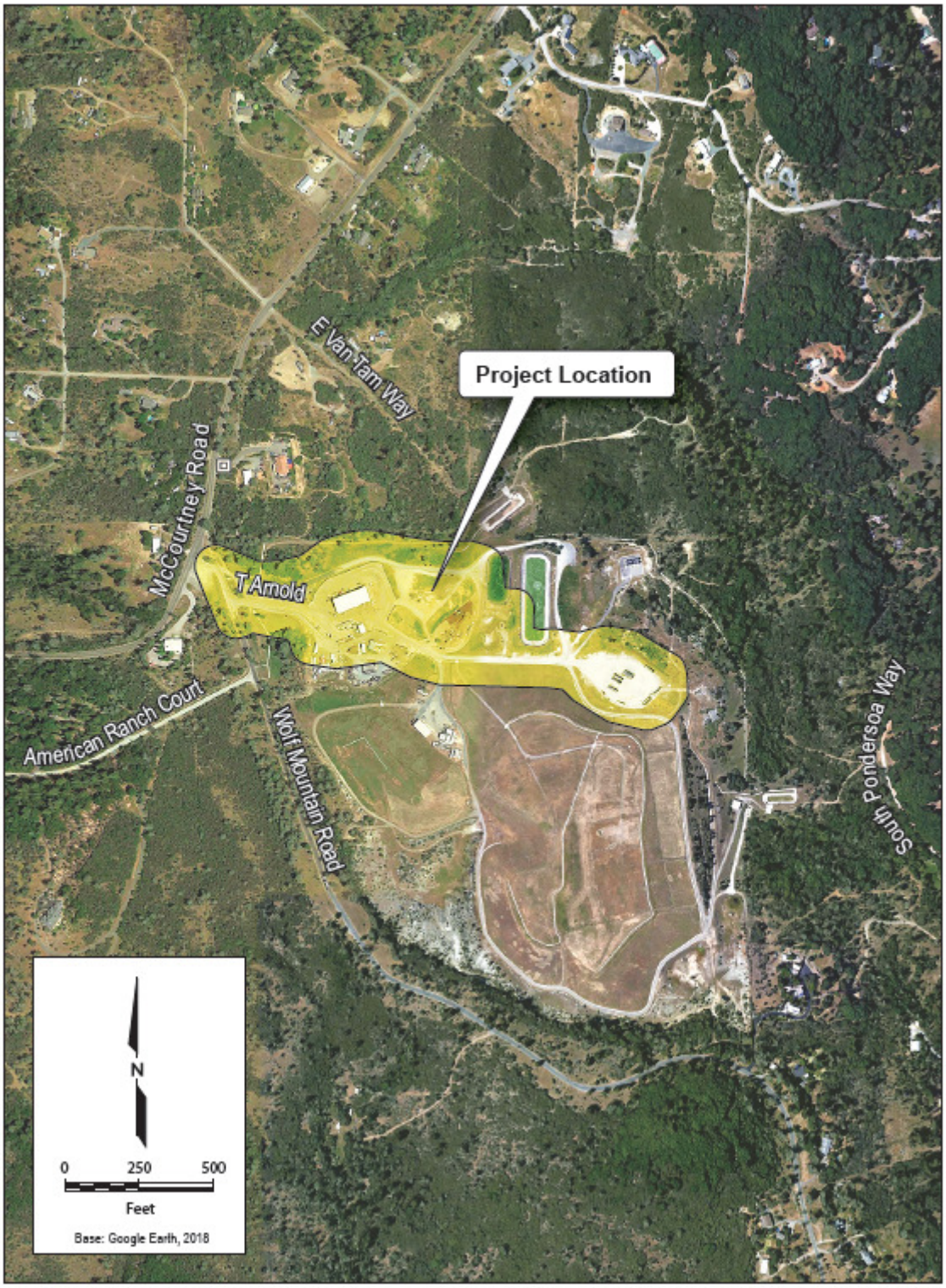


Figure 2 Project Location Map



1.4 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Prior to approving the proposed project, Nevada County must evaluate the project's potential environmental impacts as required by CEQA. The County, as the lead agency under CEQA, will consider the proposed project's environmental impacts when considering whether to approve project implementation. This Initial Study is an informational document to be used in the local planning and decision-making process; it does not recommend approval or denial of the proposed project.

This Initial Study will be available for public review for 30 days. The County will take into consideration comments received during the public review period and will factor these comments into their assessment of the environmental impacts associated with the proposed project prior to making their decision related to project approval.

2 PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The McCourtney Road Transfer Station (MRTS) provides solid waste and recycling transfer services for the communities of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and the unincorporated areas of western Nevada County, California. Constructed in 1994 after the adjacent McCourtney Road landfill closed, the MRTS is owned by the County of Nevada (County) and operated by USA Waste of California, Inc. doing business as Waste Management of Nevada County (Waste Management). The MRTS is permitted to accept 350 tons per day (tpd) of residential and commercial solid waste, with a vehicle limit of 1,090 per day. The facility currently receives an average of approximately 198 tpd (based on 359 receiving days per year), with recent peak days as high as 390 tpd (Pineda, G. 2019). During peak days, as many as 900 vehicles cross the scales at the MRTS, while an additional 180 vehicles access the site's recycling and household hazardous waste drop-off areas for a total near its peak daily vehicle limit (Pineda, G. 2019).

As currently designed, the MRTS does not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the volume of vehicles regularly delivering waste to the site, particularly on peak use periods throughout the spring, summer and fall. This capacity constraint is partly due to the site's compact size and limited queuing area. In addition, the amount of recyclable materials accepted at the MRTS has increased over the last several years due to the closure of most buy-back and drop-off facilities both locally and regionally, including four local facilities operated by RePlanet, as well as Grass Valley Recycle and Recycle Works in Grass Valley. These changes follow the worldwide collapse of the recyclable materials market, which directed large volumes of recyclable materials to China. However, China has imposed stringent quality criteria on recyclable materials entering the country that function essentially as a ban on imported recyclables. An example of the collapse in the recyclable materials market is the closure of all of the remaining 284 recyclable material buy-back centers owned by RePlanet in late 2019 (Los Angeles Times 2019). More than 400 total facilities have closed since 2016.

To address the site's operational constraints and anticipated growth in the waste stream, the County initiated site planning activities focused on improving operational efficiencies and designing the site to accommodate the expected growth in services needed over the next 25 years. The main operational concerns identified during the planning process included the following:

- During peak times, traffic backups occur throughout the site, most notably at the main entrance (kiosk), the scales, the self-haul refuse unloading area, and the recycling drop off area.

- The Public Receiving Area (PRA) building, where refuse is received, consolidated, and loaded into transfer trucks, is a covered, but not enclosed, structure. Base on the open design of the PRA building, litter and dust generation associated with the waste handling activities are difficult for site personnel to control. Also, noise generation is substantially higher than would be anticipated with an enclosed facility.

- The operation of the PRA is inefficient in many ways. The limited number of unloading spaces adds to site queuing and safety challenges for self-haul customers. The constrained space makes it difficult for Waste Management to safely and successfully recover or mine recyclables from the PRA floor. The

refuse must be lifted up from the PRA floor and top loaded into a transfer trucks, causing excess equipment wear, greater material handling time and limiting waste compaction.

- Site constraints and inefficiencies in the recyclables drop-off areas cause queuing issues and may be discouraging waste diversion practices. Along with the difficulty of mining recyclables at the PRA, this could be hindering the County's ability to meet their goals for diverting waste from landfill disposal.

2.2 EXISTING OPERATIONS

2.2.1 PUBLIC RECEIVING AREA

The existing PRA is a 8,400 square-foot canopy building with open sides that houses the site's refuse transfer operations. Public self-haul vehicles unload on the north side of the building. Sufficient space is available for up to ten vehicles to unload at the same time. The drop from the unloading spaces to the PRA floor is approximately four feet. Commercial refuse vehicles unload along the south side of the PRA.

Refuse on the PRA floor is pushed to the east side of the building, where it is lifted from the floor and top loaded into a transfer truck. In 2013, Waste Management began pulling some recoverable items from the PRA floor. Referred to as waste mining, staff recovered 105 tons in the first six months of these recovery efforts (SHWC 2014). The mining of recyclables from the refuse is limited by safety concerns due to the need to operate end loaders and refuse vehicles within the area where waste would be recovered.

2.2.2 RECYCLING AREA

Approximately 1.25 acres in the southern portion of the MRTS site are dedicated to recycling drop-off areas, a buy-back center, and related vehicle circulation and queuing. The buy-back center building is approximately 1,100 square foot. The recycling and buy-back features, although located on the site, are separately permitted from the waste transfer station.

2.2.3 HOUSEHOLD HAZARDS WASTE FACILITY AND REUSE ROOM

The HHW facility occupies approximately 0.33 acre in the southern portion of the MRTS site. This area includes the 1,300 square-foot covered drop-off area, various storage trailers, and vehicle circulation area. The HHW facility is open to commercial customers with appointments on Wednesday and Thursday. It is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday. The HHW includes a reuse room, which includes recovered materials that are made available to the public. The reuse room is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday. The HHW facility and related features, although located on the site, are separately permitted from the waste transfer station.

2.2.4 GREEN WASTE

The green waste drop-off area is located east of the PRA. Although nearly one acre is available for green waste operations, and the current Transfer Processing Report for the site states that half an acre is dedicated to this use, approximately 0.3 acre is typically used to receive and load out an average of approximately 33 tons per day. The majority of the green waste is received over seven days per week, or 365 days per year (HDR 2020). Green waste

is collected, stockpiled, then loaded into transfer trucks and hauled to organics processing facilities out of the county.

The existing permit allows a chip and grinding activity of up to 65 tons per day. Chipping and grinding is conducted sporadically depending upon need. Although this operation is not currently being used, it has historically been conducted and is a permitted use that is assumed to be part of the baseline site conditions.

2.2.5 CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION WASTE AREA

The approximately 0.5 acre construction and demolition (C&D) waste drop-off area is located east of the green waste area. An area of approximately 2.5 acres is usually used to receive and load out approximately 24 tpd of C&D waste. The majority of the C&D waste is received over five days per week, or 260 days per year (HDR 2020). C&D material is accepted in two separate areas of the facility. C&D materials are unloaded at the tipping area located on the west side of the green waste area and is segregated by eco-blocks.

2.2.6 ADMINISTRATION AND PARKING

An approximately 700 square-foot trailer located on the site is used for administrative purposes. Most of the parking area at MRTS is provided by a 12,000 square-foot gravel lot to the north of the main entrance road. A few other parking spaces are scattered throughout the facility.

2.3 PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project includes a variety of changes including the following:

- An expansion of the area east of the surface impoundments to enable the temporary use of the current trailer/bin storage area to be used as the green/yard waste receiving and transfer, C&D materials receiving and transfer, and related uses.

- Long-term use of this same area east of the surface impoundments to be used for staging of bins, trucks, equipment and related on-going needs.

- An expansion of the site entrance road and installation of new entrance and exit scale facilities to provide access to the new transfer station as well as continued access to the existing recycling, buy-back and HHW features,

- Construction of a new transfer station consisting of an approximately 48,000 square foot building to replace the existing PRA building and to serve as the receiving area for both self-hauled commercial municipal solid waste as well as recyclables and other materials as necessary,

- Repurposing of the existing PRA building to serve as the Organics receiving and transfer building,

- Removal of the existing entrance scale and scale house facility and pavement or all-weather treatment of this area to be used for green/yard waste and/or C&D materials receiving and transfer.

- Installation of approximately 170,000 square feet of new or repaved asphalt surfaces.

- Expansion of the hours of operation, increase in the permitted tonnage of waste materials accepted and processed at the facility, and increase in the daily vehicle trips.

The proposed project would employ a phased construction approach to allow current operations to continue throughout the construction process.

To construct the proposed project, approximately 30,000 cubic yards of fill material would be imported to prepare a building pad and perimeter pavement areas suitable for construction.

Figure 3 presents the proposed site development plan and **Figure 4** identifies the operations within and around the proposed transfer station building. **Figure 5** includes an oblique aerial photograph of the existing site looking towards the south. **Figure 6** presents the project site as it would look following construction. The proposed project components are described in further detail below.

Figure 3 Site Development Plan

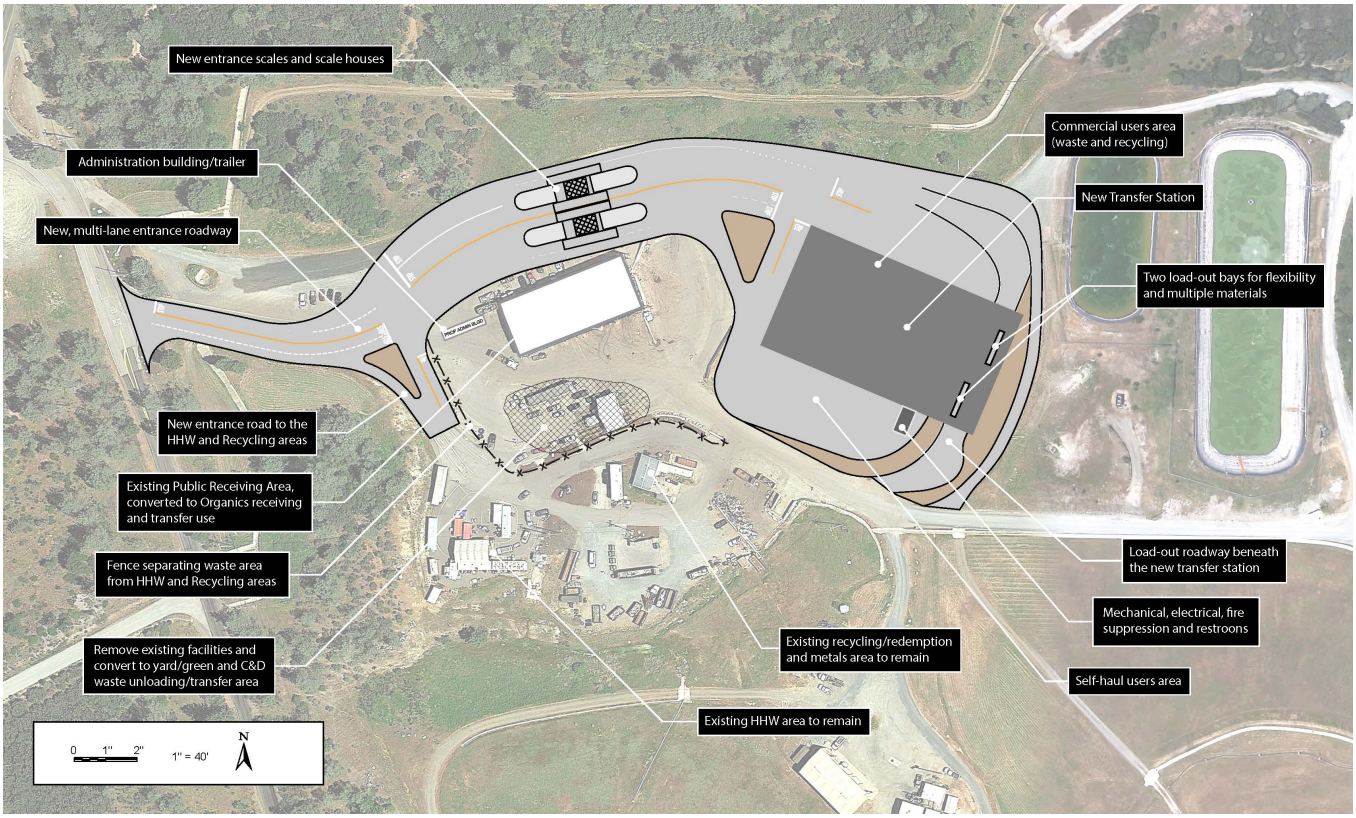


Figure 4 Transfer Station Plan

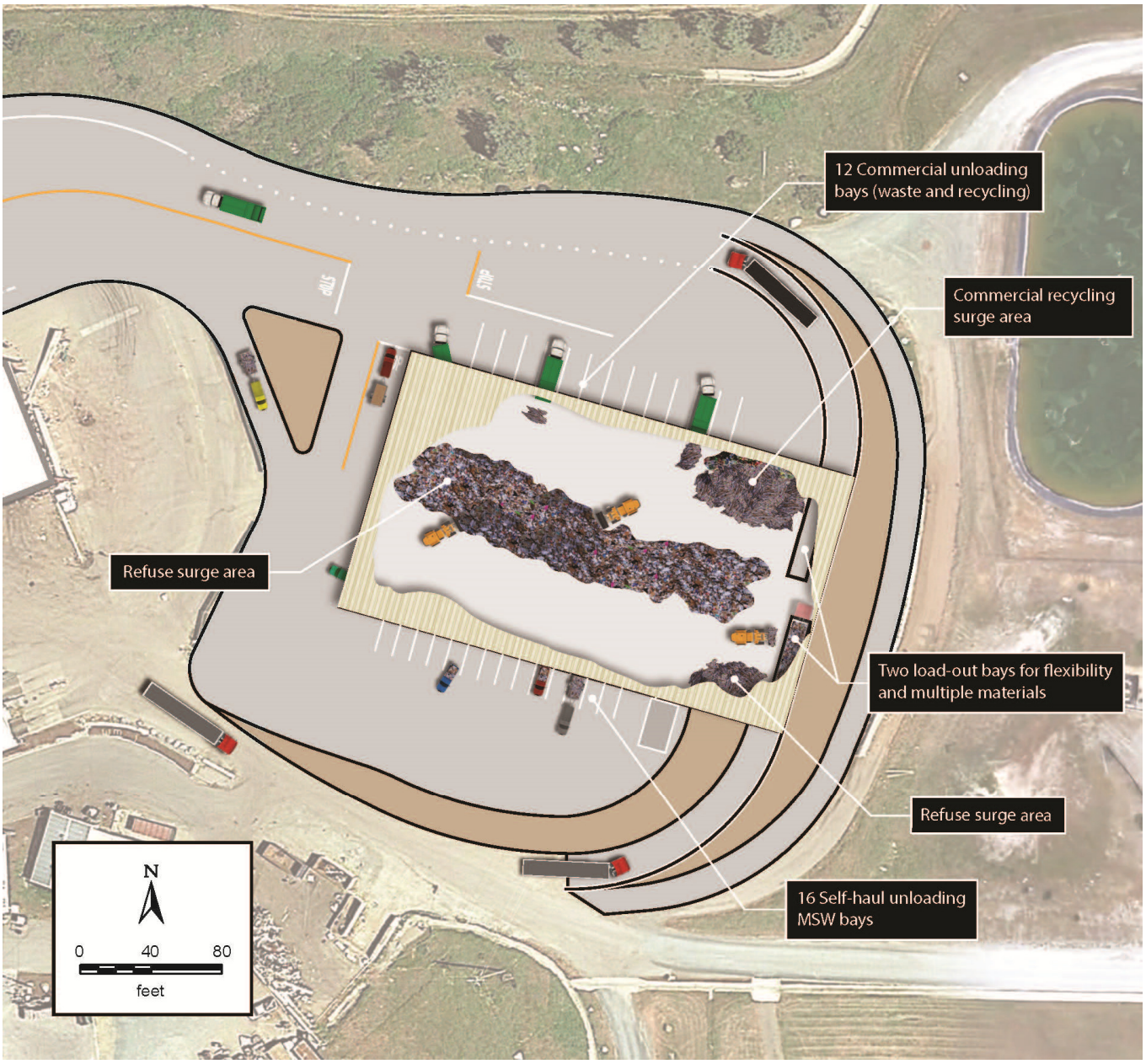


Figure 5 Existing Aerial Photo of the Site

Figure 6 Photo Simulation of the Proposed Improvements

2.3.1 EXPANDED AREA FOR GREEN/YARD WASTE AND C&D OPERATIONS

The area east of the surface impoundments would be expanded to enable the temporary use of the current trailer/bin storage area to be used as the green/yard waste receiving and transfer, C&D materials receiving and transfer, and related uses. In addition, the same area would be used over the long term for staging of bins, trucks, equipment and related on-going needs.

2.3.2 EXPANDED SITE ENTRANCE AND NEW SCALE FACILITIES

The existing site entrance roadway is proposed to be widened to enable arriving traffic to be directed to a new entrance facility (scales and scale houses) located north of the existing PRA. The entrance roadway would be expanded to accommodate three entrance lanes directly east of the Wolf Mountain Road intersection, which would substantially increase the on-site queuing capacity for vehicles arriving at the site.

The new scale facility would include up to six lanes, two scale houses, and four scales. The use of the scale houses and scales is designed to be flexible to enable the operator to direct traffic in and out the facility according to the traffic rate on any given day. Generally, the facility would enable a maximum of two in-bound scales and two out-bound scales, each with a single scale house serving the respective in-bound and out-bound traffic.

However, some flexibility to this arrangement is expected given the highly flexible traffic arrival rates of the public. A bypass lane is also provided both in-bound and out-bound for staff and emergency vehicles.

