

**Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
for the
Soledad Recycled Water Conveyance Project**

Prepared for:



City of Soledad

Prepared by:



Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc.

January 2025

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Project Summary

1. **Project Title:** Soledad Recycled Water Conveyance Project (“Proposed Project”)
2. **Lead Agency:** City of Soledad
3. **Contact:** Don Wilcox, Public Works Director/City Engineer
248 Main Street, Soledad, CA 93960
(831) 223-5124
dwilcox@cityofsoledad.gov
4. **Prepared By:** Denise Duffy and Associates, Inc (“DD&A”)
5. **Date Prepared:** January 2025
6. **Project Location:** City of Soledad, Monterey County, California
7. **Name of Property Owner/Project Proponent:** City of Soledad
8. **Project Location:** City of Soledad, in Monterey County, California
9. **Assessor’s Parcel Number(s):** 257-082-018, 257-082-020, 257-082-010, 257-082-011, 257-082-012, 257-082-013, and City Rights-of-Way
10. **Project Area of Disturbance:** Three and a half (3.5) acres
11. **Project Description:** Installation and operation of Title 22 recycled water conveyance infrastructure from the City’s existing WRF to up to 20 parks and schools throughout the City.
12. **General Plan Designation:** Public/Institutional, Agricultural, Recreational
13. **Zoning District:** PF – Public Facility

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Chapter 1. Introduction and Project Description

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Initial Study has been prepared to evaluate the potential environmental effects associated with the City of Soledad ("City") Recycled Water Conveyance Project ("Project" or "Proposed Project"), located in the City of Soledad in Monterey County, California. This document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), Public Resources Code §21000 et. seq., and the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations ("CCR") §15000 et. seq.

An Initial Study is an informational document prepared by a Lead Agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment (CEQA Guidelines §15063, subd. (a)). If there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") must be prepared, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064(a). However, if the Lead Agency determines that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the applicant to mitigate the potentially significant effects to a less than significant level, a Mitigated Negative Declaration ("IS/MND") may be prepared instead of an EIR (CEQA Guidelines §15070, subd. (b)). Per CEQA Guidelines for an IS/MND, a Lead Agency prepares a written statement describing the reasons a proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, why an EIR need not be prepared. This IS/MND conforms to the content requirements under CEQA Guidelines §15071.

The City is acting as the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15050(a). As the Lead Agency, the City has prepared this IS/MND pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15063, §15070, and §15152 as the project does have some significant impacts on the environment that can be mitigated to less than significant with identified measures. This IS/MND will be circulated for agency and public review during a 30-day public review period pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15073. Comments received by the City on this IS/MND will be reviewed and considered as part of the deliberative process in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15074.

Publication of this IS/MND marks the beginning of a 30-day public review and comment period. During this period, the IS/MND will be available to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested organizations and individuals for review. Written comments concerning the environmental review contained in this IS/MND during the 30-day public review period should be sent to:

Don Wilcox, Director of Public Works
248 Main Street, Soledad, CA 93960
(831) 223-5124
dwilcox@cityofsoledad.gov

This IS/MND and all documents referenced in it are available for public review at the City's Public Works Department at the above address. Following the conclusion of the public review period, the City will consider the adoption of the IS/MND for the Proposed Project at a regularly scheduled public hearing. The City shall consider the IS/MND together with any comments received during the public review process. Upon adoption of the IS/MND, the City may proceed with approval actions for the Proposed Project. If the City approves the Project, the City will file a Notice of Determination ("NOD"), which will be available for public inspection and posted in 24 hours of receipt at the County Clerk's Office for 30

days. The filing of the NOD starts a 30-day statute of limitations on court challenges to the approval under CEQA (CEQA Guidelines Section 15075(g)).

The City prepared the following section consistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15124 to the extent that it applies to the Proposed Project. Additionally, the information contained in this section has also been prepared to satisfy the applicable CEQA Plus requirements. The following section provides a discussion of key background details related to the Proposed Project, including project components, site and area characteristics, and applicable regulatory requirements.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The City retained Carollo Engineers, Inc. (“Carollo”) to develop preliminary and final design documents for the Recycled Water Conveyance Project. The Project is being funded by the Department of Water Resources (“DWR”) under the Urban Community Drought Relief (“UCDR”) Grant and is subjected to the terms and conditions set forth in the Grant Agreement between the State of California DWR and the City (Agreement No. 4600015016, UCDR Grant). A Basis of Design Report (“BODR”) prepared by Carollo (May 2024) described existing site conditions, existing and proposed system components, design criteria, and included technical and engineering decisions to be used for the preparation of the final design documents for the Project (**Appendix A**). The Proposed Project is intended to provide Title 22 recycled water from the City’s Water Reclamation Facility (“WRF”) to 20 schools and parks throughout the City and is part of a larger multi-phase City water conveyance project, consisting of the following phases:

- Phase 1 (completed in 2010): Design and construction of a new 5.5 million gallons per day (“MGD”) water reclamation facility and approximately 10,200 linear feet (“LF”) of 8-inch diameter recycled water transmission pipeline.
- Phase 2 (completed in 2018): Design and construction of approximately 3,800 LF of 12-inch diameter recycled water transmission pipeline to connect all the existing Phase 1 8-inch pipeline.
- Phase 3 (Project): Design and construction of a city-wide distribution system to irrigated landscaped areas within twenty City’s parks and schools. Details of the required facilities are provided below in **Section 1.5, Proposed Project**.
- Phase 4 (Future): New transmission pipeline to provide recycled water to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (“CDCR”) facilities within an Incorporated City “Island” three (3) miles north of the City.

Figure 1 shows the regional location of the Project and **Figure 2** shows an aerial view of the project area. The existing facilities are shown in **Figure 3**. The pipeline constructed during Phases 1 and 2 is referred to as the transmission pipeline. Phases 1 and 2 were previously completed. The pipelines and associated improvements to be constructed within the City during Phase 3 are referred to as the distribution system. Phase 3 comprises the Proposed Project as analyzed in this CEQA document. Phase 4 is not included as part of the Proposed Project analyzed within this document and would require future CEQA analysis if implemented.