Once public self-haul vehicles have arrived at the site, they could turn right (south) into the HHW or buyback using the existing site entrance roadway, they could continue straight on the new roadway to the new scale facility if they have other recyclables, refuse, green waste, treated wood, or C&D waste. Self-haul vehicles entering the south entrance may proceed to the appropriate area based on the materials they are unloading. Self-haul vehicles continuing to the new scale facility would drive onto one of the two entrance scales. After encountering the scale attendant, self-haul vehicles would proceed to the appropriate unloading area(s). Refuse loads would be directed to the new transfer station building (described below). Self-haul vehicles would unload on the south side of the new transfer station building during weekdays and on both sides of the building on weekends (Peak Days). Green waste and C&D material would be directed to the designed areas outside the existing PRA. Recyclables, depending on amount could be unloaded in PRA or directed to the metal drop off pad. Treated wood material would be directed to the designated area outside the existing PRA where, following the ending of the exemptions in statute for this material, it would be handled as a hazardous waste and shipped to an appropriate facility for disposal.

All types of Waste Management vehicles and other ccommercial vehicles arriving at the site would proceed straight through the expanded entrance intersection to the scale facility, after which they would be directed to the appropriate unloading area based on type(s) of waste material present and unloading bay utilization. Commercial vehicles and some vehicles with trailers would unload on the north side of the new transfer station building.

Empty transfer trucks arriving at the site to pick up refuse, recyclables, green/yard wastes, C&D wastes, organics and treated wood from the facility would also use the expanded site entrance roadway. These transfer trucks would proceed through the new scale facilities using the bypass lane if they have a vehicle tare weight on file or using the entrance scale if they do not have a tare weight. Transfer trucks picking up refuse and recyclables would proceed counter clockwise around the new transfer station building to access the ramp down to the load-out tunnel beneath the building. Two load-out bays would be provided in the load-out tunnel to provide operational flexibility. Waste material would be pushed from the tipping floor into the trailers of the transfer trucks when they are in the load-out tunnel. Once full, these transfer trucks would drive up the exit ramp and would continue west past the scale facilities to exit the site. Note that actual operations may change based on need or later changes in operational requirements. Transfer trucks picking up green/yard wastes, C&D, organics or treated wood would proceed to the repurposed PRA building or outside area where they would be loaded. Once full, these transfer trucks would proceed counterclockwise around the east end of the new Transfer Station using the new perimeter road and would continue to the exit scales prior to exiting the site.

2.3.3 PROPOSED NEW TRANSFER STATION BUILDING

The proposed new transfer station building is expected to be approximately 164 feet wide and 290 feet long, plus mechanical rooms and public restrooms, or approximately 48,000 square feet in total. The building would be constructed without the use of internal columns, which would enable the front-end loaders and customers to freely move about the interior of the building. The building would be approximately 24 feet clear height inside, 50 feet tall at the peak, depending on the required clear-heights, slope of the roof, and architectural treatment. The east end of the building would extend as high as 70 feet above the ground surface where the two-story load-out chutes

and sub-floor driveway are proposed to be constructed. Figure 4 identifies planned operations at the new transfer station, which are described in more detail below.

Table 1 identifies the features that would be provided at the new transfer station.

Table 1. Proposed Transfer Station Design Features

Feature	Quantity	Area (square feet)
Self-haul unloading bays	27	6,480 (12x20 feet each)
Commercial waste unloading bays	3	2,520 (14x60 feet each)
Commercial recycling unloading bays	1	840 (14x60 feet)
Top-load out ports	2	4,800 (15x160 feet each)
Waste surge stockpile capacity		17,750
Total Area of Transfer Station Design Features (excluding maneuvering areas)		32,390
Source: HDR Engineering 2020		

These features, when combined with the necessary vehicle maneuvering areas, sum to the minimum facility design criteria identified in Table 2.

Table 2. Facility Design Criteria

Function	Area (square feet)
Receiving Areas (maneuvering, backing)	10,320
Stockpiles	17,750
Loader Maneuvering Space	13,154
Load-out Area Requirements	4,800
Total Building Area required	**46,024**
Ancillary areas outside of main TS building (mechanical, electrical, fire risers and restrooms)	1,200
Note: the proposed building is approximately 48,350 sf Source: HDR Engineering 2020	

Self-Haul Refuse

Similar to the proposed scale facility, the proposed new transfer station is designed to function in two modes: low self-haul traffic conditions (generally weekdays) and peak self-haul conditions (generally weekends). Self-haul arrival and unloading on peak days requires as many as 27 unloading bays, compared to the typical low to moderate use days when 12 to 16 unloading bays would suffice. Consequently, the operation of the new transfer station is described in these terms. The description below is intended to describe possible configurations, which

may change depending on facility needs. Changes to these configurations are not expected to affect the impact conclusions of this Initial Study.

- **Days with low to moderate self-haul traffic (generally weekdays).** During these conditions, the self-haul traffic would be primarily managed on the south side of the facility, which would accommodate use of 16 unloading bays at one time. Vehicles would back into a designated bay and unload their contents onto an area that extends along the length of the building. Commercial traffic would use the north side of the facility. Commercial refuse and commercial recyclable materials would be unloaded into two separate areas and would be consolidated into a surge area near the facility's two eastern load-out ports.

- **Days with peak self-haul traffic (generally weekends).** During these conditions, few commercial trucks are typically at the site, leaving the north side of the facility with more availability. Self-haul traffic would be directed to both the north and south sides of the facility for unloading. The north side of the new transfer station building would accommodate 11 additional unloading bays. When combined with the 16 bays on the south side, a total of 27 unloading bays would be provided. The new transfer station would accommodate peak traffic use with minimal time spent in queue, unlike the current operations that are limited to 10 unloading bays. Vehicles would back into a designated area and unload their contents into an area that extends the length of the building. The operator would consolidate the refuse into a surge area near the two lead-out ports at the east end of the facility.

For both of the modes described above, an area for cars/trucks without trailers would be located separately from the area that is designed to accommodate trailers, so as to allow for quick entrance and unloading of smaller loads. Vehicles towing trailers and larger trucks would be directed into the facility and allowed to maneuver for unloading while inside the facility. After unloading, the public self-haul vehicles would be directed to the exit by way of the exit scales. Vehicles would be weighed and charged the appropriate fee at the exit scales. After paying, the public would exit the site by way of the new entrance/exit road on which they arrived.

Commercial Refuse

After entering through the commercial scale, vehicles with tare weights carrying commercially collected refuse would be directed to the north side of the new transfer station, where an area separate from commercially collected recyclables would be provided. The refuse would be consolidated with self-hauled refuse in the center of the facility and pushed to the eastern end of the facility where it would be staged in an area for shipment. When appropriate, the waste would be loaded into a waiting transfer truck using one of the two load-out ports at the east end of the new transfer station.

After unloading, commercial refuse trucks would leave the site using the by-pass exit lane at the new scale facility (because their tare weights would be on-file and updated periodically). This is the northernmost exit lane, which does not contain a scale.

Commercial Recycling

After entering through the commercial scale, vehicles with tare weights carrying commercially collected recycling would be directed to the north side of the new transfer station where an area separate from commercially collected refuse would be provided. The recyclables would be consolidated and staged in an area until a full load is ready

for shipment. When appropriate, the recyclables would be loaded into a waiting transfer truck using one of the two load-out ports at the east end of the new transfer station. After unloading, commercial recycling trucks would leave the site using the same by-pass exit lane as the commercial refuse trucks.

Surge Management

Refuse deposited under either of the two levels of operating conditions described above would generally result in a line of refuse in the center that would extend the length of the building. The front-end loader operator would consolidate the waste into the center and then move the material to the east end of the facility where the two lead-out ports are located. If commercial recyclables are present, the operator would consolidate separate piles for the recyclables, loading them into the northerly most load-out port when the appropriate load-out truck arrives. Refuse could be loaded into either or both bays when recyclables are not utilizing the north load-out port and depending on the availability of the load-out truck in the tunnel below.

Load-out

Load-out trucks (also known as transfer trucks) used to export refuse from the site would proceed beneath the new transfer station into either of the two load-out ports provided on the east side of the building. The ports are staggered to allow egress and exit to each of the bays when either of the other bays is occupied with a load-out truck. Consequently, both load-out ports can be used independently. This would enable different materials to be loaded into each of the ports (e.g., refuse and recyclables) without being influenced by loading or load-out truck maneuvers related to the other port. When a load-out truck is stationed in either of the load-out ports, the operator would be advised by a light panel in the transfer station. Load cells located beneath the axle loads of each bay would be displayed on overhead signage, informing the operator of the weights of the load-out truck below.

After being filled, load-out trucks containing refuse would proceed up the ramp to the north side of the new transfer station, along the lane dedicated for this use. These trucks would be allowed to proceed to the exit scale facility with minimal interference from other vehicles, and then depart from the site.

Supporting Features

Supporting features include a variety of systems that enable the operation of the facility. These include the following:

New Transfer Station Misting System: The misting system in the new Transfer Station would be configured to reduce dust and odors at key locations where materials are generating dust such as the surge area and loadout areas.

Expanded Contact Water Collection and Conveyance System: The expanded contact water system would capture water from inside the building, both at the receiving/tip area and the lower load-out level. Both areas would collect contact water and combine contact water from the existing PRA building and convey the contact water to the recently expanded leachate tank farm located east of the two surface impoundments.

Public Restrooms (two): The public restrooms would be located on the south side of the new Transfer Station as a part of the mechanical, electrical and fire suppression rooms. Sewage from the restrooms would be combined

with sewage from the existing site features, including the administrative trailer restrooms, and conveyed to the recently expanded leachate tank farm located east of the two surface impoundments.

New Fire Suppression System: The new Transfer Station building when combined with existing buildings requires a new fire suppression system to provide increased quantities of fire suppression water. The new fire suppression system would be energized by a new diesel powered fire pump system that would be located on the west side of the surface impoundment, north of the new Transfer Station. The new fire suppression system would include a new fire intake from surface impoundment number 2.

Recently Expanded Liquids Tank Farm: The recently expanded liquids tank farm is sized to store 180,000 gallons of liquid from the contact water from the existing PRA, contact water from the new Transfer Station, new rest rooms at the new Transfer Station, existing restrooms at the HHW facility, recyclables buy/back buildings, and maintenance building restroom. Liquid in the tank farm is monitored and when necessary is trucked from the tank farm to the regional wastewater treatment facility.

Expanded Domestic Water Supply System: The expanded water supply system would be fed from well PW-1 replacing the historic use of water from well DW-1. The expanded water supply system would be equipped with a new domestic water storage tank, pressure tank and hypochlorite tank that would provide improved water quality at higher volumes to meet the increased site demand.

New Wash Down System: The expanded water supply water system would provide water for the wash down needs of the new Transfer Station. Unlike the existing wharf hydrant located at the existing PRA building that is connected to the existing fire suppression system, the new wash down water would be fed from the expanded domestic water supply system.

Subsurface Landfill Gas Ventilation System: The enclosed buildings within 1,000 feet of the landfill are required to be equipped with a subsurface landfill gas ventilation system. The enclosed structured to be constructed as a part of the proposed improvements include the enclosed rooms adjacent to the new transfer station (mechanical, electrical, fire suppression and restrooms) but does not include the transfer station building because it is not enclosed.

2.3.4 NEW GREEN WASTE AND CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION AREAS

In addition to use of the PRA for Organics receiving and transfer (as described below), a new outdoor green waste and C&D unloading area would be provided in the location of the existing administration trailer and entrance scales, which are located directly south of the PRA. Arriving vehicles would proceed through the new scale house facility, would travel past the western end of the new transfer station and would be directed back toward the center of the site to the new green waste and C&D area for unloading.

The unloading area would include two load-out bays to accommodate two load-out trucks. The operator of a front-end loader would employ a lift-and-load operation to load-out green waste and C&D materials. After being filled, the loaded green waste or C&D trucks would proceed around the east side of the new transfer station building load-out level in a dedicated bypass lane and utilize the ramp up to the scale plaza and stop at the outermost outbound scale before leaving the site.

2.3.5 METAL, BUYBACK AND HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Vehicles containing HHW and recycling/redemption materials would enter the HHW/buyback by turning south without crossing the scale facility, which would increase the site's queuing capacity and improve traffic flow. The HHW area and buyback areas would remain unaltered from their current condition and are a separately permitted activity from the transfer station.

The metal tipping pad permitted under the solid waste permit for the transfer station and tipping area would remain unchanged; however, both self-haul and commercial customers would enter the scale house and then be directed to either the new transfer building or metal tipping pad, depending on the amount of material.

2.3.6 REPURPOSE OF EXISTING PRA AS ORGANICS BUILDING

The existing PRA would be repurposed to function as the organics building, receiving commercial vehicles with food waste and other organics to assist in compliance with SB 1383 and AB 1886. Although the self-haul customers are not currently thought to be likely participants in the food diversion program, the existing PRA facility could accommodate these users, similar to the way commercial refuse is currently unloaded (on the south side of the facility), as the north side of the existing PRA would no longer be accessible when the new scale plaza is installed. In addition, this area will be used for green waste to the extent the operator prefers this area over the outdoor area discussed above.

2.4 PROJECT PHASING

The facility would be constructed in two general phases, although several "sub-phases" would also be needed in order to maintain site operations during construction. One of the key factors in the selection of the proposed site development plan was the need for the existing PRA to remain open and operating at normal capacity during construction of the new entrance roads, scale house, scales, and new transfer station building. The project is envisioned to be constructed in a series of phases as outlined below.

2.4.1 PHASE 1

Phase 1 would consist of earthwork, utilities (including the primary fire protection system on the site), pavement, completion of the new transfer station and associated building components, load-out area and perimeter roadways. These improvements are anticipated to be constructed without substantially interfering with the current operations of the entrance facilities and existing PRA building. However, the existing green waste and C&D activities would need to be relocated to make the area currently used for these activities available for the necessary improvements and the new transfer station. Prior to commencing construction, the existing green waste and C&D materials areas would need to be relocated to a temporary location that would operate for the duration of project construction. As described above, the current trailer storage area on the pad to the east of the leachate ponds would serve as the temporary location for these uses. Relocation work would include preparing roadway access to this area that would extend around the north side of the existing PRA and around the south side of the new transfer station construction area.

The majority of the project's construction effort would occur during Phase 1. Grading necessary to construct the new entrance road and scale facility would occur on the north side of the existing PRA and grading necessary to construct the new transfer station would occur in the existing green waste and C&D areas.

Phase 1 includes the following components:

- A temporary boundary would be constructed around the existing PRA, HHW and recycling area to protect on-going operations while Phase 1 improvements are constructed.

- Current green waste and C&D areas would be temporarily moved to the current trailer storage area at the far east end of the site. This would allow for the area around the new transfer station location to be clear and available for construction. This includes a new temporary access road around the north side of the existing PRA while the new transfer station is being constructed.

- The existing low area north and east of the existing recycling area would be filled to raise the grade as well as to reduce the length of slope between the new Phase 1 grading and the existing site circulation. Some of the area currently used for recycling storage would need to be streamlined in order to accommodate this southwestern portion of Phase 1 construction.

- The new transfer station foundation, building, aprons, paving, subsurface utilities and related components would be constructed and would be ready for use by the end of Phase 1 construction.

- A new site fire system would be relocated (from its current location) and constructed to serve the new transfer station and the remainder of the site systems.

- An array of other utilities would also need to be constructed during this phase. These include but are not limited to water, power, gas (if appropriate), sewer, and fire suppression.

2.4.2 PHASE 2

Phase 2 would commence when the County begins to use the new transfer station as the primary MSW and recycling handling facility. Phase 2 would consist of widening and redirecting the existing entrance road from Wolf Mountain Road to a new three-way intersection west of the existing PRA. A new roadway to route traffic to the new entrance/exit scale facility located north of the existing PRA would be constructed. The new entrance/exit scale facility would consist of a total of three new scale houses and four new scales. From the new three-way intersection, a road directing traffic to the existing HHW and recycling area would be constructed.

Phase 2 includes the following components:

- The new entrance road and new scale facilities would be constructed as illustrated in the Phase 2 site circulation plan. Four new scales and three new scale houses would be installed.

- The new entrance road improvements would be extended to the new transfer station facility constructed in Phase 1, connecting at the three-way intersection located at the northwest corner of the new transfer station.

- During this phase, the old PRA would be re-purposed to become the organics diversion facility.
- The existing scales and scale house would be utilized with the new transfer station for a temporary duration. After the new scale facility is open and operational, the existing scales and scale house would be removed.
- The administration building would be relocated or replaced to the north of the existing PRA.
- After the existing scales, scale house and administration building have been removed and the area prepared for operations, the green waste and C&D activities would be moved to the new permanent location south of the existing PRA building.

2.5 OPERATIONS

2.5.1 EXISTING OPERATIONS

The MRTS is currently permitted to receive 350 tons per day (tpd) for all material. Design and corresponding calculations are shown below for each area, including the solid waste tipping pad (i.e., PRA) and the recycling tipping pad. The recycling tipping pad calculations below reflect proposed upgrades. The actual design methodology, assumptions, and calculations are presented below and on the following pages. The existing station was constructed in accordance with the applicable Nevada County building and environmental health codes and regulations.

The current facility operating parameters are as follows:

Activity	Hours of Operation[1]
Material Receiving	8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.; Seven days/week
Material Processing On-Site	8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Seven days/week
Material Transfer Off-Site	8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Seven days/week
Public Material Receiving	8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.; Wednesday through Sunday
Special Events	8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.; Wednesday through Sunday

[1]On certain occasions, operations may occur after 5:30 pm with adequate lighting provided for night-time operations. In the event this happens, the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) will be notified of this occurrence. Altered operating hours and closure may occur due to emergency conditions, such as equipment failure or due to severe weather conditions such as heavy precipitation, snow and or other unsafe conditions as authorized in Minute Order 90-3. The decision to close the facility will be made by the site supervisor, after consulting with the Nevada County Department of Public Works Director or his/her designee and the LEA will be notified.

The facility is closed on New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas.

Existing Permitted Maximum Tonnage and Traffic Volume

The existing permit criteria for the facility operations are:

- A total of up to 350 tons per day of all material. Expected amounts of individual material are as follows;
  - Refuse = 260 tons per day
  - Recyclable (not to include Buy-Back operations) = 25 tons per day
  - Chipping and grinding green waste and wood waste = 65 tons per day

- 1,090 vehicles per day

Table 3 includes a summary of the current estimated tonnage and traffic volumes at MRTS. The average customer count and average tonnage is calculated using the total vehicle count and/or tonnage from December 2018 to November 2019 and then dividing this by the days of operation (359 days). The traffic count is calculated by adding the vehicles entering the main gate and the green waste gate. In addition, 20 vehicles are added to the count on Wednesday through Sunday to account for estimated employee vehicles. The facility vehicle count may be inflated due to the possibility of a vehicle visiting both areas within one visit.

The tonnage of both the public household hazardous waste collection facility (PHHWCF) and the buy-back are not included or counted towards the daily tonnage limits. Both these operations are permitted separately and hazardous waste is not regulated as solid waste. The PHHWCF is located at the southwestern end of the property and vehicles can proceed directly to this operation. The Buy-Back center is located in a separate building with its own scales at the northern end of the Recycling Loop. Customers can proceed directly to this operation without entering the other Transfer Station operations. In accordance with Public Resources Code section 14511.7, 14518, or 14520, the tonnage of solid waste received by a transfer/processing facility, the following materials shall not be included: materials received by a recycling center located within the facility, and by beverage container recycling programs, if the recycling activities are separated from the solid waste handling activities by a defined physical barrier or where the activities are otherwise separated in a manner approved by the enforcement agency [CCR Sections 17402(9) and 17402(11)].

Table 3. Summary of Existing Average Tonnage and Vehicle Count

Waste Type	**Average Tonnage**
Refuse	133.76
Recycling (Express Drop Off / Metal / Commingle/Tires)*	8.08
C&D Material	23.56
Green Waste	32.68
Total Daily Tonnage (Includes the permitted refuse & other accepted materials)	198.07
Total Average Daily Vehicle Count	448
*Commingle recycle tonnage does not include the buy-back center as this is reported under a separate operation as described above. Note: Tonnage based on the time period of December 2018 to November 2019 for accuracy.	

2.5.2 PROPOSED OPERATIONS

The facility improvements would enable changes in the operations of the MRTS. The new operating parameters would be as follows:

Activity	Hours of Operation[1]
Material Receiving	7:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Seven days/week
Material Processing On-Site	7:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Seven days/week
Material Transfer Off-Site	7:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Seven days/week
Public Material Receiving	7:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Seven days/week
Special Events	7:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Seven days/week
Visitors	7:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Seven days/week

[1]On certain occasions, operations may occur after 5:30 pm as late as 7:00 pm with a justification of the necessity submitted to the County in advance. In the event this happens, the LEA will be notified of this occurrence. Altered operating hours and closure may occur due to emergency conditions, such as equipment failure or due to severe weather conditions such heavy precipitation, snow and or other unsafe conditions as authorized in Minute Order 90-3. The decision to close the facility will be made by the site supervisor, after consulting with the Nevada County Department of Public Works Director or his/her designee and the LEA will be notified.

The facility would continue to be closed on New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas.

The new Transfer Station would be sized to receive, store and loadout up to 890 tons per day of MSW and recyclables. The existing PRA would be repurposed to receive organic materials and would be sized to receive, store and loadout 370 tons per day. After the removal of the existing entrance scales, scale house, and administration trailer, the outdoor, paved area available for yard waste and C&D materials would be sized to receive, store and loadout 330 tons per day. The chipping and grinding operation would be relocated to the out-door area, which is sized to receive, process and loadout 65 tons per hour. The existing metals area is sized to receive and load-out 20 tons per day. These areas and associated tons with each material may be increased or decreased with changes in design or operational configurations. Table 4 below is shown to demonstrate the design capacity of each area and not designed to be used to determine individual material type tonnage.

The proposed project includes increasing the current permit limit from 350 tons per day to 1,675 tons per day and increasing the daily traffic limit from 1,090 vehicles per day to 1,658 vehicles per day. The facility permit would establish the maximum daily tonnage that could be accepted at the site. If the total accepted tonnage limit of 1,675 tons per day gets close to being exceeded, the facility would prepare to shut the gate and close the facility early so as to not exceed the permitted tonnage limit. The Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) and Nevada County Department of Public Works would be notified of early closure.

The tonnage of both the PHHWCF and the Buy-Back/Recycling are not included or counted towards the daily tonnage limits. Both these operations are permitted separately and are located in their own distinct area of the facility and can be seen on the site facility map. The PHHWCF is located at the southwest of the property and vehicles can proceed directly to this operation, in addition hazardous waste is not regulated as solid waste.

Table 4. Design Capacity Load-out Analysis

Facility	Material to be Received	Design Quantity	Units
New Transfer Station	Commercial and Self Haul Waste plus Recyclables	890	tons per day
Indoor Organics Transfer (repurposed PRA)	Organics	370	tons per day
Outdoor Yard Waste and/or C&D	Yard Waste and/or C&D	330	tons per day
Chipping and grinding operation	Yard Waste and/or C&D (currently permitted)	65	tons per day
Metal Tipping Pad	Metal, appliances and other recyclables	20	tons per day
Total		**1,675**	**tons per day**

In accordance with Public Resources Code section 14511.7, 14518, or 14520 regarding the tonnage of solid waste received by a transfer/processing facility, the following materials shall not be included: materials received by a recycling center located within the facility, and by beverage container recycling programs, if the recycling activities are separated from the solid waste handling activities by a defined physical barrier or where the activities are otherwise separated in a manner approved by the enforcement agency [CCR Sections 17402(9) and 17402(11)]. The Buy-Back center is located in a separate building with its own scales at the north of the Recycling Loop. Customers can proceed directly to this operation without entering the other Transfer Station operations.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

PROJECT INFORMATION		
1.	Project Title:	McCourtney Road Transfer Station Renovation Project
2.	Lead Agency Name and Address:	Nevada County 950 Maidu Avenue Nevada City, CA 95959
3.	Contact Person and Phone Number:	David A. Garcia, Jr. (530) 265-7038
4.	Project Location:	14741 Wolf Mountain Road in unincorporated Nevada County, California
5.	Project Sponsor's Name and Address:	Nevada County 950 Maidu Avenue Nevada City, CA 95959
6.	General Plan Designation:	Public (PUB)
7.	Zoning:	Public (P)
8.	Description of Project: (Describe the whole action involved, including but not limited to later phases of the project, and any secondary, support, or off-site features necessary for its implementation. Attach additional sheets if necessary.) See the project description included in Section 2 above.	
9.	Surrounding Land Uses and Setting: (Briefly describe the project's surroundings)	The project is located within a rural area of unincorporated Nevada County that contains low-density, large-lot residential uses.
10:	Other public agencies whose approval is required: (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement)	Local Enforcement Agency and CalRecycle Solid Waste Facility Permit and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board Waste Discharge Requirements.
11:	Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, is there a plan for consultation that includes, for example, the determination of significance of impacts to tribal cultural resources, procedures regarding confidentiality, etc.?	The County is in the process of coordinating with tribes that may be interested in consulting on the project consistent with the requirements of Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☐ Aesthetics	☐ Agriculture / Forest Resources	☒ Air Quality
☒ Biological Resources	☒ Cultural Resources	☐ Energy
☒ Geology / Soils	☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☒ Hazards / Hazardous Materials
☒ Hydrology / Water Quality	☐ Land Use / Planning	☐ Mineral Resources
☒ Noise	☐ Population / Housing	☐ Public Services
☐ Recreation	☐ Transportation	☐ Tribal Cultural Resources
☐ Utilities / Service Systems	☐ Wildfire	☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance
☐ None		

DETERMINATION (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☐ I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment, and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.

☒ I find that although the proposed project COULD have a significant effect on the environment, there WILL NOT be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared.

☐ I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required.

☐ I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier **EIR** or **NEGATIVE DECLARATION**, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____ Title _____

Agency _____

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).

2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.

3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.

4. "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from "Earlier Analyses," as described in (5) below, may be cross-referenced).

5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:

   a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.

   b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.

   c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7. Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.

8. This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.

9. The explanation of each issue should identify:
   a) the significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
   b) the mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance.

3.1 AESTHETICS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
I. Aesthetics. Except as provided in Public Resources Code section 21099 (where aesthetic impacts shall not be considered significant for qualifying residential, mixed-use residential, and employment centers), would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The visual character of the project site is represented by the active solid waste uses including the active transfer station infrastructure, roadways, and waste management areas. The surrounding area is dominated by low-density rural residential land uses and the closed McCourtney Road Landfill, which is located directly south of the project site. The landfill rises up approximately 50 feet above the elevation of the PRA. The vegetation community includes a mix of chaparral, pine and oak habitat types. The project site is located within an area of gently rolling hills with drainage generally flowing toward the northeast.

DISCUSSION

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

A scenic vista is defined as a viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the general public. The project site would not be considered a scenic vista because it is a solid waste management facility that is visually consistent with industrial development. Also, the project site is not located within an area that would block or alter a scenic vista. Also, because the project includes expanding the existing waste management uses on the site, it would not alter the site's industrial visual character. Therefore, the project would have **no impact** on scenic vistas.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The project site is not located within a state scenic highway and is not visible from a designated state scenic highway. Although State Route 20 and State Route 49 in the project vicinity are both identified as eligible for State Scenic Highway designation, they are not officially designated as such (Caltrans August 2019). Also, the project site is not visible from these highways. Therefore, the proposed project would have **no impact** on the scenic resources of a state scenic highway.

c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

The primary public views of the site are observed from McCourtney Road and/or Wolf Mountain Road by travelers either accessing the site or driving through the area. From these roadways, the developed industrial character of the project site is represented by the roadway entering the site, the PRA building, the office trailers, the large (approximately 15 feet tall) metal-fabricated gold paner, and the landfill in the background. Views generally look down into the site, which is slightly lower in elevation than the intersection of McCourtney and Wolf Mountain Road. The construction of the proposed project facilities would alter the views of the site from these roadways but would not change the overall industrial visual character of the site. The project would include the construction of an approximately 48,000 square-foot transfer station building in the northeastern portion of the site. Although this building would represent a visually prominent change as viewed from Wolf Mountain Road, its location behind and set back from the existing PRA building would minimize its visual effect. The site's proposed improvements would be visible from several existing residences surrounding the project site. However, the site's industrial character would not be altered. For these reasons, the proposed project would not be expected to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the project site or its surroundings and this impact would be **less than significant**.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Construction would occur during daylight hours and construction activities would not be expected to need any nighttime lighting. During project operations, new light sources would be limited to site security lighting, which would typically include shielded lighting attached to any new permanent buildings and directed toward the ground. Any lighting installed at the project site would be required to comply with Nevada County General Plan Policy 18.11, which requires new industrial development to use fixtures and light sources that minimize night time light pollution. For these reasons, the project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area and this impact would be **less than significant.**

3.2 AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
II. Agricultural and Forest Resources.				
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997, as updated) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.				
Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project site has been developed as a waste management facility that does not include any agricultural uses or operations. The surrounding area consists of rural residences located within chaparral habitat communities. The project site does not include any forest land.

DISCUSSION

a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

The project site has been developed as a waste management facility that does not include land designated by the California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, and would not interfere with activities on Farmlands. Therefore, there would be **no impact** on Farmland.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?

The project site does not include land zoned for agricultural uses and is not located on, or adjacent to, land that is currently under Williamson Act contract. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

The project site does not include forest land or any land zoned for forest land. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

The project site does not include any forest land. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not result in the loss of forest land or the conversion of forest land to a non-forest use. There would be **no impact**.

e) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

The project site does not include any components that would cause the conversion of farmland or forest land. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

3.3 AIR QUALITY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
III. Air Quality.				
Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied on to make the following determinations.				
Would the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☒	☐	☐

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project site is located in the Mountain Counties Air Basin (MCAB), which in addition to Nevada County includes Plumas, Sierra, Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Mariposa Counties, as well as portions of Placer and El Dorado Counties. The project is within the jurisdiction of the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD). NSAQMD adopts air quality rules and issues permits consistent with County and state regulations.

The climate of Nevada County is characterized by hot, dry summers and cool, moist winters. The prevailing wind direction over the county is westerly; however, the terrain of the area has a great influence on local winds and wide variability in wind direction can be expected. Afternoon winds are generally channeled up-canyon, while nighttime winds generally flow down-canyon. Winds are, in general, stronger in spring and summer and weaker in fall and winter. Periods of calm winds and clear skies in fall and winter often result in strong, ground based inversions forming in mountain valleys. These layers of very stable air restrict the dispersal of pollutants, trapping them near the ground, representing the worst conditions for local air pollution occurring in the county (NSAQMD 2016).

The nearest sensitive receptors to the project site are the single-family residences located near the intersection of McCourtney Road and Wolf Mountain Road. Rural residences are also located north, east and south of the project site.

The ambient concentrations of air pollutant emissions are determined by the amount of emissions released by pollutant sources and the atmosphere's ability to transport and dilute such emissions. Natural factors which affect transport and dilution include terrain, wind, atmospheric stability, and the presence of sunlight. Therefore,

existing air quality conditions in the area are determined by such natural factors as topography, meteorology, and climate, in addition to the amount of emissions released by existing air pollutant sources, as discussed separately below.

Criteria Pollutants

Concentrations of the following air pollutants are used as indicators of ambient air quality conditions: ozone; carbon monoxide; nitrogen dioxide; sulfur dioxide; respirable and fine particulate matter, PM_{10} (respirable particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 micrometers or less) and $PM_{2.5}$ (fine particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less); and lead. These pollutants are commonly referred to as "criteria air pollutants" because they are the most prevalent pollutants known to be deleterious to human health; extensive documentation is available on health effects criteria for these pollutants.

Both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California Air Resources Board (ARB) designate areas of the state as attainment, nonattainment, or unclassified for various pollutant standards. An "attainment" designation for an area signifies that pollutant concentrations did not violate the standard for that pollutant in that area. A "nonattainment" designation signifies that a pollutant concentration violated the standard, excluding those occasions when a violation was caused by an exceptional event, as identified in the criteria. An "unclassified" designation signifies that data do not support either an attainment or nonattainment status. In addition, each agency has several levels of classification used to further describe the severity of nonattainment conditions. For instance, the ARB classifies nonattainment areas into moderate, serious, or severe air pollution categories, with increasingly strict control requirements mandated for each.

Western Nevada County is classified as nonattainment for both the federal and state ozone standard. Ozone within western Nevada County is primarily generated in the Sacramento area and transported by wind to the county. Nevada County is also classified as nonattainment for the state PM_{10} standard but is unclassified for the federal PM_{10} standard due to a lack of available recent data. The county is unclassified/attainment for the federal $PM_{2.5}$ standard and unclassified for the state $PM_{2.5}$ standard (US Environmental Protection Agency 2020).

Toxic Air Contaminants

Air quality regulations also focus on toxic air contaminants (TACs) or in federal parlance, hazardous air pollutants (HAPs). The EPA and ARB regulate HAPs and TACs, respectively, through statutes and regulations that generally require the use of the maximum or best available control technology for toxics (MACT and BACT) to limit emissions. These, in conjunction with additional rules set forth by the NSAQMD, establish the regulatory framework for TACs. To date, ARB has identified over 21 TACs and has adopted the EPA's list of HAPs as TACs. Most recently, diesel PM was added to the ARB list of TACs.

CARB has identified naturally occurring asbestos (NOA) as a toxic air contaminant. NOA occurs in rocks and soil as a result of natural geological processes. Natural weathering and human activities, such as construction, may disturb NOA-bearing rock or soil and release mineral fibers into the air, which pose a greater potential for human exposure by inhalation. NOA-bearing rock/soil has been identified in Nevada County ().

Odors

The NSAQMD has an established screening process which requires in-depth review of any project with potential to emit odors which may impact considerable number of persons, leading to a public nuisance. Additionally, NSAQMD encourages lead agencies to address potential land use conflicts (such as odors), or exposure of sensitive receptors to odors as early as possible in the development review process (NSAQMD 2016).

Significance Thresholds

To assist local jurisdictions in the evaluation of air quality impacts, the NSAQMD has published a guidance document for the preparation of the air quality portions of environmental documents that includes thresholds of significance to be used in evaluating land use proposals. Thresholds of significance are based on a source's projected impacts and are a basis from which to apply mitigation measures (NSAQMD 2016). The NSAQMD has developed a tiered approach to significance levels:

- A project with emissions meeting Level A thresholds would require the most basic mitigations;
- Projects with projected emissions in the Level B range would require more extensive mitigations; and
- Those projects which exceed Level C thresholds would require the most extensive mitigations. The NSAQMD-recommended thresholds are identified in Table 5.

Table 5
NSAQMD-Recommended Significance Thresholds

Significance Level for Project-Generated Emissions	NO_X (lb/day)	ROG (lb/day)	PM_{10} (lb/day)
Level A	<24	<24	<79
Level B	24-136	24-136	79-136
Level C	>136	>136	>136

Source: Data calculated by Douglas Environmental 2019.

According to the NSAQMD, these thresholds are recommended for use by lead agencies when preparing initial studies (NSAQMD 2016). If, during the preparation of the initial study, the Lead Agency finds that the project emissions are at Level B or can be reduced to Level B with the addition of NSAQMD mitigation measures, then the air quality impact is considered less than significant.

DISCUSSION

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

The NSAQMD attains and maintains air quality conditions in Nevada County through a comprehensive program of planning, regulation, enforcement, technical innovation, and promotion of the understanding of air quality issues. The clean air strategy of the NSAQMD includes the preparation of plans for the attainment of ambient air quality standards, adoption and enforcement of rules and regulations concerning sources of air pollution, and issuance of permits for stationary sources of air pollution. The NSAQMD also inspects stationary sources of air pollution and responds to citizen complaints, monitors ambient air quality and meteorological conditions, and

implements programs and regulations. Air quality plans applicable to the proposed project are discussed below.All projects are subject to NSAQMD rules and regulations in effect at the time of construction. The proposed project would be required to comply with the local rules and requirements established by NSAQMD during all phases of construction and operation. As a result, the proposed project would not include any development activities that would conflict with or obstruct implementation of any applicable air quality plan. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

Project Construction Emissions

Construction emissions are described as "short term" or temporary in duration and have the potential to represent a significant impact with respect to air quality, especially fugitive PM_{10} dust emissions. Fugitive dust emissions are primarily associated with soil excavation activities and vary as a function of such parameters as soil silt content, soil moisture, wind speed, acreage of disturbance area, and miles traveled by construction vehicles on-site and off-site. ROG and NO_X emissions are primarily associated with gas and diesel equipment exhaust and the application of architectural coatings. Construction activities associated with transfer station construction activities would result in the temporary generation of ROG, NO_X, and PM_{10} emissions from construction equipment during site preparation, the application of asphalt overlays, cleanup and other miscellaneous construction activities, and from material transport to the site and construction worker commute trips. The estimated daily volume of ROG, NO_X, PM_{10} and CO emissions from construction activities is identified in Table 6.

As previously stated, the NSAQMD considers emissions in excess of Level C thresholds to have a significant air quality impact. Emissions below Level C thresholds but above Level A thresholds are considered potentially significant and subject to the recommended mitigation of the NSAQMD's guidance document (NSAQMD 2016). Therefore, because the construction emissions would be below the Level C thresholds and above the Level A thresholds, the increase in criteria air pollutants associated with the proposed project would be considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Table 6
Estimated Maximum Daily Construction and Operational Emissions[1]

Source	ROG (lb/day)	NO_X (lb/day)	PM_{10} (lb/day)
Site Preparation	1.48	17.42	21.86
Grading	7.43	42.51	24.07
Building Construction and Paving	11.56	39.86	5.11
Operational Sources	5.54	9.24	1.21
NSAQMD Significance Threshold (Level B)	24-136	24-136	79-136
Exceed Threshold?	No	Yes	No

[1] Emissions estimates based on CalEEMod computer modeling.

Source: Data calculated by Douglas Environmental 2020.

Mitigation Measure AIR-1

The construction contractor shall submit to the NSAQMD for approval an Off-Road Construction Equipment Emission Reduction Plan prior to ground breaking demonstrating the following:

- All off-road equipment (portable and mobile) meets or is cleaner than Tier 2 engine emission specifications unless prior written approval for any exceptions is obtained from the NSAQMD. Note that all off-road equipment must meet all applicable state and federal requirements.

- Emissions from on-site construction equipment shall comply with NSAQMD Regulation II, Rule 202, Visible Emissions.

- The primary contractor shall be responsible to ensure that all construction equipment is properly tuned and maintained.

- Idling times shall be minimized either by shutting equipment off when not in use or reducing the maximum idling time to 5 minutes when not in use (as required by California airborne toxics control measure Title 13, Section 2485 of the California Code of Regulations). Clear signage shall be provided for construction workers at all access points.

- All construction equipment shall be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with manufacturers' specifications. All equipment shall be checked by a certified mechanic and determined to be running in proper condition prior to operation.

- Existing power sources (e.g., power poles) or clean fuel generators shall be utilized rather than temporary power generators (i.e. diesel generators), where feasible.

- Deliveries of construction materials shall be scheduled to direct traffic flow to avoid the peak hours on local roadways of 7:00–9:00 AM and 4:00–6:00 PM.

- The primary contractor shall use architectural coatings for the proposed structure that have a volatile organic compound (VOC) content no greater than 50 grams per liter of VOC.

Mitigation Measure AIR-2

To reduce impacts of short-term construction, the County shall obtain NSAQMD approval of a Dust Control Plan (DCP) which shall include, but not be limited to, the standards provided below to the satisfaction of the NSAQMD. Prior to issuance of grading permits, the County shall include the requirements of the DCP as notes on all construction plans. The County Building Department shall verify that the requirements of the DCP are being implemented during grading inspections.

Alternatives to open burning of vegetation material on the project site shall be used unless deemed infeasible to the Air Pollution Control Officer (APCO). Among suitable alternatives is chipping, mulching, or conversion to biomass fuel.

- The County shall implement all dust control measures in a timely manner during all phases of project development and construction.

- All material excavated, stockpiled or graded shall be sufficiently watered, treated or converted to prevent fugitive dust from leaving the property boundaries and causing a public nuisance or a violation of an ambient air standard. Watering should occur at least twice daily, with complete site coverage.

- All areas (including unpaved roads) with vehicle traffic shall be watered or have dust palliative applied as necessary for regular stabilization of dust emissions.

- All land clearing, grading, earth moving, or excavation activities on a project shall be suspended as necessary to prevent excessive windblown dust when winds are expected to exceed 20 mph.

- All on-site vehicle traffic shall be limited to a speed of 15 mph on unpaved roads.

- All inactive disturbed portions of the development site shall be covered, seeded or watered until a suitable cover is established. Alternatively, the construction contractor shall be responsible for applying non-toxic soil stabilizers to all inactive construction areas.

- All material transported off-site shall be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent public nuisance.

- Paved streets adjacent to the project shall be swept or washed at the end of each day, or as required to removed excessive accumulation of silt and/or mud which may have resulted from activities at the project site.

- If serpentine or ultramafic rock is discovered during grading or construction, the NSAQMD must be notified no later than the next business day and the California Code of Regulations, Title 17, Section 9315 applies.

Mitigation Measure AIR-3

To avoid significant generation of VOCs, all architectural coatings shall utilize low-VOC paint (no greater than 50g/L VOC). Prior to building permit issuance, the County shall submit their list of low-VOC coatings to the NSAQMD for review and approval. Finally, all building plans shall include a note documenting which low-VOC architectural coatings will be used in construction.

As stated above, according to the NSAQMD, if the project emissions are at Level B or can be reduced to Level B with the addition of NSAQMD mitigation measures, then the air quality impact is considered less than significant. Because the project emissions are at Level B and the NSAQMD recommended mitigation measures would be implemented, this impact would be reduced to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

Project Operational Emissions

The project would result in the generation of long-term operational emissions of criteria air pollutants and ozone precursors. Project-generated increases in emissions would be predominantly associated with motor vehicle use.

To a lesser extent, area sources, such as the use of natural-gas-fired equipment, landscape maintenance equipment, and architectural coatings, would also contribute to overall increases in emissions. Emissions attributed to energy use would be reduced through compliance with the California Green Building Code. Long-term operational emissions attributable to the proposed project are summarized in Table 6.

Based on the modeling conducted, daily operational emissions associated with the proposed project would not exceed Level A significance thresholds. Therefore, this impact would be considered less than significant. However, NSAQMD still requires the implementation of mitigation measures for projects that generate operational emissions. Therefore, the following mitigation measure shall be implemented prior to the commencement of project operations.

Mitigation Measure AIR-4

The County shall obtain an Authority to Construct Permit from NSAQMD for any source of air contaminants that exist after construction that is not exempt from District permit requirements. All requirements of this permit shall be incorporated into standard operating procedure manuals or materials for the project.