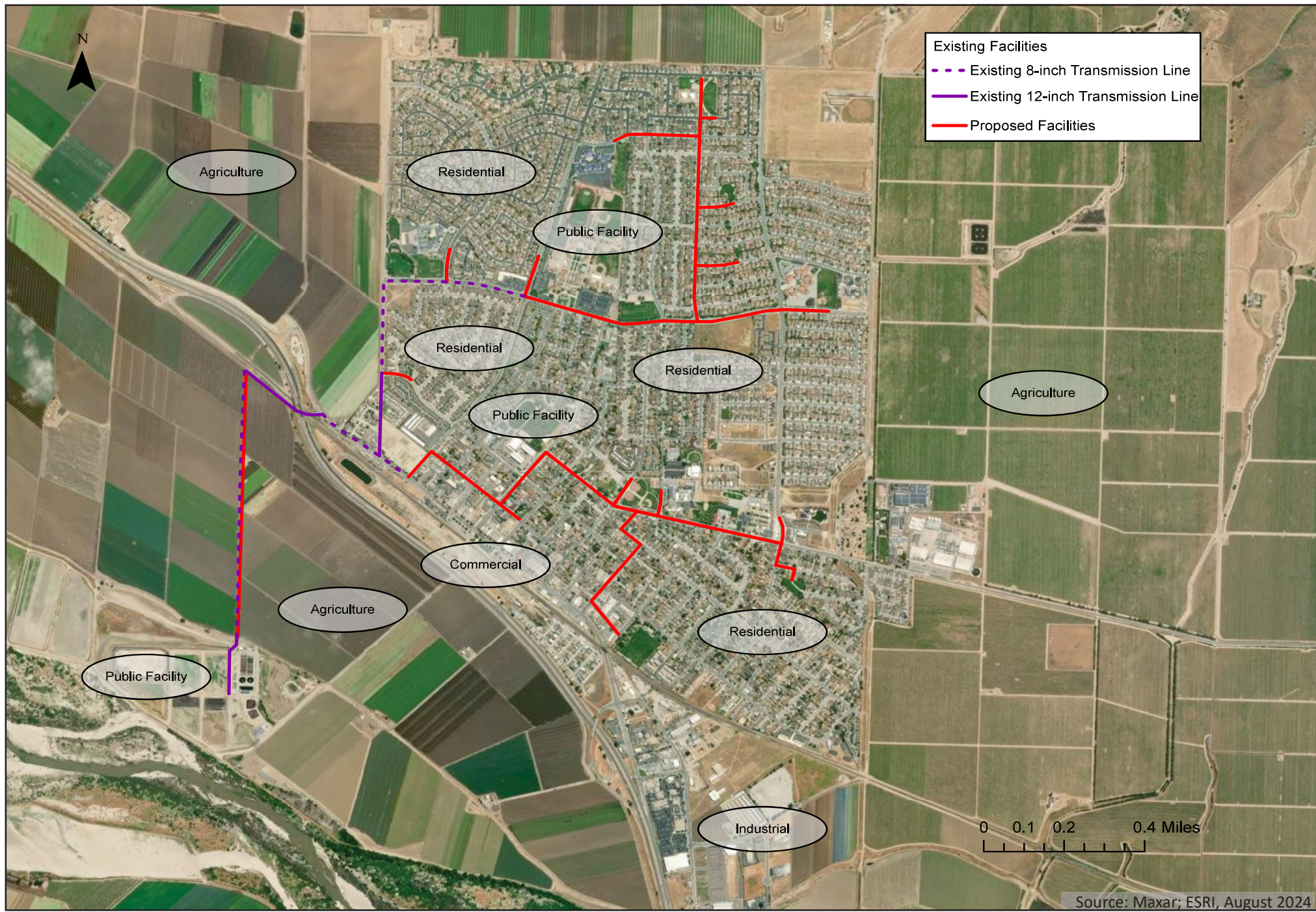


Title: **Regional Map**

Date 8/13/2024
Scale N/A
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Figure
1



Title:

Vicinity Map

Date 8/13/2024

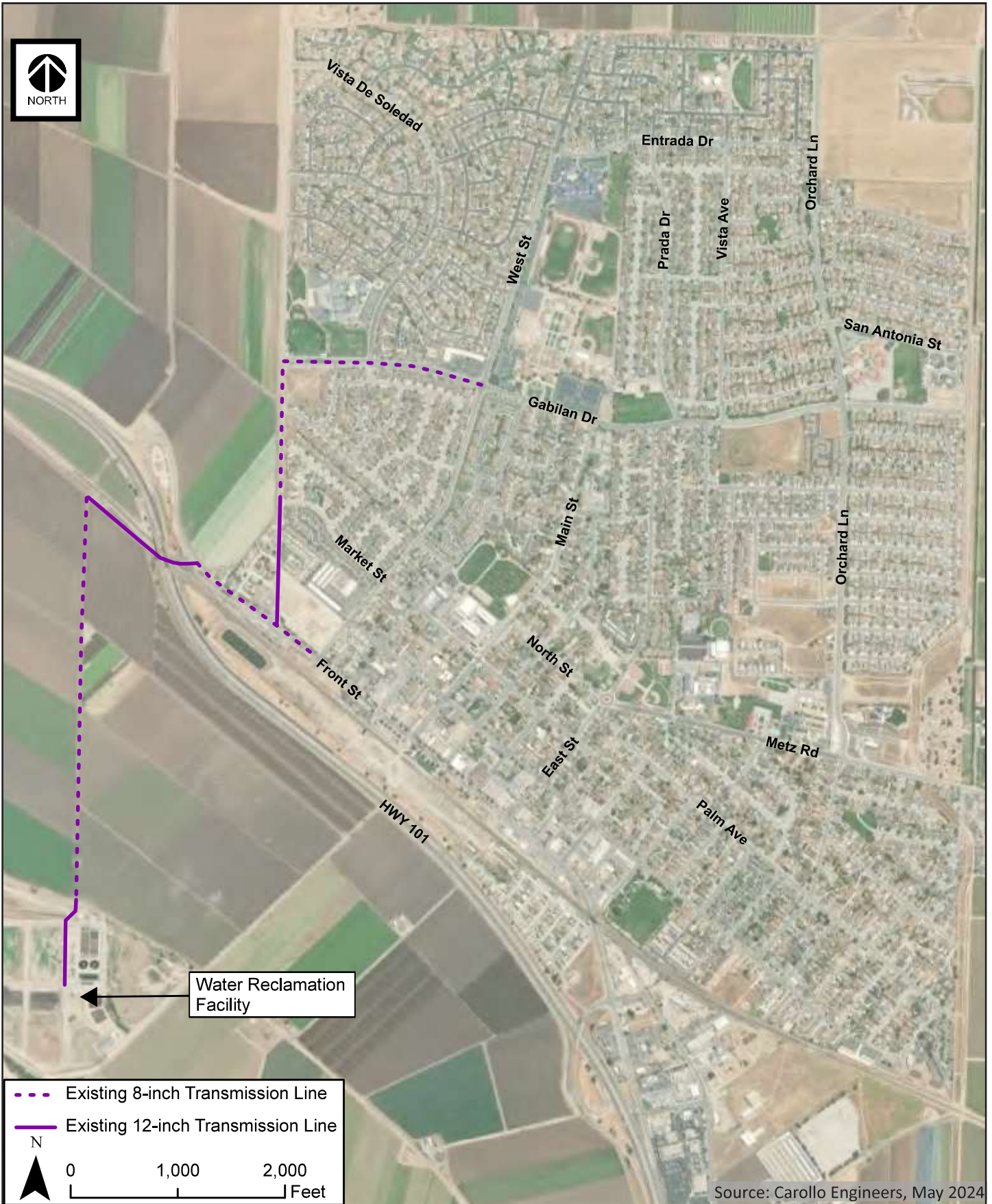
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Figure
2



Source: Carollo Engineers, May 2024

Title: **Existing Facilities**

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Figure
3

The WRF is owned and operated by the City and treats wastewater from the City and CDCR facilities. It produces disinfected, tertiary treated effluent that meets Title 22, Division 4, Chapter 3, California Code of Regulations (“CCR”) for recycled water. It is operating around 2.45 MGD average daily flow and the effluent is currently being discharged to rapid infiltration basins adjacent to the WRF for aquifer recharge. The current discharge permit limits recharge to 4.3 MGD with the remaining 1.2 MGD of peak flow capacity designated for non-potable reuse.

1.3 PROJECT LOCATION

The Proposed Project is located primarily within the City of Soledad in Monterey County, as shown in **Figure 1**, and is subject to the requirements in the City’s 2005 General Plan. The City is in the process of updating the General Plan, anticipated for adoption in 2025, but the current Project would comply with the adopted 2005 General Plan that is currently in effect. The Project would provide recycled water from the City’s WRF, located at 34520 Morisoli Road (Assessor’s Parcel Numbers [“APNs”] 257-082-018, 257-082-020, and 257-082-021) to schools and parks throughout the City. Most proposed facilities are located within the City’s WRF property and in City rights of way (“ROW”) and would not require additional property. The City has a 20-foot-wide easement for the existing transmission main running from the WRF to Front Street, which is located within farmland. This portion of the Proposed Project is located within unincorporated Monterey County and is subject to the requirements contained in the County’s 2010 General Plan. The existing easement would be reviewed during final design to determine if additional permanent and temporary easements are required. Regional access to the Project area is provided from U.S. 101 (“Highway 101”) and State Route 146 (“SR 146”). Local access to the Project area is provided by roadways throughout the City. Access to the WRF is provided via Morisoli Road to a one-half mile driveway connecting Morisoli Road to the WRF main gate. **Figures 4a** through **4e** shows site photos of the Project area.

1.4 SURROUNDING LAND USES AND SETTING

The Project site is surrounded by residential, commercial, public facilities (i.e., parks and schools), and agricultural land uses. Residential uses surrounding the Project primarily consist of single-family residences and multi-family residences. Commercial use surrounding the Proposed Project primarily comprises retail businesses and a segment of general commercial area along Front Street and Highway 101. **Figure 5** shows the land uses within the Project area.

1.5 PROPOSED PROJECT

The Proposed Project consists of installing and operating infrastructure necessary to convey Title 22 recycled water from the City’s WRF to up to 20 parks and schools throughout the City. The Project includes the construction of a booster pump facility, distribution piping system, and appurtenances, new or converted irrigation systems, and cross-connection prevention assemblies, as well as construction management, environmental work, planning, and design. The expansion would replace a minimum of 165 acre-feet (54 million gallons) per year of groundwater pumping with recycled water to offset the use of potable water to irrigate sports fields and reduce groundwater use.



Photo #1: West facing view of Aurelio N. Ramirez Park from Munras Street (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #2: Northeast facing view of Bill Ramus Park from Monterey Street (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #3: North facing view of Blas Santana Park from Gabilan Drive (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #4: North facing view of Toledo Park from Gabilan Drive (Source: Google, 2024).

Title:

Site Photos

Date 8/19/2024
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Figure
4a



Photo #1: North facing view of Jesse Gallardo Park from Metz Road/State Route 146 (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #2: Northwest facing view of Joe Ledesma Park from Market Street (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #3: Northwest facing view of Little League Park from Andalucia Drive (Source: Google, 2024).

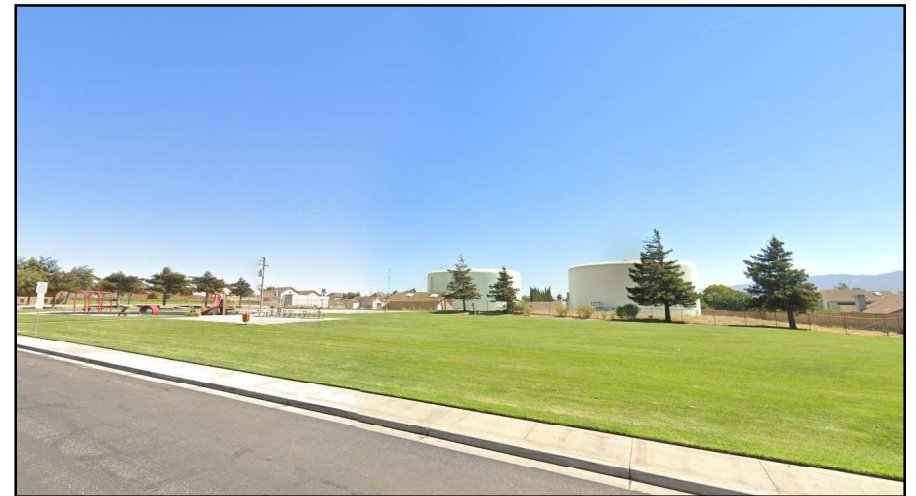


Photo #4: Southeast facing view of Lum Park from Terraza Street (Source: Google, 2024).

Title:

Site Photos

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Figure
4b



Photo #1: East facing view of Orchard Lane Park from Orchard Lane
(Source: Google, 2024).

Photo #2: North facing view of Peverini Park from Vida Street
(Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #3: South facing view of San Antonio Park from La Colina Street
(Source: Google, 2024).

Photo #4: Northwest facing view of Santa Barbara Park from Santa Barbara Road
(Source: Google, 2024).

Title:

Site Photos

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Figure
4c



Photo #1: North facing view of Veterans Park from Gabilan Drive (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #2: West facing view of Vosti Park from Monterey Street (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #3: West facing view of Frank Ledesma Elementary School from Vista De Soledad (Source: Google, 2024)

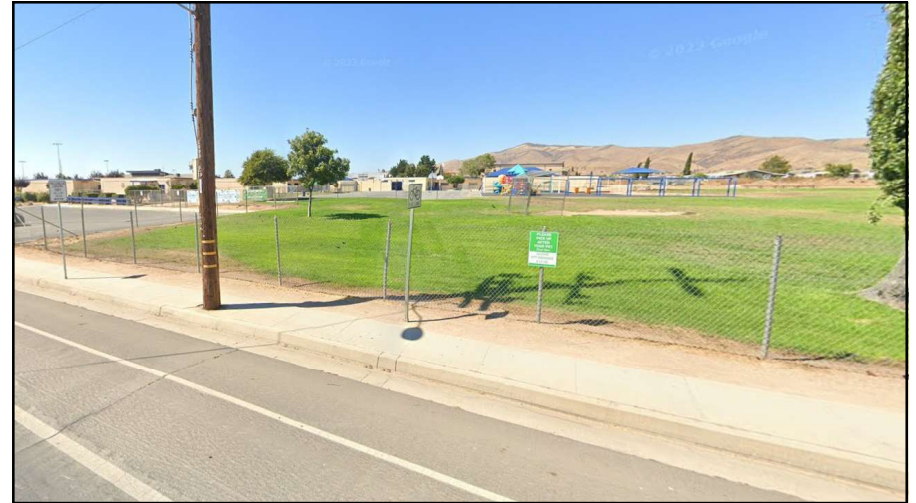


Photo #4: North facing view of Gabilan Elementary School from Metz Road/State Route 146 (Source: Google, 2024).