The implementation of this mitigation measure would ensure this impact remains **less than significant**.

c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Construction activities at the project site would result in short-term emissions of diesel exhaust from on-site heavy-duty construction equipment. Particulate exhaust emitted from diesel-fueled engines (diesel PM) was identified as a TAC by the California Air Resources Board in 1998. The dose to which receptors are exposed (a function of construction and duration of exposure) is a primary factor used to determine health risk (i.e. potential exposure to TAC emission levels that exceed applicable standards). Dose is positively correlated with time, meaning that a longer exposure period would result in a higher exposure level for the maximally exposed individual. Thus, the risks estimated for a maximally exposed individual are higher if a fixed exposure occurs over a longer period of time. According to the state Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), health risk assessments, which determine the exposure of sensitive receptors to TAC emissions, should be based on a 30-year exposure period; however, such assessments should be limited to the period/duration of activities associated with the project (EDAW 2007). In addition, since diesel PM is known to be highly dispersive, emissions would diffuse rapidly from the source, thus resulting in lower concentrations to which receptors could be exposed. Thus, because the use of mobilized equipment would be temporary and would combine with the dispersive properties of diesel PM, short-term construction activities would not result in exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

Project operations would also include the generation of diesel PM from waste-hauling trucks using diesel engines. However, waste-hauling trucks are expected to generate fewer diesel emissions due to improvements in engine efficiencies and the emission control systems. Also, due to the rapid dispersion of diesel emissions and the lack of other significant TAC emission sources in the project vicinity, the project would not be expected to expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Therefore, this impact would be **less than significant**.

d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

The occurrence and severity of odor impacts depend on numerous factors, including the nature, frequency, and intensity of the source; wind speed and direction; and the presence of sensitive receptors. While offensive odors rarely cause any physical harm, they can be unpleasant, leading to considerable distress and often generating citizen complaints to local governments and regulatory agencies.

The human nose's ability to smell makes it the most sensitive detection tool available; although, it should be remembered that sensitivity to odors is variable from one person to the next. Quantifying the amount of odor that constitutes an objectionable amount is virtually impossible due to the wide variation in how people perceive odors as well as the typically transient nature of odors.

Moving the acceptance of municipal solid waste into an enclosed building is expected to substantially reduce the odor generated from the handling of this waste in the site's current open-sided PRA. The waste would be tipped onto a concrete floor by commercial and self-haul vehicles and would be consolidated into the center of the building. The waste would then be pushed to the eastern end of the facility where it would be loaded into a waiting transfer truck using load-ports at the east end of the building. By being located within an enclosed building, the building's ventilation system can capture many of the odor emissions. Therefore, odors generated from municipal solid waste received at the site are expected to be reduced even though the volume of waste is expected to increase in the future due to population growth in the service area.

The project also includes the repurposing of the PRA to function as an organics building. The repurposed PRA would receive food waste and other organic from commercial vehicles to assist in compliance with SB 1383 and AB 1886. Self-haul customers may also participate in the food diversion program in the future. Objectionable odors from food waste are typically a result of anaerobic biological activity in the food waste. The anaerobic decomposition of compounds containing nitrogen and sulfur results in a number of gases, including hydrogen sulfide (H_2S), ammonia, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen, oxygen and hydrogen. Although many different combinations of gases can occur at any given time, the most offensive odors are typically the result of emissions of H_2S. Odor management requires knowledge of and attention to the odor causing factors discussed above and an understanding of the meteorological and geographic conditions. These factors affect odor dispersal and travel, odor containment, treatment methods, materials handling, air handling, facility siting, predictive modeling, odor chemistry, odor measurement, community relations and politics. The conditions that lead to an off-site odor impact are complex and involve not only management processes in the control of humans, but also meteorological and topographic conditions.

During high winds, odors generated at the facility are usually diluted. During light wind conditions, potential odor impacts can increase if dilution is minimized. Calm wind conditions can once again result in lower odor impacts because even though there is minimal dilution there is also only limited odor transportation. Odors are going to be the most noticeable downwind of the site. When these odors are strong, or when a slight breeze exists, odors can be transmitted over long distances. Potential increases in odors may be offset by design (e.g., having sufficient facility size to accommodate the volume of material received) and/or operational procedures, such as control of the materials accepted. Also, because the materials would be removed from the site within 24 to 72 hours, there would be a limited opportunity for waste decomposition to occur on the site, which is a primary generator of odors.

Because these operations would occur within the existing open-sided PRA building, the potential exists for odors to migrate offsite and to affect sensitive receptors in the local area. This impact would be considered **potentially significant**.

Mitigation Measure AIR-5

The County shall develop and implement an Odor Impact Minimization Plan (OIMP) prior to repurposing the PRA as an organics building. The OIMP shall identify the specific operational procedures that will be implemented to ensure that offsite sensitive receptors are not regularly exposed to offensive odors associated with site operations. These operational procedures shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Prioritize the processing and offsite transportation of food waste and organics to minimize the potential for odor generation at the site.
- Treat odiferous food waste and organics with commercially available odor neutralizing compounds that will be applied using a commercial misting system.
- Ensure all food waste is removed from the transfer station within 48 hours of receipt.

The implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce this impact to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

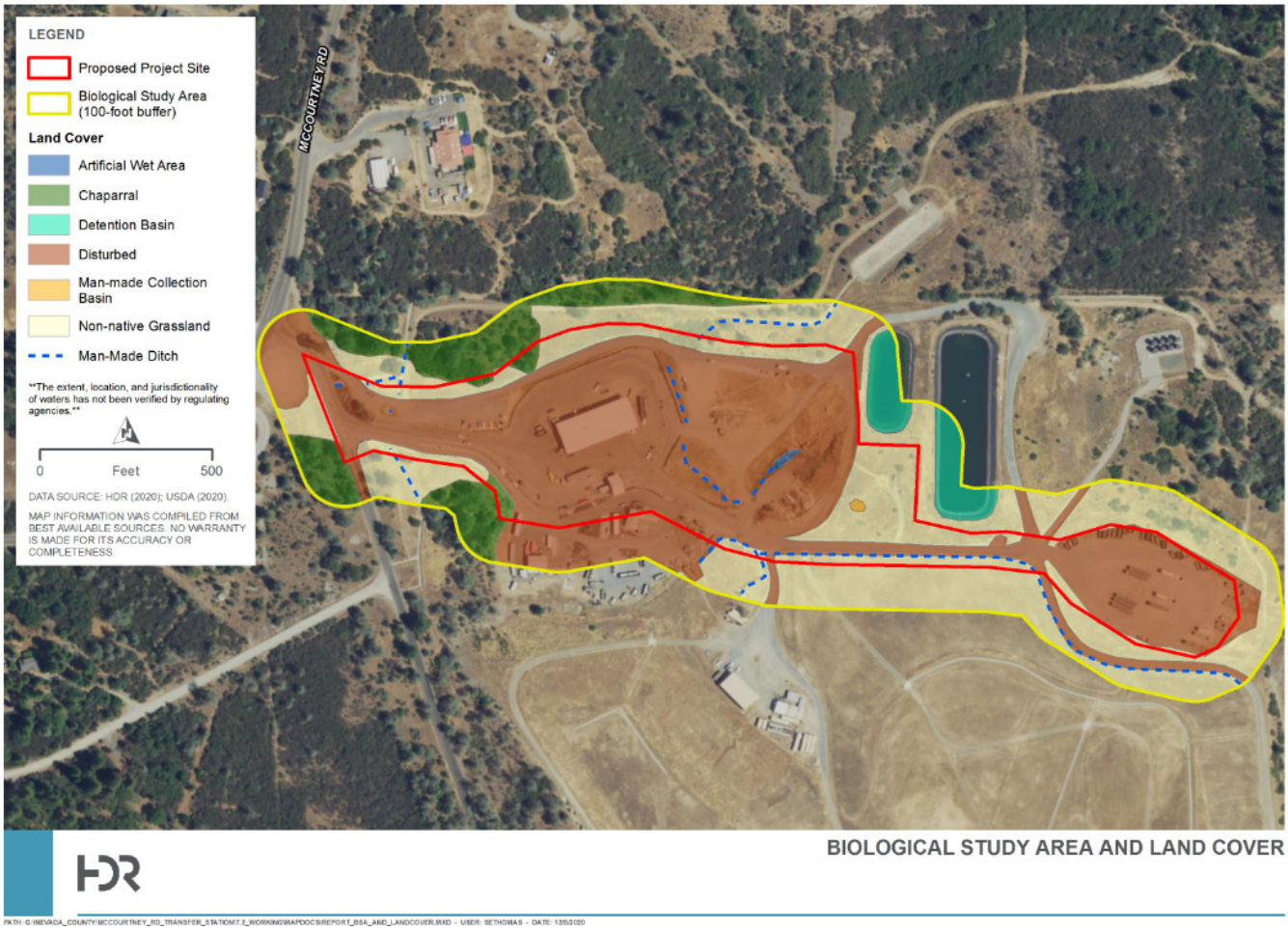
3.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
IV. Biological Resources. Would the project:				
a) 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 the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Introduce any factors (light, fencing, noise, human presence and/or domesticated animals) which could hinder the normal activities of wildlife?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section describes the regional and local environmental setting with regards to biological resources as well as the methods used to characterize the environmental setting. This section describes resources in the biological study area (study area), which is defined as the preliminary project footprint (or proposed project site) along with a 100 foot buffer (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7 Biological Study and Land Cover Area



Methodology

A literature review and surveys were performed to characterize the environmental setting of the study area and to determine the potential effects that project-related activities could have on biological resources.

Literature Review

Project-related documentation was reviewed for site-specific data regarding special-status species habitat suitability. In addition, preliminary searches of the following databases were performed to identify special-status species and their habitats, as well as aquatic resources, with the potential to occur in the study area:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation System (2020a)
- USFWS Critical Habitat Portal (2020a)

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) QuickView Tool in BIOS 5 (2020)
- California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants of California (2020)
- Google Earth aerial imagery (2020)

The USFWS databases were queried to identify federally protected species and critical habitats with the potential to occur in the study area. A query of the CNDDB provided a list of processed and unprocessed special-status species occurrences in the Grass Valley and Rough and Ready, California, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangles. In addition, the CNPS database was queried to identify special-status plant species with the potential to occur in the aforementioned USGS quadrangles.

Rare Plant Surveys

In 2004, the CNPS performed a rare plant survey on the County-owned land between the project site and the adjacent Animal Shelter. Two rare plants were located and were identified as the Stebbins' morning glory (*Calystegia stebbinsii*), which is listed as endangered on the state and federal levels, and the Pine Hill flannelbush (*Fremontodendron decumbens*), which is listed as rare at the state level and endangered at the federal level.[2] This led to the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County, CDFW, CNPS, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The MOU addressed the management, maintenance, and restoration of the Stebbins' morning glory and an endemic chaparral ecosystem.[3]

HDR Engineering Inc. (HDR) conducted a rare plant survey for the proposed project in June 2017 and documented the results in a July 11, 2017 memo.[4] The rare plant survey was conducted on approximately five acres, including the area proposed for the new entrance scale facilities, during the blooming period for the various federal, state, and locally rare plant species that could occur in the study area. The HDR team observed the same two federally-listed plant species as CNPS, Stebbins' morning glory and Pine Hill flannelbush, and mapped the populations for future avoidance.

Field Investigation

A reconnaissance-level habitat assessment was conducted by HDR biologists on June 16 and June 24, 2020, to determine the potential for special-status species and other sensitive biological resources to be found in the proposed study area. A protocol-level rare plant survey was not included as part of the field investigation; however, a visual sweep of the grassland areas near the previously identified rare plant populations was conducted with the purpose of checking to see if any previously identified rare plant populations had extended closer to the existing road and proposed project footprint. No new rare plant populations or individuals were observed in the

2 Letter from Karen I. Callahan of the California Native Plant Society, to Michael Hill-Weld, Department of Transportation and Sanitation, County of Nevada. May 15, 2004.
3 Resolution No. 15-180 of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Nevada. Resolution approving a multi-agency memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the protection of the Stebbins Morning Glory and development of an endangered plant management plan at the Nevada County Animal Shelter and McCourtney Road Transfer Station. Passed and adopted April 28, 2015.
4 Memo from Todd Wong, HDR, to David Garcia, County of Nevada. McCourtney Road Transfer Station June 2017 Rare Plant Survey Results. July 11, 2017.

grassland areas between the chaparral habitat and existing transfer station. During this investigation, Stebbins' morning glory was observed in areas previously identified during the 2017 survey. An assessment of the artificial wet area and man-made collection basin was conducted by HDR Professional Wetland Scientists on December 12, 2020. Data was collected on vegetation, soils, and hydrology. Refer to the *Sensitive Communities and Aquatic Resources* section below for more information.

Environmental Setting

The study area is highly disturbed and mostly consists of the active transfer station infrastructure, roadways, and waste management areas. These areas consist primarily of hardscape, gravel, or compacted soil, and support little to no vegetation. Non-native grassland surrounds the roads and active transfer station area. The grassland is dominated by invasive species including medusahead (*Elymus caput-medusae*), barbed goatgrass (*Aegilops truncilalis*), wild oat (*Avena fatua*), various bromes (*Bromus* spp.), and perennial ryegrass (*Festuca perennis*). Other non-native forb species typical of highly disturbed areas, such as red-stem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), yellow star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), and field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), are also common.

The outer portions of the northern and southwestern study area are more heavily vegetated and dominated by native gabbro chaparral species. Scattered gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*) and interior live oak (*Quercus wislizenii*) make up the sparse overstory. The shrub layer is dominant and composed primarily of white leaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos viscida* ssp. *viscida*), buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus* var. *cuneatus*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) and scattered MacNab cypress (*Hesperocyparis macnabiana*). Ground cover is moderate and mostly consists of native species such as creeping sage (*Salvia sonomensis*). Barbed wire fencing surrounds most of the chaparral communities on the north side of the study area, and signs have been hung along the fence designating it as a plant protection area. **Figure 7** shows the location of various land cover types in the study area.

Special-Status Species

Candidate, sensitive, or special-status species are commonly characterized as species that are at potential risk or actual risk to their persistence in a given area, or across their native habitat. These species have been identified and assigned a status ranking by governmental agencies such as CDFW, USFWS, and private organizations such as CNPS. The degree to which a species is at risk of extinction is the determining factor in assigning a status ranking. Some common threats to a species' or population's persistence include habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation, as well as human conflict and intrusion. For this biological review, special-status species are defined by the following codes:

- listed, proposed, or candidates for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act (50 CFR 17.11 – listed; 61 *Federal Register* 7591, February 28, 1996 – candidates)
- listed or proposed for listing under the California Endangered Species Act (FGC 1992 Section 2050 et seq.; 14 CCR Section 670.1 et seq.)
- designated Species of Special Concern by CDFW
- designated Fully Protected by CDFW (FGC Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515)
- species that meet the definition of rare or endangered under CEQA (14 CCR Section 15380), including California Rare Plant Rank 1B and 2B

The results of the USFWS, CDFW, and CNPS database queries identified three special-status plants[5] and a single special-status wildlife species with the potential to be affected by project-related activities. These include the two aforementioned plants, Stebbins' morning glory and Pine Hill flannelbush. An additional plant, chaparral sedge (*Carex xerophila*) has the potential to occur in areas similar to that of the two other plants, specifically in the chaparral communities. Chaparral sedge has no federal or state listing; however, it has a California Rare Plant Rank of 1B.2 and was observed during previous botanical surveys as a chaparral associate. Blainville's horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*), a California species of special concern, is the only special-status animal with the potential to occur on the project site. This species has been previously observed on the transfer station property.[6]

Sensitive Communities and Aquatic Resources

Sensitive communities include those that are of special concern to resource agencies or those that are protected under CEQA, Sections 1600 to 1603 of the California Fish and Game Code (FGC), and/or Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act. Sensitive communities typically either contain special-status species, their associated habitat, or are sufficiently rare themselves to warrant protection as ranked by the NatureServe Heritage Program Status Rank (Faber-Langendoen 2012).

The only primarily native stands of vegetation are the chaparral communities in the northern and southwestern portions of the study area. These areas are dominated by white leaf manzanita, gray pine, and interior live oak and would be assigned a rank of S4: Apparently Secure — Uncommon but not rare; some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors. Natural Communities with ranks of S1-S3 are considered Sensitive Natural Communities to be addressed in the environmental review processes of CEQA and its equivalents. Thus, none of the communities in the study area are considered sensitive per the Heritage Program. The gabbro soils underlying the study area and chaparral communities are known to support a unique suite of plant species, many of which are considered rare; however, the community as a whole is not afforded any protections.

A network of man-made drainage ditches bisects portions of the study area. Most of the ditches have been concrete lined, while others are vegetated with primarily upland species (Figure 7). This drainage network is referred to as Drainage Area 3 in the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The ditches are connected via culverts and all eventually drain into the concrete-lined catchment basin (known as the North Sedimentation Basin in the SWPPP) in the northeastern portion of the site. Based on site conditions observed during the field investigation and a review of historic aerials, the man-made drainages are ephemeral in nature. The drainage network begins near the center of the study area and was created to facilitate drainage of storm water and excess water resulting from ongoing transfer station operations.

A small artificial wet area (~0.02 acre) has formed in a depression between two active waste areas because of a leaking water pump and runoff. Both this wet area and the associated man-made drainage ditches appear to eventually drain into the cement-lined catchment basin north of the study area. The catchment basin outfalls into a boulder field, which transitions into an ephemeral channel that runs east, eventually draining into another series of channels tributary to Wolf Creek. In addition, a man-made, earthen collection basin (~0.02 acre) occurs east of the drainage network in an isolated depression with no outfall. Finally, two large detention basins are present east of the transfer station. These basins are not included further in this discussion as they are completely isolated,

5 Mostly referred to as "rare plants" in this text. Consider rare plants to have the same definition as special-status plants as defined here.
6 California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2020. RareFind 5. *Phynosoma blainvillii* Occurrence #577

artificial, and do not support vegetation. Refer to Figure 7 for the locations of the artificial wet area, drainage ditches, lined detention basins, and man-made collection basin.

The artificial wet area and man-made collection basin were assessed for wetland indicators, including the presence of hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils and wetland hydrology. All three indicators need to be present for an area to be considered a wetland (Environmental Laboratory 1987). Both areas are dominated by rush (*Juncus* spp.), a genus that is designated as either facultative wet or obligate and qualifies as hydrophytic vegetation. Soil saturation was present at both locations, and is an indicator of wetland hydrology, although artificial or resulting from man-made disturbance. As previously mentioned, the hydrology of the artificial wet area is fed by a leaking water pump and standing water is present. This area is considerably wetter than the man-made collection basin, which appears to be fed exclusively by runoff. Finally, soils were assessed at the artificial wet area, and were found to not be hydric. It can be assumed that the soils underlying the man-made collection basin are not hydric, as well, due to the area being considerably less wet than, and a similar soil type to, the artificial wet area. The areas do not have hydric soils, thus, they do not meet the definition of a wetland per Corps' guidance (Environmental Laboratory 1987). These data, including the location, extent, and jurisdictionally of on-site features, have not been verified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) or the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board).

According to current definitions and regulations, none of the onsite features appear to be jurisdictional. The Navigable Water Protection Rule, which was published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on April 21, 2020, defines the federal government's Clean Water Act permitting jurisdiction over waters of the United States (National Archives 2020). The rule states that a wetland would be considered a water of the United States if it is adjacent to other jurisdictional waters. The rule explicitly excludes ephemeral features that flow only in direct response to precipitation, including ephemeral streams, swales, gullies, rills and pools. The rule also excludes ditches that are not traditional navigable waters, tributaries, or that are not constructed in adjacent wetlands; artificially irrigated areas that would revert to upland if artificial irrigation ceases; and storm water control features constructed or excavated in upland or in non-jurisdictional waters to convey, treat, infiltrate or store storm water runoff. According to these exclusions, it appears that the on-site drainage ditches and artificial wet area would not be considered waters of the U.S. In addition, the man-made collection basic is completely isolated from other waters, and for this reason, would not be considered jurisdictional by the Corps.

The Water Board adopted the State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State in April 2019. The state wetland definition excludes artificial wetlands under 1 acre in size that are not: created by modification of a surface water of the state; approved by an agency as compensatory mitigation for impacts to other waters of the state; specifically identified in a water quality control plan as a wetland or other water of the state; or, resulted from historic human activity, is not subject to ongoing operation and maintenance, and has become a relatively permanent part of the natural landscape. Based on this definition, it appears both the artificial wet area and the man-made collection basin would be excluded as state wetlands as neither are considered naturalized or a relatively permanent part of the landscape. Both features would not occur but for the ongoing activities at the transfer station and are subject to ongoing maintenance and/or disturbance. Linear waters of the state are not explicitly defined in the state wetland definition; however, it could be inferred that the cement-lined, man-made drainage ditch network would be excluded based on language excluding artificial wetlands. This language includes the exclusion of features that were constructed, currently used and

maintained, for detention, retention, infiltration, or treatment of stormwater runoff and other pollutants or runoff subject to regulation under a municipal, construction, or industrial stormwater permitting program.