Title:

Site Photos

Date 8/19/2024
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Figure
4d

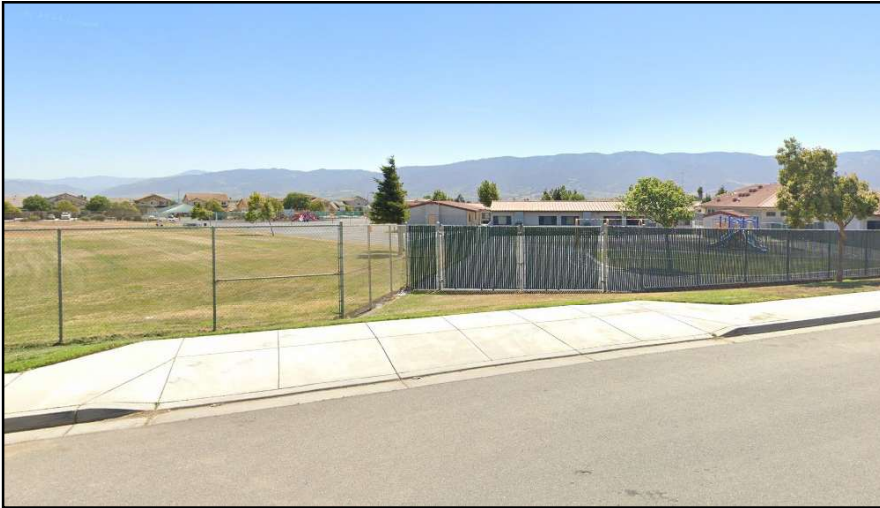


Photo #1: Southwest facing view of Jack Franscioni Elementary School from San Antonio Street (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #2: Southeast facing view of Rose Ferrero Elementary School from Entrada Drive (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #3: East facing view of Soledad High School from West Street (Source: Google, 2024).



Photo #4: West facing view of Soledad Middle School from Main Street (Source: Google, 2024).

Title:

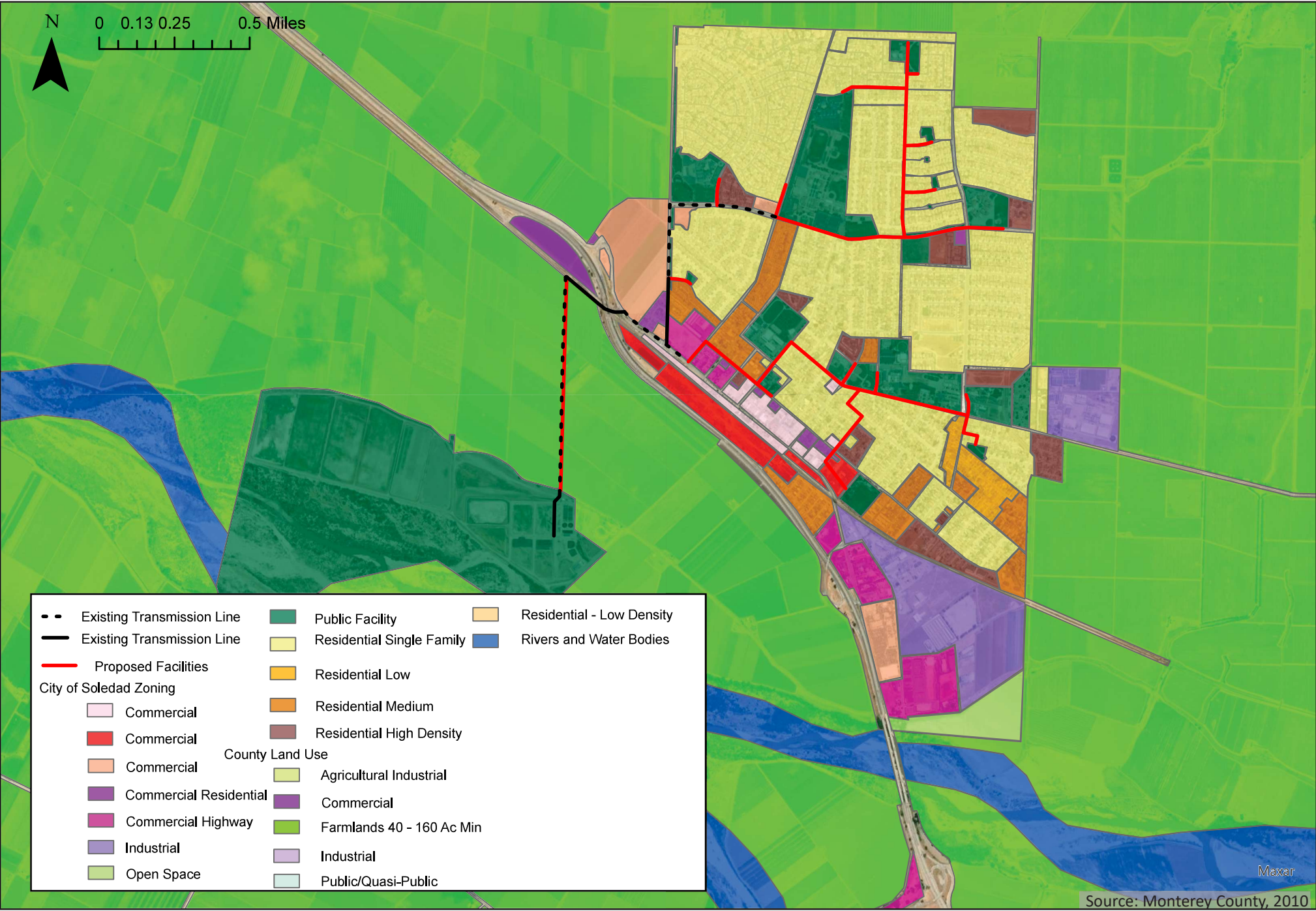
Site Photos

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Figure
4e

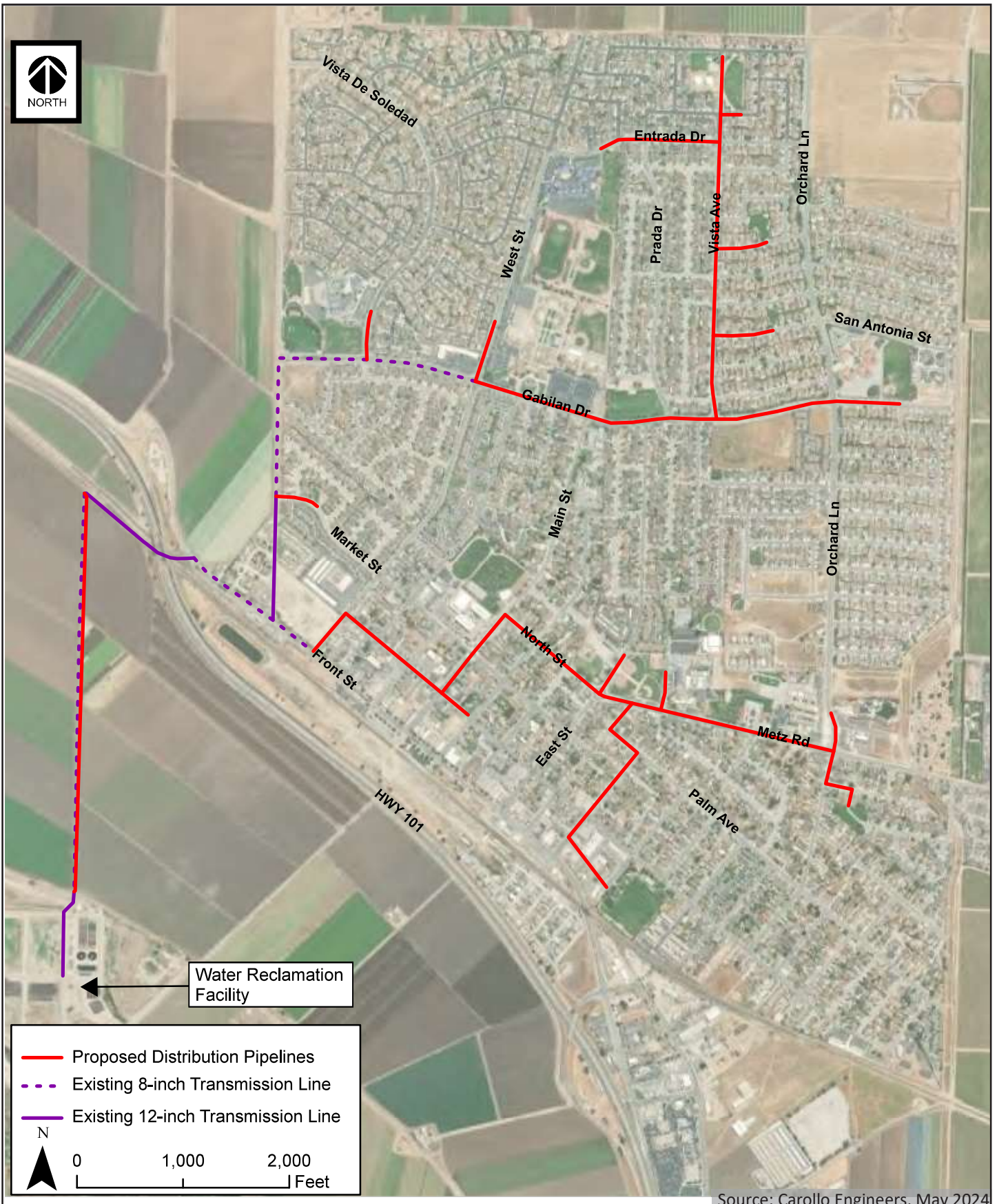


The Project would provide recycled water to the following parks and schools in the City, which are currently irrigated with potable water and/or non-potable well water:

- Lum Memorial Park
- Peverini Park
- Santa Barbara Park
- San Antonio Park
- Jack Franscioni Elementary
- Toledo Park (under development)
- Blas Santana Park
- Soledad High School
- Rose Ferrero Elementary
- Frank Ledesma Elementary
- Veterans Park
- Joe O. Ledesma Park
- Main Street Middle School
- Albert Bill Ramus Park
- Little League Park
- Jesse Gallardo Park
- San Vicente/Gabilan Elementary (one service connection)
- Orchard Lane Park
- Aurelio N. Ramirez Park
- Vosti Park

Additional work on some of these park and school sites, consisting of Installing irrigation meters, disconnecting the potable water system from the irrigation system, installing irrigation piping, and replacing sprinkler heads with Title 22 compliant purple colored recycled water sprinkler heads would be required to connect the existing sites' water systems to the recycled water distribution system. Key components of the Proposed Project are described in further detail below and are shown in **Figure 6**. **Figures 7a** and **7b** show the overall site plan for the Proposed Project and **Figure 8** shows the Project Service Location.

- Recycled water pump station at the City's WRF.
- Approximately 3,800 feet of a 12-inch diameter recycled water transmission pipeline from the WRF to Front Street. The pipeline diameter may be upsized to approximately 16 inches in diameter during final design.
- Approximately 22,700 feet of recycled water distribution pipelines ranging from 4 to 8 inches in diameter.
- Conversion or replacement of existing on-site irrigation systems to meet recycled water standards.



Title: **Proposed Project Components**

Date 8/13/2024
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Figure
6



ALIGNMENT A
PLAN
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Source: Carollo Engineers, June 2024