DISCUSSION

a) 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 the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The footprint of the proposed project is largely staying within previously developed or highly ruderal areas of the existing transfer station. The majority of impacts in vegetated areas would be associated with the non-native grassland areas north of the existing scales, as well as the patches of ruderal grassland between the active waste areas. These areas provide little to no habitat for special-status species as they are filled with invasive annual grasses and are subject to high levels of existing disturbance including, but not limited to, dust and noise generated by traffic coming and going from the transfer station and its various waste areas. Although the majority of project-related impacts would be associated with highly disturbed areas, small portions of the native chaparral community would be impacted by project-related activities. The study area has the potential to support the three species of rare plant and one special-status lizard previously cited, and also provides suitable nesting habitat for raptors and migratory birds. Each of these species groups is discussed in more detail below.

Rare Plants

As previously mentioned, three species of rare plant have been observed on the project site during previous surveys and include Stebbins' morning-glory, Pine Hill flannelbush, and chaparral sedge. All three species are associated with the chaparral community north and southwest of the existing transfer station. Rare plant surveys in 2017 found a Stebbins' morning-glory population in the new entrance road and scale facility development area. Although the proposed project has been designed to avoid rare plants to the greatest extent possible, impacts may result from project-related activities if they occur in (1) areas identified as rare plant locations in the 2017 survey; (2) areas previously fenced as plant protection areas; and, (3) areas mapped as the chaparral community (or, suitable habitat for the rare plant species identified herein). Should avoidance of these areas not be achievable, then impacts on rare plants could occur in the form of compaction, trampling, removal, or degradation of habitat. Because implementation of project-related activities may result in direct and/or indirect effects on these species, this would be considered a **potentially significant impact**.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1

The following mitigation measure shall be implemented prior to the initiation of project construction activities:

- A qualified biologist shall be retained to conduct mandatory contractor/worker awareness training for construction personnel. The awareness training would be provided to all construction personnel, or personnel entering the project sites, to brief them on the locations of sensitive biological resources, how to identify species most likely to be present, required avoidance and minimization measures for biological resources, and to brief them on the penalties for not complying with biological mitigation requirements. If new personnel are added to the project, the contractor would be required to receive the mandatory training before starting work.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2

The following measures shall be conducted prior to any work conducted in and within 100 feet of mapped chaparral areas. Work areas more than 100 feet away from the chaparral communities do not apply.

- Prior to construction, a qualified botanist shall be retained to perform focused surveys for the rare plants determined to have the potential to occur at the project site (in or within 100 feet of chaparral). These surveys shall serve to document the presence/absence of these species in and adjacent to (within 100 feet, where appropriate) proposed impact areas, including temporary construction areas. These surveys shall be conducted at the proper time of year when target species are both evident and identifiable. Surveys shall be scheduled to coincide with known blooming periods, and/or during appropriate developmental periods that are necessary to identify the plant species of concern. Surveys should be done within two years of construction. This will result in survey findings that are close enough to construction start to be considered valid while leaving enough time prior to construction to obtain necessary permits and/or develop a mitigation plan, if necessary.

- Any rare plant species that are identified in or adjacent to the project sites, but not proposed to be disturbed, shall be protected by flagging, signage, orange construction fence, and/or silt fence as appropriate based on site conditions to limit the effects of project-related activities and material stockpiles on any special-status plant species.

- If state-listed plant species (Stebbins' morning-glory or Pine Hill flannelbush) are identified in the project site and avoidance is not possible, then the CDFW shall be consulted to determine a mitigation strategy and/or if an Incidental Take Permit is necessary[7].

- If other rare plant species (such as chaparral sedge) are identified in the project site and project-related activities would result in the loss of greater than 10% of a population or occupied habitat for that species, a mitigation plan shall be developed that describes a program to transplant, salvage, cultivate, and re-establish the species at suitable sites. The plan shall include means and methods to propagate affected rare plants via vegetative or reproductive means (e.g., harvesting of seed or seed bank through topsoil collection, salvaging and transplanting or collecting of cuttings), as appropriate for the species, and transplant at suitable receiving sites as close to the existing population as possible. Propagation and transplantation shall occur prior to construction. The receiving location would be evaluated and chosen based on similarity to conditions at the transplant source location, to the extent feasible. Site conditions to consider when choosing a receiving site include aspect, substrate, hydrology, associated species, and canopy cover. The transplanted plants shall be monitored for at least one year following construction.

The implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce this impact to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated.**

Blainville's Horned Lizard

The study area provides suitable habitat for Blainville's horned lizard. This species prefers loose, fine soils for burrowing, open areas for basking, and dense foliage for cover. The lizard may be found throughout the study

7 Per Section 2081 subdivision (b) of the California Fish and Game Code

area; however, the most ideal habitat is located away from the transfer station, in less disturbed areas. Individuals likely avoid the highly disturbed areas of the transfer station associated with daily operations for the most part; however, previous records of this species on the project site are associated with the leach field, so lizards may wander into more active portions of the site. The proposed project is not anticipated to significantly change the level of disturbance when compared to the existing conditions associated with daily operations, thus, the level of potential for impacts on Blainville's horned lizard is not expected to increase. There is potential for this species to wander into construction areas during project implementation, but no significant alterations to habitat are anticipated. For these reasons, the project's impacts on Blainville's horned lizard would be considered **less than significant**.

Nesting Raptors and Migratory Birds

The study area may provide nesting, wintering and/or foraging habitat for migratory birds and raptors. All native breeding birds (except game birds during the hunting season), regardless of their listing status, are protected under California Fish and Game Code 3503. Ground disturbance, as well as vegetation and structure clearing during the nesting season could result in direct effects on nesting birds should they be present in construction areas. Typically, there is potential for construction noise and other human activity to result in nest abandonment if nesting birds are present within the vicinity of the project site; however, this seems unlikely given the high level of existing disturbance associated with the daily operations of the transfer station. Project implementation is unlikely to result in a noticeable increase in disturbance compared to the existing conditions. It can be assume that any birds nesting in the vicinity would be acclimated to a high level disturbance and the only impact would be risk of direct nest destruction via clearing. The impacts of direct nest destruction on nesting birds would be considered **a potentially significant impact**.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3

The following mitigation measure shall be implemented prior to the initiation of project construction activities:

- When possible, conduct all vegetation and/or structure clearing outside of the nesting season. If clearing and/or construction activities would occur during the nesting season (March 1 to August 31), then preconstruction surveys to identify active migratory bird and/or raptor nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist within 7 days prior to construction initiation. Focused surveys must be performed by a qualified biologist for the purposes of determining the presence or absence of active nest sites in and within 100 feet of active construction areas.

- If active nest sites are identified within 100 feet of the project site, a no-disturbance buffer shall be established prior to commencement of any project-related activities to avoid disturbances to nesting activities. A no-disturbance buffer constitutes a zone in which project-related activities such as vegetation removal, earth moving, and construction cannot occur. The size of no-disturbance buffers would be determined by a qualified biologist based on the species, activities in the vicinity of the nest, and topographic and other visual barriers.

The implementation of this mitigation measure along with mitigation measure BIO-1 would reduce this impact to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The study area does not contain any riparian habitat or sensitive natural communities as identified by the CDFW or the USFWS. Therefore, the project would have **no impact** on riparian habitat or sensitive natural communities. A discussion of the project's effects on potential waters and wetlands is provided in response to question c) below.

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

The site's storm water drainage system includes a network of man-made drainage ditches that bisect portions of the study area. The majority of the drainages are either concrete lined or are vegetated swales supporting upland species. A small artificial wet area (~0.02 acre) has formed in a depression between two active waste areas because of a leaking water pump and runoff. Both this wet area and the associated man-made drainage ditches drain into the concrete-lined catchment basin, north of the study area. The catchment basin outfalls into a boulder field, which transitions into an ephemeral channel that runs east, eventually draining into another series of channels tributary to Wolf Creek. A man-made, earthen collection basin (~0.02 acre) occurs east of the drainage network in an isolated depression with no outfall. Neither the artificial wet area nor the man-made collection basin meet the definition of a wetland due to an absence of hydric soils. Furthermore, onsite features do not appear to be jurisdictional due to a combination of isolation from other jurisdictional features, their artificial/man-made nature, and/or their ephemeral characterization. For these reasons, the project is anticipated to have **no impact** on federal and state-regulated aquatic resources.

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

The study area does not contain any features that would typically facilitate wildlife movement, such as riparian corridors or other contiguous spans of vegetative cover. The proposed project would not significantly increase the existing level of ongoing human disturbance and would not remove any habitat suitable for facilitation of wildlife movement. For these reasons, project implementation would not interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

The proposed project would comply with local policies and ordinances pertaining to biological resources, such as those include in the Nevada County Code and Nevada County General Plan. Section L-II 4.3.12 set standards to avoid the impact of development on rare, threatened, endangered, and special-status species and their habitat, or where avoidance is not possible, to minimize or compensate for such impacts, and to retain their habitat as non-disturbance open space. The proposed project would comply with this ordinance through avoidance and minimization. Section L-II 4.3.15 of the Nevada County Code protects landmark trees, landmark groves, and heritage trees and groves. Trees or groves meeting the definitions provided in this ordinance were not observed in

the study area. The proposed project is not anticipated to result in the removal of trees or any other biological resources protected by local ordinances. Section L-II 4.3.17 sets standards for protection of aquatic resources. The proposed project would be conducted in accordance with all regulations protecting aquatic resources and sensitive communities. The proposed project would not conflict with local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

The project site is not located within an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan. Therefore, the project would not conflict with any such plan and there would be **no impact**.

g) Introduce any factors (light, fencing, noise, human presence and/or domesticated animals) which could hinder the normal activities of wildlife?

The project site is currently an active waste management operation that by its design, discourages wildlife use. The majority of the site is disturbed and it provides little to no habitat value. Also the waste management activities, including regular vehicle traffic delivering waste, a consistent human presence, and the use of heavy machinery, minimizes wildlife attraction to the site. The proposed project would expand the waste management activities that currently occur at the site. However, the proposed project would not introduce new uses that would hinder the normal activities of wildlife. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

3.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
V. Cultural Resources. Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Grass Valley area and the surrounding region are known to contain numerous remains associated with early Native American occupation and historic-era activities. Ethnographically, the project area is situated within the traditional territory of the Nisenan (sometimes referred to as the Southern Maidu) (Ritter and Schulz 1972; Voegelin 1942; Wilson and Towne 1978, 1979). The Nisenan territory included the drainages of the Yuba, Bear, and American rivers, and the lower drainages of the Feather River, extending from the crest of the Sierra Nevada to the banks of the Sacramento River. Aside from early Spanish explorers and probable trappers and traders from the Hudson Bay Company, the Sierra Nevada foothill region and Sacramento Valleys were virtually unsettled by Euro-Americans prior to the Gold Rush.

A wave of gold seekers descended upon California and the foothill and mountain regions of the Sierra Nevada following the discovery of gold at Coloma on the South Fork American River in January of 1848. Rapid, major impacts from mining and settlement, quickly caused conflicts between Native peoples and Euro-Americans who quickly appropriated Native American lands as their own (Hurtado 1988a, 1988b, 2006; Wilson and Towne 1978). Apart from the Auburn area's prominence as a mining support center during the middle and latter decades of the 1800s, the arrival of the Central Pacific Railroad in 1864 (part of the Transcontinental Railroad as of 1869) in Junction (subsequently known as Rocklin) ushered in a series of historic-era developments where transportation became the dominant historic-era theme of the region (Wells 1880, Nevada County 1915).

Historic and Unique Archaeological Resources

Under CEQA, historical resources and "unique archaeological resources" are recognized as a part of the environment (Public Resources Code Sections 21001(b), 21083.2, 21084(e), 21084.1). In 1992, the Public Resources Code was amended as it affects historical resources. The amendments included creation of the California Register of Historical Resources (Public Resources Code Sections 5020.4, 5024.1 and 5024.6).

The California Register is an authoritative listing and guide for state and local agencies and private groups and citizens in identifying historical resources. This listing and guide indicates which resources should be protected from substantial adverse change.

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5, an "historical resource" includes: (1) a resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources; (2) a resource listed in a local register of historical resources or identified in a historical resource survey meeting the requirements in Section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code; and (3) any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines is historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California, provided the determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record; or a resource determined by a lead agency to be "historical," as defined in Public Resources Code Sections 5020.1(j) or 5024.1.

CEQA is also concerned with effects of a project on "unique archaeological resources." If an archaeological site meets the definition of a unique archaeological resource (Public Resources Code Section 21083.2), then the site must be treated in accordance with the special provisions for such resources, which include time and cost limitations for implementing mitigation. "Unique archaeological resource" is defined as "an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets the following criteria:

- Contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions and that there is a demonstrable public interest in that information.
- Has a special and particular quality such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type.
- Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person. [Public Resources Code Section 21083.2 (g)]"

If it can be demonstrated that a project will cause damage to a unique archaeological resource, the lead agency may require reasonable efforts to be made to permit any or all of these resources to be preserved in place or left in an undisturbed state. Examples of that treatment are described in the code. To the extent that unique archaeological resources are not preserved in place or left in an undisturbed state, mitigation measures shall be required as provided in the code. The code also places limitations on the extent, cost and timing of mitigation measures that can be required by the lead agency.

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

On behalf of Nevada County, HDR conducted background research and requested a records search from the North Central Information Center (NCIC) of the California Historical Resources Information System located at California State University, Sacramento. The records search included examining resource location maps and records for archaeological sites, historic built resources, and tribal resources; and consulting historic property files, including the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, the Historic Property Data File and Built Environment Resource Directory for Nevada County, and California Historic Landmarks. The background research also included a review of historical General Land Office plats (GLOs) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic quadrangles to identify the potential to encounter historic sites and features potentially still present within the project area. In a letter dated June 16, 2020 (NCIC 2020), the NCIC

indicated that no previous cultural resource studies have been conducted at the project site but one previous study had been conducted within the 0.25-mile search radius, in support of the Nevada County Animal Shelter. The NCIC concluded that no previously recorded resources are located either within the project area or within the 0.25-mile search radius.

HDR's Senior Cultural Resource Specialist Jay Lloyd conducted an intensive pedestrian survey of the project area on June 16, 2020 using transects spaced no more than 10 meters (approximately 33 feet) apart. The field survey was completed by examining all accessible lands (i.e., gentle to moderate slopes, locations with no or moderate densities of vegetation, other areas deemed by field personnel to be safe) within the project area. Topographic features encountered in areas considered to be sensitive for cultural resources (i.e., springs, drainages, terraces, ridge tops, etc.) were thoroughly inspected. All accessible lands in the project area were examined. The transfer station facilities were constructed in 1994 and, therefore, do not meet the 50-year-old minimum age threshold for eligibility consideration for listing on either state or national registers. Observations made during the pedestrian survey indicate the natural landscape within the project area has been heavily modified by the former landfill activities and current transfer station operations and any cultural resources, if present, have likely been substantially disturbed or destroyed.

The pedestrian survey and records search did not identify any newly discovered or previously recorded historic properties, historical resources, archaeological sites, or objects within the project area. The background research did not identify any previous structures, roads, buildings, or other historic-era facilities which may still be extant within the project area. Therefore, the proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource and there would be **no impact**.

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

No archaeological resources were identified on the site during the record search or the site pedestrian survey. Based on the prior site disturbance associated with previous operation of the landfill as well as the construction and operation of the transfer station facilities, as discussed in response to question a) above, no archaeological resources are expected to be located within the proposed project area. However, there is always the possibility that archaeological resources are located within the soils underlying the facility and improvement activities could damage or destroy these previously undiscovered archaeological resources. The disturbance of archaeological resources during project construction would be considered a **potentially significant impact**.

Mitigation Measure CUL-1

The following mitigation measures shall be implemented during project construction activities:

- If potential Native American prehistoric, historic, archaeological or cultural resources including midden soil, artifacts, chipped stone, exotic rock (non-native), or unusual amounts of baked clay, shell or bone are uncovered during any on-site construction activities, all work must immediately stop in the area. Work shall cease within 100 feet of the find regardless of whether the construction is being actively monitored by a cultural resources specialist, professional archaeologist, or representative from a culturally-affiliated Native American Tribe. Following discovery, a professional archaeologist, in consultation with any

culturally-affiliated Native American Tribes, will make recommendations to Nevada County for further evaluation and treatment, as appropriate.

- In the event that Native American prehistoric, historic, archaeological or cultural deposits or isolates found to be ineligible for inclusion in the California Historic Register of Historical Resources are identified within the project area, culturally appropriate treatment and disposition shall be determined following coordination with any culturally-affiliated Native American Tribes as appropriate. Culturally appropriate treatment may be, but is not limited to, processing materials in a lab for reburial, minimizing handling of cultural objects, leaving objects in place within the landscape, or returning objects to a location within the project area where they will not be subject to future impacts.

The implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce this impact to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

Based on the prior site disturbance associated with previous operation of the landfill as well as the construction and operation of the transfer station facilities, no interred human remains are expected to be located within the project area. However, there is always the possibility that human remains are located under the facility and improvements could damage or destroy previously undiscovered human remains. The disturbance of human remains during project construction would be considered a **potentially significant impact**.

Mitigation Measure CUL-2

The following mitigation measure shall be implemented during project construction activities:

- If articulated or disarticulated human remains are discovered during construction activities, all work shall cease with 100 feet of the find and the Nevada County Coroner shall be contacted immediately. Upon determination by the Nevada County Coroner that the find is Native American in origin, the Native American Heritage Commission will be contacted and will assign the Most Likely Descendent who will work with Nevada County to define appropriate treatment and disposition of the burials. Following a review of the find and consultation with the Native American Tribe and appropriate experts, if necessary, Nevada County may authorize work to proceed but it may be accompanied by the additional requirements or special conditions that provide for protection of the site and/or additional measures necessary to address the unique or sensitive nature of the site. Work in the area of the cultural resource discovery may only proceed after authorization is granted by Nevada County following coordination with tribal representatives and cultural resource experts, if necessary and as appropriate.

The implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce this impact to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

3.6 ENERGY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VI. Energy. Would the project:				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project would require the use of energy during both construction and operations consisting of electricity, natural gas and petroleum fuels. Electrical and natural gas services are provided to the project site by Pacific Gas & Electric Company.

a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

The proposed project would be built using construction techniques that are consistent with industry standards. In addition, the project would be required to comply with Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which provide minimum efficiency standards related to various building features, including water and space heating and cooling equipment, building insulation and roofing, and lighting. Implementation of the Title 24 standards significantly reduces energy usage, and it is assumed that incorporation of Title 24 Energy Efficiency Standards ensures projects would not result in the inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy.

Following construction, site operations would require the continued use of electricity and natural gas. However, this energy usage would support the basic public service of waste collection, recycling and disposal. Therefore, the site operations would not be considered a wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy. The project's energy usage impacts would be **less than significant**.

b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

The proposed project includes constructing and operating transfer station improvements at the project site. The construction and operation of these improvements would not conflict with or obstruct any state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

3.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VII. Geology and Soils. Would the project:				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42.)	☐	☐	☐	☒
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☐	☒
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☐	☒
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994, as updated), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Geology

The project site is located in the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada Range. The Sierra Nevada is a large fault block composed of granitic and metamorphic rocks tilted gently from the summit near Donner Lake to the west, where the block dips under sedimentary and alluvial units of the Sacramento Valley.

The Geologic Map of the Chico Quadrangle, California indicates that the site is underlain by Mesozoic massive diabase. The Mesozoic era encompass a time period from 65 to 248 million years ago (NV5 2020).

Topography

The topography of the project site ranges between generally flat to gently sloping towards the east and south with moderately sloping fill slopes to the north, east and south. Elevations range from approximately 2,250 to 2,310 feet above mean sea level (NV5 2020).

Seismicity

The project site is located in the Foothills Fault System, which is the major regional geologic feature in the project area. The fault system extends from the Melones Fault Zone on the east to the westernmost exposure of metamorphic rocks west of the Bear Mountain Fault Zone. These faults are not considered to be active and the relative risk of earthquakes in this region is considered to be lower than in other areas of the State. The Foothills Fault System is designated as a Type C fault zone, with low seismicity and a low rate of recurrence (NV5 2020).

The Fault Activity Map of California and Adjacent Areas does not identify Holocene and/or Late Quaternary age faults (displacement within the last 700,000 years) within or adjacent to the project site. The project site does not lie within or adjacent to an Alquist–Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone (NV5 2020).

Site Soils

The project site is located in an area containing two soil types. The majority of the site contains soil of cut and fill land. Areas along the western and northern boundary contain Secca-rock outcrop complex, 2 to 50 percent slopes.

The soil survey describes cut and fill land as a miscellaneous land type containing areas that have been altered by methods other than mining. In places, the subsoil or parent rock is exposed.

The soil survey describes the Secca-rock outcrop complex as moderately well-drained soil underlain by basic igneous and metamorphic bedrock. About 10 to 40 percent of this complex is rock outcrop. Permeability is slow. A typical soil profile is described as follows: The surface layer is approximately 15 inches of brown and reddish-brown gravely silt loam (medium acidic and slightly acidic). The subsoil layer is described as approximately 30 inches of yellowish-red cobbly silt clay loam, strong-brown cobbly clay, and light yellowish-brown gravelly light clay (medium acidic and slightly acidic). The subsoil is typically underlain by partially weathered basic rock at a depth of 45 inches (NV5 2020).

Site Soil Investigations

NV5 investigated the subsurface soil, rock and groundwater conditions in 2020 by excavating exploratory trenches, drilling exploratory borings, and performing seismic refraction surveys. This included excavating 10 exploratory trenches and 13 exploratory borings across the project site. In addition, 6 seismic refraction surveys were conducted across the site.