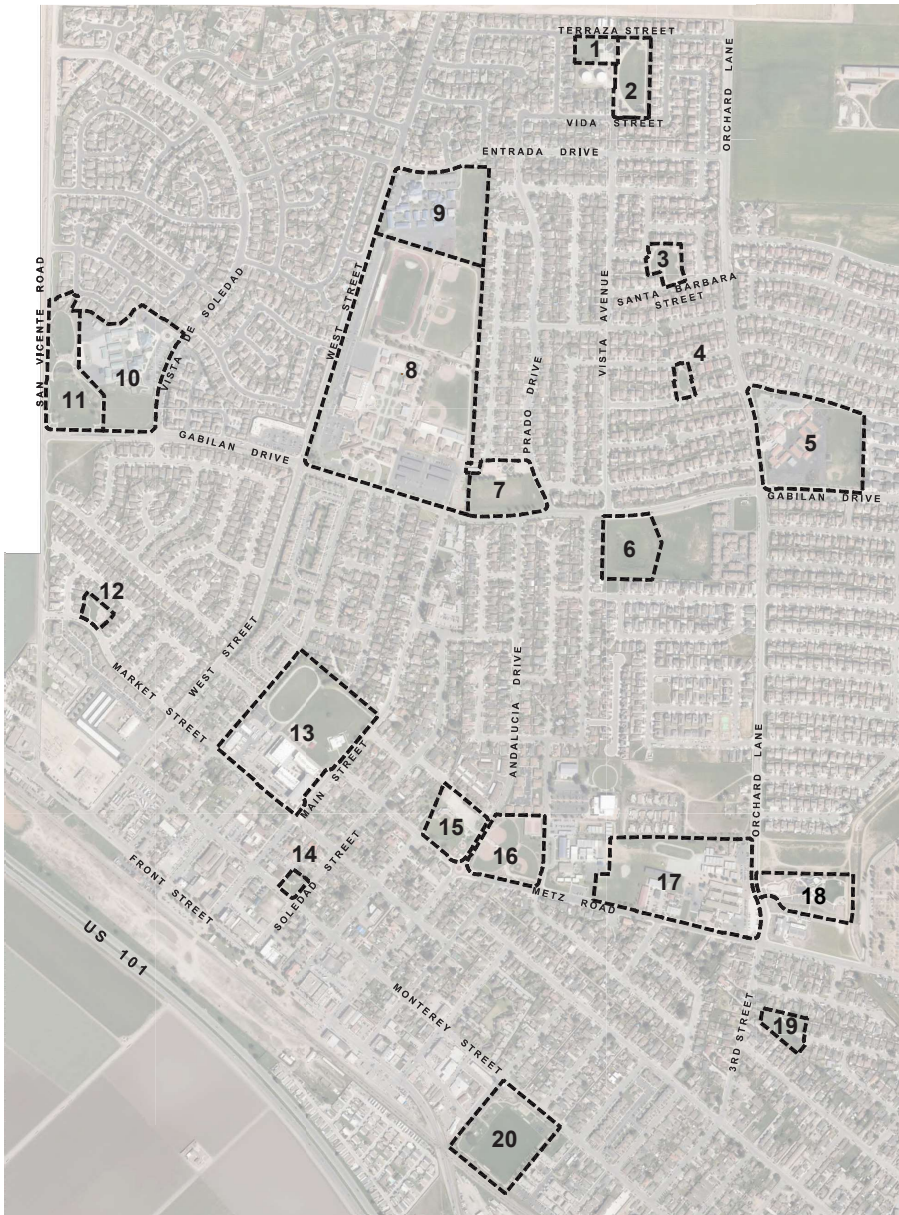
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Site Plan - South

Date **8/13/2024**
Scale **N/A**
Project **2024.26**



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Figure
7a



1 PROJECT SITES KEY MAP
1:500

KEY MAP SITE LIST

SITE	SITE NAME	TYPE	SHEET NUMBER
1	LUM MEMORIAL PARK	PARK	L1.0 / L1.1
2	PEVERINI PARK	PARK	L2.0 / L2.1
3	SANTA BARBARA PARK	PARK	L3.0 / L3.1
4	SAN ANTONIO PARK	PARK	L4.0 / L4.1
5	JACK FRANCONI ELEMENTARY	SCHOOL	L5.0 / L5.1 - L5.4
6	TOLEDO PARK	PARK	L6.0 / L6.1
7	BLAS SANTANA PARK	PARK	L7.0 / L7.1 - L7.2
8	SOLEDAD HIGH SCHOOL	SCHOOL	L8.0 / L8.1 - L8.8
9	ROSE FERRERO ELEMENTARY	SCHOOL	L9.0 / L9.1 - L9.4
10	FRANK LEDESMA ELEMENTARY	SCHOOL	L10.1 / L10.1 - L10.3
11	VETERANS PARK	PARK	L11.0 / L11.1
12	JOE O. LEDESMA PARK	PARK	L12.0 / L12.1
13	MAIN STREET MIDDLE SCHOOL	SCHOOL	L13.0 / L13.1 - L13.4
14	ALBERT BILL RAMUS PARK	PARK	L14.0 / L14.1
15	CHESTER AAROE PARK (LITTLE LEAGUE)	PARK	L15.0 / L15.1
16	JESSE GALLARDO PARK	PARK	L16.0 / L16.1 - L16.2
17	SAN VICENTE ELEMENTARY	SCHOOL	L17.0 / L17.1 - L17.4
18	ORCHARD LANE PARK	PARK	L18.0 / L18.1
19	AURELIO N. RAMIREZ PARK	PARK	L19.0 / L19.1
20	VOSTI PARK	PARK	L20.0 / L20.1

Source: Carollo Engineers, June 2024

Title:

Project Service Locations

Date 8/13/2024
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Figure
8

Recycled Water Pump Station

The pump station would be located at the City's WRF, as shown in **Figure 6**. The pump station would draw recycled water from existing WRF facilities to supply the recycled water to the City's parks and schools. The new pump station is proposed at the southeast corner of the sludge drying pond area west of the flocculation tanks. The pump station includes a below-ground wet well structure with vertical turbine pumps. The wet well feed pipe crosses several existing utilities and penetrates through two earthen berms. The discharge header penetrates one earthen berm, extends north at the access road, and continues toward a connection to the existing 12-inch recycled water transmission main. Pipe penetrations through earthen berms would be watertight and designed to maintain structural integrity of the berm.

Recycled Water Transmission Pipeline - WRF to Front Street

The existing transmission pipeline is composed of 8-inch and 12-inch diameter pipes, as shown on **Figure 6**. The existing 8-inch transmission pipeline from the WRF to Front Street, which runs through farmland, is undersized. A new 12-inch pipeline would be constructed parallel to the existing 8-inch pipeline as part of the Project. This would tie into the existing 12-inch transmission pipeline at the WRF on the south end and the existing 12-inch transmission pipeline on the north end before the railroad crossing. Additional easements may be required for the transmission pipeline through farmland, which will be confirmed during final design. In addition, construction work restrictions may include a work window that reduces any impacts to farming operations. The transmission pipeline would pass through land outside of the City limits within unincorporated Monterey County.

Recycled Water Distribution Pipelines

The distribution system would be divided into two pipeline systems – to the northern and southern parts of the City. At the intersection of San Vicente Road and Front Street, the existing transmission main bifurcates with a pipeline continuing east along Front Street until it intersects West Street and terminates. At this location the distribution pipeline would connect to the existing transmission main to serve the City parks and schools located in the southern half of the City. The second segment of the existing transmission pipeline continues north along San Vicente Road then east and along Gabilan Drive until it intersects West Street and terminates. At this point, the distribution pipeline would tie into the existing transmission main to serve the City parks and schools located in the northern half of the City. **Appendix B** contains plan sheets for pipeline segments included under this component of the Project.

As described above, proposed work at the schools and parks includes installing irrigation meters, disconnecting the potable water system from the irrigation system, installing irrigation piping, and replacing sprinkler heads with Title 22 compliant purple colored recycled water sprinkler heads.

1.6 PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

Project construction is proposed primarily on existing roadway ROWs and the WRF property. The proposed transmission pipeline segment running from the WRF to Front Street would be constructed within an easement on existing farmland. Additional construction is proposed within temporary construction easements ("TCEs") and on Soledad Unified School District ("SUSD") properties.

Site Preparation

Site preparation would primarily involve initial grading and trenching for pipeline installation. Construction would involve open-trenching, which typically includes clearing and grading the ground surface along the pipeline alignments; excavating the trench; preparing and installing pipeline sections; installing vaults, air valves, blowoffs, and other pipeline components; backfilling the trench with non-expansive fills; restoring preconstruction contours; and revegetating or paving the pipeline alignments, as appropriate. Site preparation activities are anticipated to be completed within approximately 18 months.

Grading

The Project would disturb a total of approximately 189,320 square feet (4.35 acres) of previously disturbed land. A total of approximately 3,800 linear feet of 12-inch pipeline, 6,200 linear feet of 8-inch pipe, 5,620 of 6-inch pipe, and 10,850 linear feet of 4-inch pipe would be constructed. Project construction would require approximately 31,400 cubic yards ("CY") of cut and 31,100 CY of fill.

Schedule

Project construction is expected to last approximately 18-24 months. Construction would occur between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. No nighttime construction is proposed.

Equipment and Personnel

To complete Project construction on schedule, approximately 10 construction personnel would be present onsite at any given time. Additionally, the types of equipment that would be used during construction may include, but not be limited to:

- Excavator
- Backhoe
- Dump Truck
- Delivery Truck
- Water Truck
- Crane

Access and Circulation

The Project site is within the City of Soledad. Highway 101 and SR 146 provide regional access to the Project site and local access is provided via local roadways throughout the City. Access to the WRF is provided via Morisoli Road. Daily lay-down areas would be located along pipeline alignments within existing roadway ROWs. Longer-term equipment staging would be located at the WRF, off of Morisoli Road. It is currently unknown how many vehicle trips would be generated by the construction of the Proposed Project.

Tree Removal

Construction of the Project is not expected to require the removal of any trees.

1.7 OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The City manages the current water system and would be responsible for operating and maintaining the new infrastructure for the recycled water system as part of ongoing operations and maintenance activities. The Proposed Project would serve the identified existing parks and schools, and operation would not result in increased water use or changes in existing land use.

1.8 OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES WHOSE APPROVAL IS REQUIRED

The primary regulation governing recycled water use is the California Water Code Regulations, Title 22. The treatment requirement for this project would be tertiary treated recycled water, unrestricted use. In June 2014, the California legislature passed State Bill 861, which authorized transfer of California Department of Public Health's ("CDPH's") drinking and recycled water responsibilities, including the issuance of waste discharge requirements ("WDRs"), to the State Water Resources Control Board ("SWRCB"). Regulatory authority for projects using recycled water falls to the DDW within the SWRCB, as well as the Regional Water Quality Control Board ("RWQCB").

The DDW is charged with protection of public health and drinking water supplies and with the development of uniform water recycling criteria appropriate to particular uses of water. DDW recommendations are implemented through permits issued by the RWQCB.

The City's WRF produces effluent that meets Title 22 recycled water requirements. A Title 22 Report for the distribution of recycled water must be approved by DDW and the RWQCB before recycled water projects are implemented.

The SWRCB establishes general policies governing the permitting of recycled water projects consistent with its role of protecting water quality and sustaining water supplies. The SWRCB also exercises general oversight over recycled water projects, including review of RWQCB permitting practices. The SWRCB is the state agency that has jurisdiction over water quality throughout California. Under the SWRCB, nine RWQCBs have authority to exercise rulemaking and regulatory activities by water basin. The RWQCB is charged with protection of surface and groundwater resources. The City of Soledad is located within the jurisdiction of the Central Coastal RWQCB.

Chapter 2. Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by the Proposed Project, as discussed in the Initial Study analysis on the following pages.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Quality |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gas Emissions | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazards/Hazardous Materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hydrology/Water Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Noise | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Services |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribal Cultural Resources |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wildfire | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance |

Environmental Factors Not Affected

The following environmental resources were considered as part of the scoping and environmental analysis conducted for the Proposed Project. The potential for adverse impact to these resources were not identified. Consequently, there is no further discussion regarding these resources in this document.

Mineral Resources: The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (“SMARA”) of 1975 and the California Geological Survey (“CGS”) define and map regional significant mineral resources. The CGS delineates Mineral Resource Zones (“MRZs”) based on their mineral resource potential. The Proposed Project is located outside areas classified as MRZs and no mineral resources are known to exist on the Proposed Project site (CGS, 2022). For this reason, the Proposed Project would have no impact on mineral resources. Therefore, no further discussion is necessary.

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Chapter 3. Determination

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

January 17, 2025

Date

Don Wilcox, Director of Public Works

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Chapter 4. Environmental Setting and Impacts

The following chapter assesses the environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project and identifies mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts to less than significant, as appropriate.

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 project-specific screening analysis).
2. All answers must consider the whole action involved, including offsite 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.
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 in 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 information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances) into the checklist references. 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.

4.1. Aesthetics

Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project is located in the City of Gonzales, within the Salinas Valley in Monterey County. The Salinas Valley is a northwest-southeast trending valley between the Gabilan and Santa Lucia Ranges. The visual character of the Project site comprises distant mountain ranges, the Salinas River, agricultural lands, and urban development within the City. The Proposed Project would be located primarily within the paved portions of City roadways, surrounded by residential and commercial uses. A 4,000-foot segment of the proposed recycled water transmission pipeline, running from the WRF to Front Street, would be surrounded by farmland. Additional construction would occur on SUSD properties to connect pipelines and convert or replace existing irrigation systems. All Project components would occur within previously disturbed areas and would be primarily located underground. Vegetation within the Project area consists of cropland and maintained lawns.

Visually sensitive areas are those containing scenic resources visible from existing, potential, and proposed scenic routes. Prominent visual resources in the Project vicinity are limited to distant views of the Gabilan Mountains. Additionally, the City's General Plan identifies Metz Road (also known as Highway 146) as a State designated scenic highway (City of Soledad, 2005). However, while Caltrans identifies this roadway as an eligible scenic highway, it does not designate it as a State scenic highway (Caltrans, 2024). Approximately 2,250 feet of pipeline would be installed within Metz Road. Other segments of pipeline would be installed within City roads connecting to Metz Road and would be visible from this roadway.

Regulatory Framework

State

California Scenic Highways Program: The Legislature created the California State Scenic Highway program in 1963. This program's purpose is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The program includes a list of highways that are either designated or eligible for designation as a scenic highway. The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Sections 260 through 263. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. In Monterey County, the only officially designated state scenic highway are portions of State Route ("SR") 1 (Caltrans, 2023). Highway 146 is a two-lane roadway which runs east to Pinnacles National Monument and south to King City. This is a state designated scenic highway, and provides regional access to the Project site (City, 2005a).