In general, undocumented fills were encountered to depths of approximately 5 to 26 feet below the ground surface (bgs). Undocumented fills contained organics and debris, including tires, ropes, steel cable, metal scraps, concrete rubble, plastics, ceramics, glass, and a crushed 55-gallon drum. In the open field located east of the existing transfer station and west of the wood/yard waste management area, relatively well indurated, hard boulders (likely nested) estimated to be up to approximately 10 feet in diameter were encountered. The undocumented

heterogeneous and boulder fills were underlain by residual soil and/or weathered granitic rock. Bedrock was generally encountered between approximately 22 and 49 feet bgs; however, areas of shallower rock appear to exist at the project site. Resistant material encountered in borings B3-A and B3-B at an approximate depth of 6 feet bgs appeared to be shallow bedrock based on drilling observations and a seismic refraction survey performed in this area. Another seismic refraction survey indicates shallow bedrock is located in the southeastern area of the project site (NV5 2020).

Liquefaction

Liquefaction is a phenomenon where loose, saturated, non-cohesive soils such as silts, sands, and gravels undergo a sudden loss of strength during earthquake shaking. Under certain circumstances, seismic ground shaking can temporarily transform an otherwise solid, granular material to a fluid state. Liquefaction is a serious hazard because buildings in areas that experience liquefaction may suddenly subside and suffer major structural damage. Liquefaction is most often triggered by seismic shaking, but it can also be caused by improper grading, landslides, or other factors. In dry soils, seismic shaking may cause soil to consolidate rather than flow, a process known as densification.

Paleontological Resources

Fossil remains of prehistoric plant and animal life could be found in the sedimentary rocks and volcanic rock sedimentary materials that are present throughout Nevada County. Fossilized animal remains also may be present in caves associated with the limestone geology that can be found in the central part of the Sierra Nevada foothills. No inventory or other information source exists that characterizes the extent, sensitivity, or significance of paleontological resources in Nevada County.

DISCUSSION

a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42.)

Surface rupture is an actual cracking or breaking of the ground along a fault during an earthquake. Structures built over an active fault can be torn apart if the ground ruptures. Surface rupture along faults is generally limited to a linear zone a few meters wide. The Alquist-Priolo Act was created to prohibit the location of structures designed for human occupancy across the traces of active faults, thereby reducing the loss of life and property from an earthquake. No Alquist Priolo zones have been established in the project area (NV5 2020). Therefore, ground rupture due to faulting is considered unlikely at the project site and there is **no impact**.

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

Ground shaking occurs as a result of energy released during faulting, which could potentially result in the damage or collapse of buildings and other structures, depending on the magnitude of the earthquake, the location of the epicenter, and the character and duration of the ground motion.

The foothills of the Sierra Nevada are characterized by relatively low risk of seismic activity. Data compiled between 1808 and 1987 show that only 15 earthquakes between a maximum moment magnitude (M) 3.0 and M 4.0 (on the Richter scale) were recorded along the Foothills Fault System between Mariposa and Oroville. Four notable historical earthquakes have been reported in the northern Sierra Nevada. Three seem to have been associated with the northern portion of the Melones Fault Zone near Downieville. The fourth was the M 5.7 Oroville earthquake of August 1, 1975 (EDAW/AECOM 2009). Due to the relatively low risk of seismic activity in the local area, the project would not be expected to be exposed to significant seismic ground shaking. Therefore, strong seismic ground shaking is considered unlikely at the project site and there is **no impact**.

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

The primary factors in determining liquefaction potential are soil type, the level and duration of seismic ground motions, and the depth to groundwater. Sandy, loose, or unconsolidated soils are susceptible to liquefaction hazards. Liquefaction and other seismically-induced forms of ground movement have historically occurred throughout California during major earthquake events. These phenomena generally consist of lateral movement, flow, or vertical settlement of saturated, unconsolidated soil in response to strong ground motion. The geotechnical investigation conducted for the proposed project concluded that the risk of seismically induced hazards such as slope instability, liquefaction, and surface rupture are remote at the project site (NV5 2020). Therefore, seismic-related ground failure is considered unlikely at the project site and there is **no impact**.

iv) Landslides?

The proposed project would not include components that would contribute to landsliding in the local area because the facilities would be located on relatively flat land. Therefore, people and structures would not be exposed to adverse effects from landslides and **no impact** would occur.

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Construction of the proposed project would include excavation activities that would expose site soils to wind and water erosion that could transport sediments into local drainages. These contaminant sources could degrade the water quality of receiving water bodies, potentially resulting in a violation of water quality standards. This would be considered a **potentially significant impact**. Mitigation measures have been identified under the Hydrology and Water Quality section below that would appropriately control soil erosion from project construction activities. With implementation of the identified mitigation measures, this impact would be considered **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

Undocumented heterogeneous fill was encountered at depths exceeding 15 feet bgs in some of the exploratory trenches and borings conducted during the site's geotechnical investigation. In general, the fill was observed to be predominantly fine-grained, varied from soft to stiff, and contained various amounts of debris. Heterogeneous fills of unknown origin, quality and method of placement, such as those encountered, can settle and/or heave erratically under the load of new fills, structures, slabs, and pavements. Footings, slabs, and pavements supported on heterogeneous fill could also crack as a result of such erratic movements. In addition, areas of resistant

boulders or rock may be encountered which may require splitting, hammering, or blasting to increase the rate of excavation, including large excavations for foundation systems or utility trenches (NV5 2020).

Due to the presence of undocumented heterogeneous fill and areas of resistant boulders or rock on the site, the project's proposed buildings may contribute to future differential settlement, poor subgrade support, and/or associated structural movement/distress. Although the project is not expected to be exposed to on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, or liquefaction (as described above), the potential exposure of the project buildings to elastic settlement would be considered a **potentially significant impact**.

Mitigation Measure GEO-1

The proposed project's geotechnical investigation identified the use of spread footings, mat foundation, partial fill overexcavation and recompaction, and deep dynamic compaction (DDC) as the measures necessary to minimize the potential for elastic settlement following project construction. For the overexcavation/recompaction and DDC, the report included the following detailed mitigation measures:

- Where proposed, relatively loose fill, within and a minimum of 4 feet below existing ground surface and 5 feet beyond the proposed structure footprints, shall be overexcavated and stockpiled onsite. The depth of the overexcavation should extend through all loose soil a minimum of 4 feet below finished grade or to competent native soil or rock, if shallower. Areas where new fill will exceed 3 feet in depth the overexcavation can be reduced to 2 feet, including proposed roadways.
- The extent and limits of overexcavation shall be observed and determined by the geotechnical engineer. The fill shall be replaced and compacted using the recommendations presented in the geotechnical report.
- In areas were overexcavation and recompaction is not proposed, DDC is recommended. DDC is a technique that involves using a crane to drop a heavy weight on the ground surface to densify loose soil. Densification occurs by performing repeated, controlled drops of the weight (typically 5-40 tons) at determined locations in a grid pattern.
- The drop weight is anticipated to be composed of an approximately 5-foot by 5-foot by 5-foot concrete block (approximately 18 tons), which would be dropped from a height of 20 to 30 feet. The depth of compaction is based on the soil type, density and moisture content. Based on published empirical calculations, the depth of densification is estimated to be on the order of 10 to 15 feet below the dynamic weight. The drop pattern should consist of a minimum grid spacing of 10 feet. At least two passes with the heavy weight should be performed, followed by a final low-energy contiguous tamping pass to compact the shallow near-surface soils disturbed during the heavy weight passes. Some areas at the project site may require grading or benching to provide an evenly distributed load on the ground surface.
- Once DDC is completed, the site shall be prepared and compacted in accordance with the recommendations included in the geotechnical report.

The implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce this impact to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994, as updated), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

Expansive soils, also known as shrink-swell soils, refer to the potential of soil to expand when wet and contract when dry. Expansive soils were not encountered on the project site during geotechnical investigations (NV5 2020). The project facilities would not be expected to be exposed to expansive soils and no impacts associated with expansive soils would be anticipated with project implementation. Therefore, the soils on the site would not be expected to create substantial risks to life or property and there would be **no impact**.

e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

The project would not include components that would require the use of septic tanks. The proposed project includes the use of an existing liquids tank farm for wastewater storage. The tank farm was recently expanded to store 180,000 gallons of liquid. The volume of liquid in the tank farm is regularly monitored and is pumped from the tanks and trucked to the regional wastewater treatment facility when the tanks near capacity. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

The project site does not contain any unique geologic features and has been extensively disturbed by ongoing solid waste management activities. Any paleontological resources that may have been previously located at the site have likely been substantially disturbed or destroyed by the original site construction and ongoing operations. Therefore, the proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a unique geologic feature or paleontological resource and there would be **no impact**.

3.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VIII. Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Greenhouse gases (GHG) are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. These gases are emitted by both natural processes and human activities. The accumulation of GHG in the atmosphere regulates the earth's temperature. Without natural GHG, the Earth's surface would be approximately 61 degrees Fahrenheit cooler (IPCC 2007). However, scientific studies have determined that the combustion of fossil fuels (coal, petroleum, natural gas, etc.) for human activities, such as electricity production and vehicle use, has elevated the concentration of these gases in the atmosphere beyond the level of naturally occurring concentrations. The increase in atmospheric concentrations of GHG has resulted in more heat being held within the atmosphere, which contributes to global climate change.

Global Warming Potentials (GWPs) are one type of simplified index (based upon radiative properties) that can be used to estimate the potential future impacts of emissions of various gases. GWP is based on a number of factors, including the heat-absorbing ability of each gas relative to that of carbon dioxide, as well as the decay rate of each gas relative to that of carbon dioxide. Common GHG components include water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons, hydro-fluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and ozone.

The NSAQMD has not yet established significance thresholds for GHG emissions from project operations. However, the NSAQMD requires quantification of GHG emissions for decisions-makers and the public to consider (NSAQMD 2016).

DISCUSSION

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

GHG emissions associated with the project would primarily be generated by site preparation (construction equipment and trucks transporting equipment and supplies to the site) and operation-related activities (waste-haul vehicles, on-site equipment, electricity use, and employee travel). The proposed project would generate annual GHG emissions of approximately 942 MT of $CO2_e$ per year from construction and operations. However, due to the increased operational efficiency of the proposed transfer station, substantial vehicle queuing at the site would be reduced and residents who travel to more distant disposal sites after experiencing long waits at the existing

facility may return, reducing overall vehicle miles traveled. With improved operational efficiencies, the change in the total GHG emissions generated from waste disposal activities in the County are expected to be negligible. Also, the inclusion of an organics waste building and compliance with Senate Bill 1383 (Short-lived Climate Pollutants Reduction Act) and Assembly Bill 1826 (Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling) would be expected to reduce GHG emissions when compared to existing organics processing at the site. Thus, the construction and operation of the project would not generate substantial greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may be considered to have a significant impact on the environment. Therefore, this impact would be **less than significant**.

b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

The NSAQMD does not have thresholds of significance for GHGs but encourages that the information be present for decision makers. The County has established a GHG goal of encouraging project applicants (including County departments) to reduce GHG emissions to the extent feasible. As described above, the proposed project would generate annual GHG emissions of approximately 942 MT of $CO2_e$ per year from construction and operations. However, by improving the overall efficiency of waste disposal activities in the County, the project would be expected to result in negligible effects on GHG emissions within the County. Therefore, the project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases and there would be **no impact**.

3.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
IX. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excess noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☒	☐

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The State CEQA Guidelines require that initial studies and environmental impact reports assess whether a project will emit hazardous air emissions or involve the handling of extremely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school (see Sections 21151.2 and 21151.4 of the Public Resources Code; Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines). No schools are located within one-quarter mile of the project site. The nearest school to the project site is the Clear Creek Elementary School, which is located approximately 3.5 miles to the southwest on McCourtney Road.

Safety hazards associated with airports generally are related to construction of tall structures and the creation of wildlife attractants (e.g., wetlands, golf courses, and waste disposal operations) that could interfere with airplane flight paths. The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 21096 of the Public Resources Code) require analysis of airports within 2 nautical miles of a proposed project. No airports are located within 2 nautical miles of the project

site. The nearest airport to the project site is the Alta Sierra Airport, which is located approximately 5 miles to the southeast. The project site is not located within the boundaries of an adopted Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

The Nevada County Office of Emergency Services is responsible for maintaining the County's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). Preparation of the LHMP included a risk assessment to determine the County's vulnerability to hazards, which influenced the development of goals and mitigation actions. Nevada County and its incorporated communities have a variety of systems and procedures established to protect its residents and visitors to plan for, avoid, and respond to a hazard event including those associated with floods and wildfires. This includes Pre-Disaster Public Awareness and Education information, and specific warning and evacuation systems and procedures include information relative to: Warning Systems, Alert Systems, dam protocols, evacuation procedures, and sheltering in place (Foster Morrison 2017).

The severity of wildland fires is influenced primarily by vegetation, topography, and weather (temperature, humidity, and wind). The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has developed a fire hazard severity scale that considers vegetation, climate, and slope to evaluate the level of wildfire hazard. CAL FIRE designates three levels of Fire Hazard Severity Zones (Moderate, High, and Very High) to indicate the severity of fire hazard in a particular geographical area. Fire hazard zoning is used to indicate both the likelihood for a fire (e.g., prevalence of fuels) and the potential for damage (e.g., proximity to residences). The project site is located within a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (CAL FIRE 2020).

DISCUSSION

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

The use, handling, and storage of hazardous materials is regulated by both the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Fed/OSHA) and the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA). Cal/OSHA is responsible for developing and enforcing workplace safety regulations. Both federal and State laws include special provisions/training in safe methods for handling any type of hazardous substance. These strict regulations ensure that potential hazards associated with construction and operational activities do not create a significant hazard to the public.

During project construction, potentially hazardous liquid materials such as treated wood, oil, diesel fuel, gasoline, and hydraulic fluid would be used on the site in construction equipment. These substances are commonly used during construction projects and the risk of a spill that would create a significant hazard to the public or environment would be negligible due to the small quantities of hazardous substances used and the relatively short duration of construction. However, a release of hazardous substances from construction equipment due to a leak or spill could adversely affect the environment. Although unlikely, this would be considered a **potentially significant impact**.

Hazardous materials would continue to be used in site operations following construction. However, the use of these materials would not differ from current operations and would not represent a significant hazard to site personnel or the public. Therefore, **no impact** associated with the use of hazardous materials during site operations would be anticipated.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1

Prior to initiating construction of the proposed project, the Contractor shall submit a written safety program to Nevada County. This plan shall include (at a minimum):

- A fire or medical emergency response access plan.
- A police emergency response access plan.
- An access control plan to its staging and equipment storage areas.
- The name and contact information for the Safety Director/Manager responsible for managing the safety, health and environmental risk factors for the Contractor.
- Typical tailgate safety meeting agenda and frequency.
- Compliance or exceedance of applicable OSHA requirements including requiring all employees working in dangerous or noisy environments to wear personal protective equipment including noise protection gear.
- New hire safety orientation training.
- Maintenance procedures to be implemented including dust mitigation (i.e., indoor misters and water trucks) and the use of sweepers after project construction is complete.
- Any applicable job specific requirements or permits.
- If requested, Contractor shall provide safety training records for employees working on the project.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2

Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan (HMCP): The contractor shall prepare and submit to the County a contingency plan for handling hazardous materials, whether found or introduced on site during construction. The plan shall include construction measures as specified in local, state, and federal regulations for hazardous materials and removal of on-site debris. The plan must include the following measures at a minimum:

- If contaminated soils or other hazardous materials are encountered during any soil moving operation during construction (e.g. trenching, excavation, grading), construction shall be halted and the HMCP implemented.
- Instruct workers on recognition and reporting of materials that may be hazardous.
- Minimize delays by continuing performance of the work in areas not affected by hazardous materials operations.
- Identify and contact subcontractors and licensed personnel qualified to undertake storage, removal, transportation, disposal, and other remedial work required by, and in accordance with, laws and regulations.
- File requests for adjustments to contract time and contract price due to the finding of hazardous materials in the work site in accordance with conditions of the contract.

The implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce this impact to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Hazardous Materials Handling

Similar to the analysis of question a) above, any handling, transporting, use, or disposal of hazardous or potentially hazardous materials would be required to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local agencies and regulations. Both short-term construction and long-term operation of the project would be required to adhere to the policies and programs set forth by applicable regulatory agencies. For example, during site operations, any household hazardous waste materials delivered to the site by consumers would be received and processed at the existing household hazardous waste facility consistent with existing operational procedures. In addition, a landfill gas monitoring system would be installed for any enclosed structures within 1,000 feet of the closed landfill to ensure dangerous accumulations of landfill gas do not occur. The enclosed structured to be constructed as a part of the proposed improvements include the enclosed rooms adjacent to the new transfer station (mechanical, electrical, fire suppression and restrooms) but does not include the transfer station building because it is not enclosed. This compliance, along with the limited use of hazardous materials during construction, would minimize the potential for the accidental release of hazardous materials into the environment. However, a release of hazardous substances from construction equipment due to a leak or spill could adversely affect the environment and would be considered a **potentially significant impact**.

The implementation of Mitigation Measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 would minimize this impact by requiring that safety training be conducted during project construction; by requiring the development of emergency response plans; by identifying a Safety Director/Manager responsible for managing the safety, health and environmental risk factors for the contractor; and by requiring the preparation of a HMCP. With the implementation of these mitigation measures, this impact would be **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

Naturally Occurring Asbestos Minerals

Naturally occurring asbestos minerals, including ultramafic rock and serpentinite, can create a hazard for workers during construction activities. However, during the geotechnical investigation conducted for the proposed project, no naturally occurring asbestos minerals were encountered. The project construction activities would not be expected to expose site workers or the public to these minerals and there would be **no impact**.

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

The project site is not located within ¼ mile of an existing or proposed school. Therefore, **no impact** would be anticipated with project implementation.

d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

According to the California Department of Toxic Substances Control Envirostor website (DTSC 2020), two contaminated sites are located within approximately 1.5 miles of the site. The first is the McCourtney Road Landfill, which is located adjacent and directly south of the existing transfer station. The County has implemented a corrective action program at the landfill to address the detection of volatile organic compounds in groundwater monitoring wells, which indicate a release of landfill gas from the closed landfill. In addition, the County recently implemented additional corrective actions to improve the effectiveness of the landfill's corrective action program. These actions include installing additional landfill gas extraction wells at the site, conducting more frequent landfill gas probe monitoring, evaluating the separation of groundwater from specific subdrain improvements, and conducting more frequent groundwater monitoring. Based on investigations conducted in 2019, the ongoing corrective action program continues to effectively control the release of landfill gas and to protect water quality (NV5 2019).

The other contaminated site is the Grass Valley Burn Dump, which is located approximately 1.5 miles west of the project site. This historic open burn dump included soils contaminated with arsenic, lead, nickel and zinc. The contaminated soils were cleaned up in 2012 and no further action is necessary at this site (DTSC 2020).

Although the proposed project is located directly adjacent to a site that has been identified on a list of hazardous materials sites, the County has implemented a corrective action program for the closed landfill that is intended to control the release of landfill gas. Because the Grass Valley Burn Dump is located approximately 1.5 miles from the site and was cleaned up in 2012, it would have no effect on the project site. Therefore, the project would not be expected to be adversely affected by listed hazardous materials sites and **no impact** would occur.

e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excess noise for people residing or working in the project area?

The nearest public airport to the project site is the Alta Sierra Airport, which is located approximately 5 miles to the southeast. The project site is not located within the boundaries of the Alta Sierra Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

The project site can be accessed from both the north and the south via McCourtney Road and is located directly adjacent to Nevada County Consolidated Fire District Station No. 92 (located at 14811 McCourtney Road). Vehicles evacuating from the area can access State Routes 20 and 49 to the north via McCourtney Road, State Route 20 to the west via McCourtney Road and Indian Valley Road, and State Route 49 to the southeast via McCourtney Road and Lime Kiln Road. The County considers State Routes 20 and 49 to be primary countywide evacuation routes. Minor arterials and major collector routes, such as McCourtney Road, are considered secondary evacuation routes that supplement the primary evacuation routes and provide egress from local neighborhoods and communities (Foster Morrison 2017).

The project would substantially improve the ability to queue waste collection vehicles on the site during peak waste acceptance periods when compared to current conditions. This change substantially reduces the potential for vehicle queues to back up onto Wolf Mountain Road and McCourtney Road. Vehicles backed up on these roadways could cause delays for emergency vehicles accessing residences in the local area or could delay evacuations. Because the proposed project would be expected to reduce vehicle backups on the local roadway network and would not impair emergency response or emergency evacuation plans, there would be **no impact**.

g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?

The project site is located in an area that is designated as a High fire hazard severity zone. However, the proposed project would not include any residents or permanent occupants and is located directly adjacent to the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District Station No. 92. The project includes expanding the paved area of the site to accommodate expanded waste management operations. By increasing paved surfaces on the site, the project reduces the site's wildland interface and the potential for the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire. Also, the proposed internal roadway improvements would improve internal circulation on the site, which would also improve the ability for emergency vehicles to access the entire site. Finally, by enclosing the majority of the waste tipping operations, the project would reduce the risk of hot loads (i.e., waste loads containing burning materials) causing a wildfire at the site because the materials would be dumped onto a concrete floor within the new transfer station building. The material would not be exposed to winds that could blow burning debris into the chaparral vegetation surrounding the site. Also, fire suppression would be conducted within the transfer station using heavy equipment and fire extinguishers, as appropriate. Thus, project implementation would not substantially increase the risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. This impact would be **less than significant**.

3.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
X. Hydrology and Water Quality. Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
i) Result in substantial on- or offsite erosion or siltation;	☐	☒	☐	☐
ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The proposed project site is located within the northern portion of the Sacramento River Hydrological Region, as defined by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). The Sacramento River Hydrological Region covers approximately 17.4 million acres (27,200 square miles). Annual precipitation in the project vicinity averages 55 inches, the vast majority of which falls from November through April. The summers are hot, arid, and mostly clear and the winters are long, cold, wet, and partly cloudy. Over the course of the year, the temperature typically varies from 39°F to 88°F and is rarely below 32°F or above 95°F.

Stormwater runoff pollutants vary with land use, topography, and the amount of impervious surface, as well as the amount and frequency of rainfall and irrigation practices. Runoff in developed areas typically contains oil, grease, litter, and metals accumulated in streets, driveways, parking lots, and rooftops, as well as pesticides, herbicides,

particulate matter, nutrients, animal waste, and other oxygen-demanding substances from landscaped areas. The highest pollutant concentrations usually occur at the beginning of the wet season during the "first flush."

While conducting the geotechnical investigation, shallow groundwater was not detected. However, subsurface seepage was detected in several exploratory trenches and borings at depths ranging from 3 to 12 feet below ground surface. Seepage may be encountered in excavations, which reveals the soil/weathered rock transition, particularly during or after the rainy season. In the foothills, rainwater typically percolates through the porous surface materials and migrates downslope in the form of seepage at the interface of the surface materials and bedrock, and through fractures in the bedrock. Fluctuation in the groundwater level typically occurs because of a variation in rainfall intensity, duration, and other factors such as flooding and periodic irrigation (NV5 2020).

DISCUSSION

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

Construction of the proposed project would include grading activities that would be expected to expose the site's soils to wind and water erosion. This erosion could transport sediments into local drainages. Also, accidental spills of fluids or fuels from construction vehicles and equipment, or miscellaneous construction materials and debris, could be mobilized and transported off-site in overland flow. These contaminant sources could degrade the water quality of receiving water bodies, potentially degrading surface water quality. This impact would be considered **potentially significant**.

Mitigation Measure HYD-1

To avoid adversely affecting the water quality of local waterways, the following mitigation measures shall be implemented prior to and during construction:

- A SWPPP shall be prepared for the proposed project with associated best managements practices (BMPs), consistent with Nevada County standards. The SWPPP shall be designed to protect water quality pursuant to the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater permit for construction activity (Order 99-08-DWQ, as amended). The SWPPP would identify and specify:
  - the use of erosion and sediment-control BMPs, including construction techniques that will reduce the potential for erosion, as well as other measures to be implemented during construction;
  - the means of waste disposal;
  - the implementation of approved local plans, non-stormwater-management controls, permanent post-construction BMPs, and inspection and maintenance responsibilities;
  - the pollutants that are likely to be used during construction that could be present in stormwater drainage and non-stormwater discharges, and other types of materials used for equipment operation;
  - spill prevention and contingency measures, including measures to prevent or clean up spills of hazardous waste and of hazardous materials used for equipment operation, and emergency procedures for responding to spills;

- personnel training requirements and procedures that will be used to ensure that workers are aware of permit requirements and proper installation methods for BMPs specified in the SWPPP; and
- The appropriate personnel responsible for supervisory duties related to implementation of the SWPPP.

- Where applicable, BMPs identified in the SWPPP shall be in place throughout all site work and construction. BMPs may include such measures as the following:
  - Implementing temporary erosion-control measures in disturbed areas to minimize discharge of sediment into nearby drainage conveyances. These measures may include silt fences, staked straw bales or wattles, sediment/silt basins and traps, geofabric, and sandbag dikes.
- All construction contractors shall retain a copy of the approved SWPPP on the construction site. The SWPPP shall be submitted to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) pursuant to NPDES requirements, and completed and implemented before the start of construction activities.

The implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce this impact to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

The proposed project would not include the use of groundwater resources and would have no effect on groundwater supplies. Temporary dewatering activities may be necessary if perched groundwater is encountered during excavation activities. However, the dewatering activities would not be expected to affect long-term groundwater supplies due to the relatively high levels of precipitation the area receives annually and the associated groundwater recharge. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

Construction of the proposed project would include the excavation of soil that due to exposure to wind and water erosion, could be transported into local drainages. This would be considered a **potentially significant impact** during construction activities. The implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-1 would minimize this impact by requiring the contractor to develop and implement a SWPPP and applicable BMPs, which would substantially reduce offsite sediment transport and associated water quality degradation. With the implementation of these mitigation measures, this impact would be **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?

Implementation of the proposed project would increase the area of impervious surfaces on the project site, which would increase the rate and/or amount of surface runoff. The project would also alter the site's existing drainage

pattern by grading the site to accommodate building and roadway construction. However, the proposed project includes the installation of storm water collection infrastructure that would direct flows from the site into the existing detention basin located northeast of the project site. This detention basin currently captures and retains peak storm water runoff from the project site and would continue to capture and retain peak storm water runoff following project construction. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in flooding on- or offsite and this impact would be **less than significant**.

iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or?

As discussed in response to question (c)(ii) above, the proposed project includes the installation of storm water collection infrastructure that would direct flows from the site into the existing detention basin located northeast of the project site. This detention basin is expected to have sufficient capacity to accommodate the increased peak storm water flows from the developed portion of the project site. Therefore, the project would not create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems. In addition, the project would be required to comply with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board's permitting requirements for industrial facilities. Compliance with these requirements would maintain that the proposed project would not provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff and this impact would be **less than significant**.

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

The project site is not located within the flood plain and is not subject to flood flows. Therefore, the proposed project would not impede or redirect flood flows. There would be **no impact**.

d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

The project site is not located in a flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zone. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

Due to the proposed project's limited area of impact, it would not be expected to conflict with or obstruct implementation of the State's water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan for the area. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

3.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XI. Land Use and Planning. Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Nevada County General Plan identifies the project site's land use designation as Public (PUB), which is intended to provide for land in public or quasi-public ownership, including cemeteries, schools and other public and quasi-public buildings and uses in locations which are necessary to provide services to Community Regions and Rural Regions (Nevada County 2014). The Nevada County Zoning District Maps identify the zoning designation for the project site as Public (P). According to the Nevada County Zoning Ordinance, the P zoning district provides for areas occupied by Federal, State and local government agencies, or by a private entity under contract, agreement or franchise with a governmental agency if the use is a service or function normally provided by the agency entering into a contract or agreement, or issuing a franchise (Nevada County 2020).

DISCUSSION

a) Physically divide an established community?

The project site has been developed as a waste management facility. The renovation of this facility would occur entirely within the existing property boundaries. Therefore, it would not physically divide an established community and there would be **no impact**.

b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

The proposed project would be developed consistent with the existing site uses and would not conflict with the County's "PUB" land use designation or "P" zoning designation for the site. Therefore, the project would have no adverse effect on applicable land use plans, policies or regulations and there would be **no impact**.

3.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XII. Mineral Resources. Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Mineral resources, particularly gold, have played a major role in the history of Nevada County. Other metals produced in the County include silver, copper, lead, zinc, chromite and small amounts of tungsten and manganese. Industrial minerals include barite, quartz for silicon production, and small amounts of limestone, asbestos, clay, and mineral paint. Also, substantial deposits of sand, gravel, and rock types suitable for construction aggregate are located throughout the County (HBA 1991).

The project site is not located in an area that has been designated by the State Geologist as a Mineral Resource Zone. Also, no active quarried or mining sites are known to exist in or near the project site (HBA 1991).

DISCUSSION

a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

The proposed project would include the construction of improvements at an operating transfer station and would not result in the loss of known mineral resources of value to the region or residents of the state. The project site is not designated as a Mineral Resource Zone. Therefore, no adverse effect on mineral resources would be anticipated and there would be **no impact**.

b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?

The project site has not been designated as a locally important mineral resource recovery site. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on locally important mineral resource recovery sites. There would be **no impact**.

3.13 NOISE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XIII. Noise. Would the project result in:				
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Noise is generally defined as sound that is loud, disagreeable, unexpected, or unwanted. Sound is mechanical energy transmitted in the form of a wave because of a disturbance or vibration, and as any pressure variation in air that the human ear can detect.

Because of the ability of the human ear to detect a wide range of sound-pressure fluctuations, sound-pressure levels are expressed in logarithmic units called decibels (dB) to avoid a very large and awkward range in numbers. The sound-pressure level in decibels is calculated by taking the log of the ratio between the actual sound pressure and the reference sound pressure squared. The reference sound pressure is considered the absolute hearing threshold (California Department of Transportation 1998). Use of this logarithmic scale reveals that the total sound from two individual 65-dBA sources is 68 dBA, not 130 dBA (i.e., doubling the source strength increases the sound pressure by 3 dBA).

Vibration is the periodic oscillation of a medium or object. The rumbling sound caused by the vibration of room surfaces is called structure borne noise. Sources of groundborne vibrations include natural phenomena (e.g., earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, sea waves, landslides) or human-made causes (e.g., explosions, machinery, traffic, trains, construction equipment). Vibration sources may be continuous, such as factory machinery, or transient, such as explosions. As is the case with airborne sound, groundborne vibrations may be described by amplitude and frequency.

Vibration amplitudes are usually expressed in peak particle velocity (PPV) or root mean squared (RMS), as in RMS vibration velocity. The PPV and RMS velocity are normally described in inches per second (in/sec). PPV is defined as the maximum instantaneous positive or negative peak of a vibration signal. PPV is often used in monitoring of blasting vibration because it is related to the stresses that are experienced by buildings (FTA 2006,

Caltrans 2002). Caltrans has established a recommended standard for vibration levels of 0.2 inches per second PPV (Caltrans 2002).

Construction vibrations can be transient, random, or continuous. Transient construction vibrations are generated by blasting, impact pile driving, and wrecking balls. Continuous vibrations result from vibratory pile drivers, large pumps, and compressors. Random vibration can result from jackhammers, pavement breakers, and heavy construction equipment.

Nevada County

The Noise Element of the Nevada County General Plan (1996) establishes maximum allowable exterior noise levels for various land use categories in terms of the average-hourly (L_{eq}) and maximum intermittent (L_{max}) noise descriptors. Maximum allowable noise standards are identified for daytime (7 a.m. – 7 p.m.), evening (7 p.m. – 10 p.m.), and nighttime (10 p.m. – 7 a.m.) periods. The County's noise standards, which are typically applied to non-transportation noise sources, are summarized by land use. For lands with a Public (P) land use designation, average noise level standards, or L_{eq}, for the daytime, evening and nighttime are 55, 50 and 45, respectively. The maximum noise level standards, or L_{max}, for the daytime, evening and nighttime are 75, 65 and 55, respectively. These noise standards are also identified in the Nevada County Land Use Development Code, Chapter 11, Zoning Regulations, Section L-II, 4.1.7, Noise, (2010). Construction activities are exempt from the County's noise standards.

DISCUSSION

a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

Implementation of the proposed project would include excavation, construction of foundations, utility installation, and hauling and deposition of construction debris. The project is estimated to require approximately two construction seasons to complete. All construction activities would typically be conducted between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. standard time.

Construction activities typically include a variety of construction equipment including backhoes, excavators, loaders, dump trucks, and compaction equipment. As indicated in Table 7, operational noise levels associated with individual equipment would generate typical noise levels ranging from 76 to 88 dBA at a distance of 50 feet.

Combined on-site construction equipment associated with the proposed project would be expected to generate collective noise levels up to 89 dB L_{eq} at 50 feet during operations involving the loudest equipment. Typical operating cycles for these types of construction equipment involve limited periods of full power operation followed by periods of lower power settings.

Noise-sensitive receptors in the vicinity are the residences located in closest proximity to the site. Individual residents would experience construction noise for the duration of the two construction period with noise levels varying depending upon the activities that are occurring.

The occurrence of elevated construction noise during noise-sensitive evening and nighttime hours would be considered a nuisance for local residents due to the potential for sleep disruption. However, most residents located in developed communities recognize that construction activities are inevitable from time to time and that short-term daytime noise impacts associated with construction activities are expected on occasion. This fact is reflected in the Nevada County Noise Ordinance, which consider noise levels associated with construction activities to be exempt from the noise thresholds. In addition, because construction activities are expected to occur between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, the noise associated with the proposed construction activities would not be expected to generate a substantial temporary increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies. For these reasons, the project's construction noise impacts would be considered **less than significant**.

Table 7
Construction Equipment Noise Emission Levels

Equipment Type	Typical Noise Level (dB) @ 50 feet
Air Compressor	81
Backhoe	85
Compactor	82
Concrete Pump	82
Concrete Breaker	82
Truck Crane	88
Dozer	87
Generator	78
Grader	85
Front-end Loader	84
Asphalt Paver	88
Pneumatic Tools	85
Water Pump	76
Power Hand Saw	78
Power Shovel	82
Trucks	88

*All equipment fitted with properly maintained and operational noise control device, per manufacturer specifications.

Source: Bolt, Beranek and Newman, FTA 2006.

CONSTRUCTION-GENERATED TRAFFIC

Implementation of the proposed project would result in an increase of traffic volumes due to the addition of construction-generated traffic. Construction-generated traffic volumes would be dependent on material requirements and material availability. Construction related traffic would be expected to include the use of dump

trucks, haul trucks, and various deliveries of material and equipment occurring throughout the construction period and well as construction worker commuting to and from the site.

Increases in construction traffic attributable to the project would result in a negligible and imperceptible increase in roadway noise. Typically, traffic volumes have to double before the associated increase in noise levels is noticeable along roadways. As a result, project generated construction traffic noise levels would be **less than significant**.

LONG-TERM OPERATIONAL NOISE

To estimate the operational noise levels that would be expected with a large, enclosed transfer station, noise measurement data from an existing transfer station in the region was used. The Sacramento Recycling and Transfer Station, located at 8491 Fruitridge Road in the southern area of the City of Sacramento, includes operations similar to the proposed project. Noise level measurements of facility operations and background noise levels were conducted at each of the four property lines of the existing Sacramento Recycling and Transfer Station. The noise measurement locations were selected to represent maximum noise exposure for each of the property lines. In addition, maximum noise levels due to on-site waste disposal trucks were also collected (EDAW/AECOM May 2009).

The equipment used for the measurements included a Larson Davis Laboratories (LDL) Model 820 precision integrating sound level meter. The equipment was calibrated before each test using an LDL Model CAL200 acoustical calibrator to ensure accuracy of the measurements (EDAW/AECOM May 2009).

Additional noise measurements of waste disposal and transfer truck pass-bys were also conducted. The measured maximum noise levels due to truck pass-bys was 82.3 dBA at a distance of 15 feet. Therefore, the calculated maximum noise level due to truck pass-bys at a reference distance of 50 feet is approximately 72 dBA (EDAW/AECOM May 2009).

The noise level measurement data from the existing Sacramento Recycling and Transfer Station identified a peak noise level associated with truck traffic and loading of refuse of 67 dBA L_{eq} at 475 feet. This represented the worst case noise level measured at the site and was associated with truck traffic and the loading of refuse. Applying this noise rate to the new transfer station and assuming a standard noise attenuation rate of 6 dBA per doubling of distance from the source to the receptor, exterior noise levels at the nearest existing residence, which is approximately 1,300 feet to the west of the proposed new transfer station, could be as high as 56 dBA L_{eq}. However, this assumes no topographic noise attenuation. Because the residence, which is located directly west of the McCourtney Road/Wolf Mountain Road intersection, would not have a direct line of sight to the new transfer station building, the intervening topography would attenuate, or reduce, the noise levels. The operational noise levels experienced at the nearest residences are expected to be attenuated by approximately 8 dBA associated with the topographic attenuation effects, resulting in a net noise level at the nearest residences of approximately 48 dBA L_{eq}. This noise level would not exceed the County's daytime noise threshold of 55 dBA L_{eq}. The proposed project would include other noise generating uses at the site, such as the repurposing of the PRA as an organics building. However, these proposed uses would not differ substantially from the current noise-generating operations on the site and would not be expected to add substantially to the ambient noise environment.

The project also includes expanding the facility's operating hours, which would result in the generation of noise at the site earlier in the morning and later in the afternoon. However, the expanded operating hours would not occur outside of the designated "daytime" hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. identified in the Noise Element of the Nevada County General Plan. Therefore, the expansion of the facility's operating hours would not result in the proposed project generating noise during the more sensitive evening (7 p.m. – 10 p.m.) and nighttime (10 p.m. – 7 a.m.) periods. Because the operational noise levels are not estimated to exceed the Noise Element's maximum daytime exterior noise level threshold and operational activities are not anticipated to occur during evening or nighttime hours when the County's noise thresholds are lower, this impact would be considered **less than significant**.

b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

BLASTING

The proposed project could require blasting activities if hard rock areas cannot be easily excavated with typical construction equipment. Blasting activities have the potential to result in varying degrees of temporary groundborne vibration. Vibration generated by blasting activities spreads through the ground and diminishes in magnitude with increases in distance. Noise sources associated with blasting consist of rock drills and the shot itself. The noise levels generated by the rock drills are dependent on drill type but are predicted to be generally similar to the noise levels generated by construction equipment, as described in Table 7. The number, frequency, and duration of shots required during project construction cannot be determined until large rocks are encountered in the field and an on-site blasting expert determines the most effective means of clearing the rock.

Noise generated by blasting shots is more variable, depending on the amount of charge material used, number of holes, depth of those holes, timing delays, and other factors. Misconceptions regarding what a blast looks and sounds like are common, due in part to the types of explosions frequently seen in movies and other mass media entertainment sources. In reality, blasting shots are designed to transfer the energy of the shot into the ground, rather than venting it into the atmosphere with an accompanying spectacle of flying rocks and debris.

With respect to blast-induced vibration, the type, sizes, number, depth and timing delay sequence of the charges, as well as the geology of the surrounding area, are variables that would affect the transmission of vibration beyond the site of the blasting shot. Because of the controlled nature of any required blasting, charges required would likely be relatively small and can be controlled by a blasting expert to minimize vibration and noise. However, if blasting occurs within close proximity to residences, the associated noise and vibrations could be perceived as being excessive by residents. This would be considered a **potentially significant impact.**

Mitigation Measure NOI-1

To avoid adversely affecting local residents during blasting activities, the following mitigation measures shall be implemented during any blasting activities:

- If blasting activities are necessary for site preparation, the contractor shall conduct the blasting activities in compliance with state and local regulations. The contractor shall obtain a blasting permit from Nevada County prior to commencing any on-site blasting activities. The permit application shall include a description of the work to be accomplished and a statement of the necessity for blasting, as opposed to other methods, and safety measures to be implemented such as blast blankets. The contractor shall

coordinate any blasting activities with Police and Fire Departments to facilitate proper site access and traffic control, and public notification including nearby residents and businesses, as determined appropriate by police and fire departments. Blasting specifications and plans shall include a schedule that outlines the time frame in which blasting will occur in order to limit noise and traffic inconvenience. In addition, an on-site blasting expert shall be retained by the site contractor to ensure that the blasting activities, if necessary, result in the minimum offsite noise and vibration levels (i.e., less than 0.2 inches per second PPV).

The implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce vibration related to the project's short-term construction blasting and this impact would be considered **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

DEEP DYNAMIC COMPACTION

During the geotechnical investigation for the proposed project, undocumented heterogeneous fill was encountered at depths exceeding 15 feet bgs in some of the exploratory trenches and borings. Heterogeneous fills of unknown origin, quality and method of placement can settle and/or heave erratically under the load of new fills, structures, slabs, and pavements. Footings, slabs, and pavements supported on heterogeneous fill could also crack as a result of such erratic movements. To ensure these fills do not undermine the integrity of building foundations, the geotechnical report recommended overexcavation and recompaction of the materials prior to construction foundations. However, in areas where overexcavation and recompaction are not feasible, the use of deep dynamic compaction has been recommended. DDC is a technique that involves using a crane to drop a heavy weight on the ground surface to densify loose soil. Densification occurs by performing repeated, controlled drops of the weight (typically 5-40 tons) at determined locations in a grid pattern. The use of DDC would be expected to produce ground vibrations caused by the dropped weight. Ground vibrations can potentially cause damage to adjacent structures and disturb nearby residences. However, ground vibrations attenuate with distance from the point of impact. In "Ground Vibrations during Dynamic Compaction" (Mayne, 1985), peak particle velocities (PPVs) produced from 12 compaction sites, using weights varying from 5 to 40 tons and drop heights of 5 and 100 feet, were compared at varying distances from the impacts. Nearby residences are located within approximately 1,300 feet of the project site. If we conservatively used a weight of 40 tons and a drop height of 50 feet, the estimated PPV, based on the above equation, produced from dropping the weight would be approximately 0.03 inches per second (in/sec).

Based on Caltrans recommended standard for vibration levels of 0.2 inches per second PPV (Caltrans 2002), the estimated 0.03 in/sec produced from the DDC anticipated at the project site would be considered a **less than significant** impact.

c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

The project site is not located within two miles of an airport land use plan or in the vicinity of a private airport. The proposed project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels associated with private airstrip operations. There would be **no impact**.

3.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XIV. Population and Housing. Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project site is located within a rural area of western Nevada County that includes scattered low-density residential land uses around its perimeter. The project site includes an operating solid waste transfer station and does not include any housing.

DISCUSSION

a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

The proposed project does not involve the construction of any components (i.e. roads, residential homes) that would induce population growth. The proposed project includes constructing improvements to an existing transfer station to improve operational efficiency. The transfer station improvement would not induce growth beyond what has been planned for under the adopted Nevada County General Plan. There would be **no impact** on population growth in the area.

b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

The proposed project would not result in the demolition of any homes and does not include any components that would result in the displacement of any homes or create the need for replacement housing. There would be **no impact**.

3.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XV. Public Services. Would the project:				
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Public Utilities include fire and police protection, schools, parks, and other public facilities. Fire protection services are provided to the project area by the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District (NCCFD). NCCFD is a full-service emergency response agency. NCCFD is a full-time paid staff department covering 143 square miles of residential, commercial, industrial, and rural areas, through five service areas and 10 stations (NCCFD 2020). The closest fire station to the site is the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District Station No. 92 located at 14811 McCourtney Road, which is directly adjacent to the project site.

Law enforcement services for the project area are provided by the Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO). Services include patrol, dispatch, investigations, search and rescue, boat patrol, correctional facilities, coroner, and court security services. The NCSO's main office is located at 950 Maidu Avenue (Eric Rood Administration Center) in Nevada City.

The project area is located within the Clear Creek School District and the Nevada Joint Unified High School District. Clear Creek Elementary School is located approximately 3.5 miles southwest of the project site on McCourtney Road.

Nevada County does not directly provide parks or recreational facilities. Instead, the County coordinates with other government and nongovernmental entities that own, plan, build, and manage recreation resources in the county. In addition, regional recreational facilities located throughout the county are provided by the Nevada Irrigation District, California Department of Parks and Recreation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, and numerous nonprofit organizations (Michael Baker International 2016).

DISCUSSION

a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services listed above:

The proposed project would not directly or indirectly increase the population within the project area. The proposed project would increase the size of the transfer station operations but would be required to implement all of the required fire protection measures including in the County's building code. The project would not include any components that would require additional fire protection facilities be constructed by NCCFD. The project area would continue to be served by the NCSO and project implementation would not require an increase in police protection services or the construction of additional police facilities. The proposed project does not include any uses that would increase the demands on local schools or local park facilities. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities in Nevada County. There would be **no impact**.

3.16 RECREATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XVI. Recreation. Would the project:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project site includes an active solid waste transfer station and does not include any recreational uses, facilities or resources. In addition, no recreational facilities are located within close proximity to the project site.

DISCUSSION

a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

The project does not include any components that would directly result in an increased use of neighborhood/regional parks or recreational facilities in the local area. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to increase the use of parks such that substantial physical deterioration would occur. **No impact** would occur.

b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

The project would not include any recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. As described above, the proposed project would not be expected to increase the use of recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration would occur and **no impact** would be expected.

3.17 TRANSPORTATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XVII. Transportation. Would the project:				
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b), which pertains to vehicle miles travelled?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Senate Bill 743, passed in 2013, required the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop new CEQA guidelines that address traffic metrics under CEQA. As stated in the Legislation, upon adoption of the new guidelines, "automobile delay, as described solely by level of service or similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion shall not be considered a significant impact on the environment pursuant to this division, except in locations specifically identified in the guidelines, if any. "OPR proposed, and the California Natural Resources Agency certified and adopted, changes to the CEQA Guidelines that identify vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the most appropriate metric to evaluate a project's transportation impacts. With the California Natural Resources Agency's certification and adoption of the changes to the CEQA Guidelines, automobile delay, as measured by "level of service" and other similar metrics, generally no longer constitutes a significant environmental effect under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21099, subd. (b)(3)).

As described in CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3(b)(1), projects that decrease vehicle miles traveled in the project area compared to existing conditions should be presumed to have a less-than-significant transportation impact.

Regional access to the project area is provided by State Route 20 to the north and State Route 49 to the east. Local access is provided by McCourtney Road and Wolf Mountain Road. The project site can be accessed from both the north and the south via McCourtney Road, which connects with Wolf Mountain Road and the project entrance. Vehicles can access State Routes 20 and 49 to the north via McCourtney Road, State Route 20 to the west via McCourtney Road and Indian Valley Road, and State Route 49 to the southeast via McCourtney Road and Lime Kiln Road.

DISCUSSION

a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?

Construction Traffic

Project construction activities would generate new vehicle trips on the local roadway network associated with equipment and materials hauling to and from the project site, construction worker transportation to and from the site, and the hauling of equipment and materials within the project area. Construction related traffic would be expected to include the use of dump trucks, haul trucks, and various deliveries of material and equipment occurring throughout the construction period. These trips would represent a minor and temporary increase in traffic volumes on McCourtney Road and Wolf Mountain Road and other local roads in the project vicinity. This temporary increase in vehicle traffic during the construction period would not be expected to conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

Entrance Backups

The County performed traffic counts at the MRTS in February 2016 for five consecutive days when the MRTS was open to the public and observed the total number of vehicles using the site each day ranged from 673 to 772. Although no specific traffic counts were performed in 2019, the data shows the entrance traffic arrival rates for weekends throughout the summer months to be in the 700 vehicles per day range (HDR 2020).

Based on 2019 data, nearly 1,100 vehicles used the site during the peak day, which was Sunday, July 7, 2019. During the busiest hour of that day, the total peak hour arrival rate was approximately 125 vehicles. This includes a peak rate of nearly 900 vehicles per day, and 100 vehicles per peak hour for users that cross the entrance scale (self-haul refuse, green, C&D, commercial, loadout). The peak rate for vehicles at the recycling loop was 93 vehicles per day, with an estimated 13 vehicles per hour during the peak hour. The peak rate at the HHW drop off area reached 120 vehicles per day in 2019 (HDR 2020).

Based on conservative estimates for interaction times at the scales, modeling showed that backups currently extend past the designated queuing areas for both the inbound and outbound scales during peak times (HDR 2020). County staff confirmed this was representative of actual conditions. On busy weekend days in particular, the high number of self-haul vehicles using the facility can sometimes result in backups onto Wolf Mountain Road and even all the way onto McCourtney road on rare occasions, interfering with traffic flows (HDR 2020).

In addition to traffic backups caused by the single scale house, the peak traffic model also shows backups at the existing PRA unloading area for self-haul vehicles due to the limited amount of unloading spaces at the existing PRA. Self-haul vehicles in the queue before unloading at the PRA line up around the east side of the PRA. During peak times the queue can interfere with areas where commercial refuse vehicles need to cross to the south side of the PRA and with traffic trying to get to the green waste and C&D areas or to the outbound scale.

Based on a review of population projections from Caltrans, the population of Nevada County was 98,211 in 2015 and is projected to grow to 100,657 in 2040 (2.5% total, averaging 0.1% growth per year) (Caltrans 2019).

The Caltrans estimates were also compared to the recommended regional growth projections for population from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), whose members include El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba Counties as well as the 22 cities within those counties. SACOG recommended a population growth rate of 1.28% annually from 2010 to 2035 for the 2016 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) update (SACOG Board of Directors 2020). For the 2020 MTP/SCS Update, this was revised to recommend an average annual population growth rate of 0.95% for 2016 to 2040 (HDR 2020).

The new transfer station and new entrance and scale facilities are expected to be able to accommodate an estimated 50% increase in use, both in materials processed and in traffic on site. Using the highest population growth estimate discussed above (1.28% annually), the new facility would run into size limitations in just under 40 years. If the community grows at a lower growth rate, the facility capacity could be seen as being extended to a longer period of time. Therefore, project implementation would be expected to eliminate the vehicle backups that can extend onto Wolf Mountain and McCourtney Roads for the foreseeable future.

Travel Delay

The completed project may attract customers who are currently traveling to more distant facilities due to the elimination of the long delays that can be experienced at the current facility. These returning customers would increase the vehicle traffic on local roadways accessing the site including McCourtney Road and Wolf Mountain Road. In addition, the project has been designed to accommodate growth in the waste stream within the local service area, as described above. As growth in the area occurs, more vehicles would be expected to travel to the site, increasing vehicle trips on these roadways. Increased vehicle trips have the potential to increase travel delay. However, with the California Natural Resources Agency's certification and adoption of the changes to the CEQA Guidelines mandated by Senate Bill 743, automobile delay no longer constitutes a significant environmental effect under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21099, subd. (b)(3)). Therefore, the proposed project would not result in significant travel delay impacts on local roadways accessing the site and would not be expected to conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system.

Although the number of vehicles accessing the site is expected to increase in the future consistent with population growth in the County, this increase in vehicle trips would not be expected to have an adverse effect on local transit service due to the limited service in the local area. Also, the rural roadways in the project vicinity may include some bicycle and pedestrian use. However, these uses are expected to be limited due to the narrow shoulders, lack of sidewalks and bicycle lanes, and relatively short site distances along the local roadways. The project would not include any uses that would alter the ability for cyclists or pedestrians to use the local roadway network. The proposed project would not be expected to conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Therefore, this impact would be **less than significant**.

b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b), which pertains to vehicle miles travelled?

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) applies to land use and transportation projects that would be expected to increase vehicle miles driven during their operations. For construction activities, CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b)(3) allows a qualitative analysis to be conducted. The proposed project would result in a temporary

increase in vehicle miles traveled during construction due to worker trips to the site, the delivery of materials, and trips generated by construction vehicles on the site. However, the temporary increase in vehicle mileage travelled during construction would not be expected to increase vehicle miles travelled over the long term.

Following project construction, the facility's waste handling capacity would increase. However, due to the increased operational efficiency of the proposed facilities, substantial vehicle queuing at the site would be reduced and residents who travel to more distant disposal sites after experiencing long waits at the existing facility may return, reducing overall vehicle miles traveled. Because the transfer station is publicly operated, its operations are limited to accepting waste from County residents within the local service area. Therefore, it would not draw new customers who are distant from the site. With improved operational efficiencies, the average vehicle miles traveled by County residents disposing of their waste would likely be either unchanged or reduced. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b). This impact would be **less than significant**.

c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

The project includes improvements to the site entrance that are intended to reducing queuing on Wolf Mountain Road and McCourtney Road during peak waste delivery periods. The expansion of the site entrance would include constructing two entrance lanes directly east of the Wolf Mountain Road intersection, which would substantially increase the on-site queuing capacity for vehicles arriving at the site, as discussed in response to question "a" above. The entrance improvement would be expected to reduce an existing potential design feature hazard. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

The project would substantially improve the ability to queue waste collection vehicles on the site during peak waste acceptance periods when compared to current conditions. This change substantially reduces the potential for vehicle queues to back up onto Wolf Mountain Road and McCourtney Road. Vehicles backed up on these roadways could cause delays for emergency vehicles accessing residences in the local area or the project site. Also, the proposed internal roadway improvements would improve internal circulation on the site, which would improve the ability for emergency vehicles to access the entire site. Because the proposed project would be expected to reduce vehicle backups on the local roadway network and would not impair emergency response, there would be **no impact**.

3.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XVIII. Tribal Cultural Resources. Would the project:				
Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?	☐	☒	☐	☐

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Tribal cultural resources are defined as sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following: 1) included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR); or 2) included in a local register of historical resources. Tribal cultural resources are also resources determined by the lead agency (i.e., Nevada County), in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant. In making this determination, the lead agency is required to consider the significance of the resource to California Native American tribes.

The CRHR includes resources listed in or formally determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Pursuant to Public Resources Code, Section 21084.1, a "project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment." Demolition, replacement, substantial alteration, and relocation of historic properties are actions that would change the significance of an historic resource (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, 15064.5).

As described above in Section 3.5 – Cultural Resources, the project area has been previously disturbed by the waste management activities that have occurred at the site. No evidence of historic buildings, sites, structures or

objects is present within the project area nor have any previously recorded or newly discovered archaeological sites been identified.

DISCUSSION

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?

The project site does not include any resources that are listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k). Any historic resources that may have been previously located within the project area have likely been destroyed by the development of the site for waste management operations.

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was contacted by HDR on behalf of Nevada County seeking information from the sacred lands files, which track Native American cultural resources, and the names of Native American individuals and groups that would be appropriate to contact regarding this project. The NAHC replied with a letter dated June 24, 2020 (NAHC 2020), in which they indicated that the sacred land file has no information about the presence of Native American cultural resources in the immediate project area. The letter also provided a list of Native American contacts (groups and individuals) who may have information regarding known and recorded sites. Consultation with the Native American community in accordance with Assembly Bill (AB) 52 has been conducted by Nevada County staff.

Based on the lack of existing historic resources, and the level of previous disturbance within the project area, the proposed project is not expected to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

Based on the prior disturbance of the project site, as described in response to question a) above, archaeological resources, which may also be considered tribal cultural resources, are not expected to be present on the site. However, as discussed under the Cultural Resources impact analysis section, the proposed project could impact unknown archaeological resources including Native American artifacts and human remains which may, by extension, also be considered tribal cultural resources. The disturbance of tribal cultural resources during project construction would be considered a **potentially significant impact**.

However, compliance with existing federal, State, and local laws and regulations, as well as implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 identified above for previously unidentified archaeological sites and human remains, would protect previously unidentified and unrecorded tribal cultural resources. Accordingly, implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 would reduce any impacts to a tribal cultural resource discovered on the project site as a result of implementing the proposed project to **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

3.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XIX. Utilities and Service Systems. Would the project:				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project site is located within the service area of the Nevada Irrigation District (NID). NID operates a network of six modern water treatment plants in Nevada and Placer counties and a small seventh plant that serves the Smartsville community in the Yuba County foothills. NID presently produces about 3 billion gallons, or approximately 9,000 acre-feet, of treated drinking water per year (NID 2020).

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) provides electric services in Nevada County. Approximately one-half of the electricity PG&E delivers is a combination of both renewable and greenhouse gas-free resources (Michael Baker International 2016).

Solid waste generated in the project area is received at the transfer station and transported to the Lockwood Landfill outside of Reno, Nevada. Recovered materials are transported to other processing facilities within the region including the Sacramento Recycling and Transfer Station at 8491 Fruitridge Road in Sacramento.

DISCUSSION

a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication

facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

The proposed project includes upgrading the utility systems at the project site to accommodate the proposed project operations. This Initial Study evaluated the impacts that would be expected with construction activities at the site specifically in the Air Quality, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Noise Sections. These construction activities include upgrading the site's utility systems, which may require trenching and excavation activities on the site. These upgrades are not expected to cause environmental effects that differ from those described throughout this Initial Study. Therefore, this impact would be considered **less than significant**.

b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

The proposed project would require the use of water for construction and operational purposes including for the misting system that would be installed in the new Transfer Station, the new fire suppression system, the new wash down system, and the two new bathrooms at the site. The surface impoundment on the site would provide water for the fire suppression system. For other water demands, well PW-1 would replace well DW-1, which historically provided water for the site. The expanded water supply system would be equipped with a new domestic water storage tank, pressure tank and hypochlorite tank. Although the site's water demands are not expected to substantially increase with project implementation, this new system has been designed to meet those increased demands. Therefore, this impact would be considered **less than significant**.

c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

The proposed project would not be expected to substantially increase the demand for wastewater services, as the existing liquids tank farm to which wastewater is directed was recently expanded. The expanded tank farm has the capacity to store 180,000 gallons of liquid. The volume of liquid in the tank farm is regularly monitored and is pumped from the tanks and trucked to the regional wastewater treatment facility when the tanks near capacity. Also, the proposed project would not substantially increase the number of employees at the site or include other activities that would substantially increase the demand for wastewater services. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

Project construction would not be expected to generate volumes of solid waste in excess of similarly-sized construction projects. The construction debris generated during project construction would be sorted and recycled at the transfer station, which would continue operating during project construction. Because the construction debris would not be in excess of similarly-sized construction projects, the proposed project would not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure and would not otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Because project construction would not be expected to generate volumes of solid waste in excess of similarly-sized construction projects, the project would not be expected to conflict with any solid waste statutes or regulations. There would be **no impact**.

3.20 WILDFIRE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XX. Wildfire. Would the project:				
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:				
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Require the installation of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☐	☒

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Nevada County Office of Emergency Services is responsible for developing and maintaining the Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (LHMP) (Foster Morrison 2017). Preparation of the LHMP included a risk assessment to determine the County's vulnerability to hazards, which influenced the development of goals and mitigation actions. Nevada County and its incorporated communities have a variety of systems and procedures established to protect its residents and visitors to plan for, avoid, and respond to a hazard event including those associated with floods and wildfires. This includes designing and conducting simulated disaster response exercises, evaluating emergency staff training requirements, creating evacuation strategies, and maintaining the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in a state of readiness (Foster Morrison 2017).

The severity of wildland fires is influenced primarily by vegetation, topography, and weather (temperature, humidity, and wind). The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has developed a fire hazard severity scale that considers vegetation, climate, and slope to evaluate the level of wildfire hazard. CAL FIRE designates three levels of Fire Hazard Severity Zones (Moderate, High, and Very High) to indicate the severity of fire hazard in a particular geographical area. Fire hazard zoning is used to indicate both the likelihood for a fire (e.g., prevalence of fuels) and the potential for damage (e.g., proximity to residences). The project site is located within a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (CAL FIRE 2020).

DISCUSSION

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

The project site can be accessed from both the north and the south via McCourtney Road and is located directly adjacent to Nevada County Consolidated Fire District Station No. 92 (located at 14811 McCourtney Road). Vehicles evacuating from the area can access State Routes 20 and 49 to the north via McCourtney Road, State Route 20 to the west via McCourtney Road and Indian Valley Road, and State Route 49 to the southeast via McCourtney Road and Lime Kiln Road. The County considers State Routes 20 and 49 to be primary countywide evacuation routes. Minor arterials and major collector routes, such as McCourtney Road, are considered secondary evacuation routes that supplement the primary evacuation routes and provide egress from local neighborhoods and communities (Foster Morrison 2017).

The project would substantially improve the ability to queue waste collection vehicles on the site during peak waste acceptance periods when compared to current conditions. This change substantially reduces the potential for vehicle queues to back up onto Wolf Mountain Road and McCourtney Road. Vehicles backed up on these roadways could cause delays for emergency vehicles accessing residences in the local area or could delay evacuations. Because the proposed project would be expected to reduce vehicle backups on the local roadway network and would not impair emergency response or emergency evacuation plans, there would be **no impact**.

b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

The proposed project would not include any residents or permanent occupants. The project includes expanding the paved area of the site to accommodate expanded waste management operations. By increasing paved surfaces on the site, the project reduces the site's wildland interface and the potential for the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire. Also, the proposed internal roadway improvements would improve internal circulation on the site, which would also improve the ability for emergency vehicles to access the entire site. Finally, by enclosing the majority of the waste tipping operations, the project would reduce the risk of hot loads (i.e., waste loads containing burning materials) causing a wildfire at the site because the materials would be dumped onto a concrete floor within the new transfer station building. The material would not be exposed to winds that could blow burning debris into the chaparral vegetation surrounding the site. Also, fire suppression would be conducted within the transfer station using heavy equipment and fire extinguishers, as appropriate. Therefore, this impact would be **less than significant**.

c) Require the installation of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

The proposed project would not require the installation of associated infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment. The project is limited to the construction of solid waste infrastructure improvements at an existing solid waste facility. The improvements would be expected to reduce the risk of a fire at the site by improving the internal roadway network, which would improve

emergency vehicle access and would provide greater buffer areas between project operations and the chaparral vegetation surrounding the site. Therefore, this impact would be **less than significant**.

d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

The proposed project does not include any physical changes that would be expected to expose people or structures to downslope or downstream flooding or landsliding, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. The proposed project is limited to the construction of solid waste infrastructure improvements at an existing solid waste facility. The changes anticipated to the site's storm drainage facilities are expected to improve the management of storm water on the site. Therefore, there would be **no impact**.

3.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XXI. Mandatory Findings of Significance.				
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Authority: Public Resources Code Sections 21083, 21083.5.
Reference: Government Code Sections 65088.4.
Public Resources Code Sections 21080, 21083.5, 21095; *Eureka Citizens for Responsible Govt. v. City of Eureka* (2007) 147 Cal.App.4th 357; *Protect the Historic Amador Waterways v. Amador Water Agency* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th at 1109; *San Franciscans Upholding the Downtown Plan v. City and County of San Francisco* (2002) 102 Cal.App.4th 656.

DISCUSSION

a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

Based on the information and analysis provided in the questions above, implementation of the proposed project would not substantially degrade the quality of the environment. In addition, with implementation of the mitigation measures identified for biological and cultural resources, the proposed project would not substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plants or animals, or eliminate important examples of California history or prehistory. Based on the ability of the identified mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels, the proposed project's impacts would be considered **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)

Implementation of the proposed project would result in less-than-significant environmental impacts with implementation of the identified mitigation measures. The impacts associated with the proposed project are anticipated to be localized at the project site and would not be expected to combine with other projects to cause cumulatively considerable environmental impacts. Given the limited impacts anticipated with project implementation, the proposed project would not be expected to cause cumulatively considerable impacts. Therefore, this impact is **less than significant**.

c) Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

As discussed in this Initial Study, implementation of the proposed project would result in less-than-significant environmental impacts with implementation of the identified mitigation measures. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. This impact is **less than significant with mitigation incorporated**.

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