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The City's Conservation and Open Space Element section of the General Plan identifies the following aesthetic policies applicable to the Proposed Project:

C/OS7: The City shall require new public and private development to protect scenic resources by:

- a. Prohibiting structures along ridgelines, steep slopes (above the 400-foot elevation contour), or in other highly visible locations unless no practical alternative is available, or such a location is necessary to protect public health and safety;
- b. Utilizing natural landforms and vegetation for screening structures, access roads, building foundations, and cut and fill slopes;
- c. Requiring landscaping which provides a landscape transition between developed areas and adjacent open space or undeveloped areas; and is compatible with the scenic resource being protected;
- d. Incorporating sound Soil Conservation Service practices and minimizing land alterations. Land alterations shall be minimized by: keeping cuts and fills to a minimum; limiting grading to the smallest practical area of land; limiting land exposure to the shortest practical amount of time; replanting graded areas to insure establishment of plant cover before the next rainy season; and creating grading contours that blend with the natural contours on site or look like contours that would naturally occur;
- e. Designing roads, parking, and utilities to minimize visual impacts. If possible, utilities shall be underground. Roadways and parking shall fit the natural terrain; and
- f. Designing projects to fit the site's scale and character. Structures shall be designed and located so: they do not silhouette against ridgelines, or hilltops; roof lines and vertical architectural features blend with and do not detract from the natural background or ridge outline; residential density and massing is decreased with increased elevation where it would mar the scenic quality of the scenic resource; they fit the natural terrain, and they utilize building materials, colors, and textures that blend with the natural landscape and avoid the creation of high contrast situations.

2010 Monterey County General Plan: The 2010 Monterey County General Plan includes goals and policies related to the preservation of visual integrity. The following goal from the 2010 Monterey County General Plan would apply to portions of the Proposed Project:

Goal OS-1: Retain the character and natural beauty of Monterey County by preserving, conserving, and maintaining unique physical features, natural resources, and agricultural operations.

Monterey County Code: The County of Monterey Zoning Ordinance (Title 21) requires an evaluation of potential aesthetic-related effects and a determination of significance from common public view areas in areas outside of the Coastal Zone. “Common public viewing area means a public area such as a public street, road, designated vista point, or public park from which the general public ordinarily views the surrounding viewshed” (Section 21.06.195). Monterey County defines a substantial adverse visual impact as a “visual impact which, considering the condition of the existing viewshed, the proximity and duration of view when observed with normal unaided vision, causes an existing visual experience to be materially degraded” (Section 21.06.1275).

Would the project:		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a)	Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings in a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c)	In nonurbanized 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 point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

For this analysis, views of the foothills to the northeast of the City, the Santa Lucia Mountains to the west, and the Gabilan Mountains east would represent scenic vistas. Obstruction of views of these resources would constitute a potentially significant impact. No other scenic vistas are visible within the project area.

Construction

The Proposed Project could result in temporary construction related effects. Construction of the pipeline components of the Proposed Project, including required improvements at school and park sites, would involve construction equipment that could result in visual effects on scenic vistas, including daily lay-down of construction equipment within roadway ROWs. However, due to the linear nature of these components, construction equipment would not be located in a single position for extended periods of time, and the visual effects would be short-term and temporary.

Construction of the new recycled water pump station and creation of a long-term staging area would occur at the existing WRF, both of which could result in effects on scenic vistas. However, this site is already developed with the existing WRF, and the construction activities and equipment staging would not result in substantial effects on scenic vistas compared to existing conditions. In addition, equipment would be removed following construction and would not permanently impact scenic vistas. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

Operation

Once operational, the pipeline components of the Proposed Project would be located largely underground and would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Aboveground components of the Proposed Project would be limited primarily to the new recycled water pump

station. The recycled water pump station would be located on the site of the existing WRF. This site is already developed and the addition of the recycled water pump station would not impact scenic vistas, as none are provided from the site. Views of the Santa Lucia Mountains across the WRF site are already disrupted by the existing WRF buildings. Views of the foothills or Gabilan Mountains would not be impacted by the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would not result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista due to operation. This represents a less than significant impact.

- b. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings in a state scenic highway?*

The Proposed Project is not located near a state scenic highway (Caltrans, 2024). The Proposed Project is approximately 24 miles southeast from the nearest state scenic highway (SR 68). The City's General Plan identifies Highway 146 as a designated scenic highway (City of Soledad, 2005), although Caltrans identifies it as "eligible but not officially designated" (Caltrans, 2024). The Proposed Project would not substantially damage scenic resources in a state scenic highway. In addition, the Central Salinas Valley Area Plan does not show any scenic roadways within the vicinity of the Proposed Project. No impact would occur.

- c. Would the project, in nonurbanized 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?*

Temporary visual impacts would occur during construction related to staging of construction equipment and ongoing construction work. However, these impacts would be temporary and the Project area would be restored to the same condition following completion of construction. Once operational, the Proposed Project would be largely underground, with the exception of the recycled water pump station component located at the City's WRF. This addition to the existing WRF would blend in with the existing WRF structures and would not degrade the existing visual character of the Proposed Project area or its surroundings. As a result, the Proposed Project would not adversely impact the existing visual character of the site or its surroundings, or degrade the quality of public views of the site. This represents a less than significant impact.

- d. Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?*

Construction activities would require staging of construction equipment and ongoing construction work. No nighttime construction is proposed; however, staging of construction equipment at daily lay-down areas located along the pipeline alignments and long-term equipment staging at the WRF site could result in new sources of glare. However, these impacts would be temporary and the construction equipment would be removed from Project area following completion of construction. Once operational, the Proposed Project would be largely underground and would not result in new sources of light and glare. The aboveground components (recycled water pump station) of the Proposed Project would be located within the WRF. No new security lighting or reflective surfaces are proposed. This represents a less than significant impact.

4.2. Agricultural and Forestry Resources

Terminology

The California Department of Conservation (“DOC”) identifies and designates important farmland throughout the State as part of the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (“FMMP”). Farmland is classified as follows:

- **Prime Farmland.** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. These are Class I and Class II soils.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland.** Farmland of lesser quality soils used to produce the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climactic zones in California.
- **Grazing Land.** Government Code §65570(b)(3) defines Grazing Land as: "...land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suitable for grazing or browsing of livestock." The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres. Grazing Land does not include land previously designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance, and heavily brushed, timbered, excessively steep, or rocky lands which restrict the access and movement of livestock.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land.** Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least one (1) unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six (6) structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.
- **Other Land.** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas, not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

California Public Resources Code §4526 and the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection defines "Timberland" as land not owned by the federal government nor designated as experimental forest land, which is capable and available for growing any commercial tree species.

Environmental Setting

Agricultural activities consisting of farming and livestock grazing represent the largest industry in the County of Monterey and contribute significantly to the region's economy. The most productive farmlands in the County are located in the North County, Greater Salinas, and Central Salinas Valley Planning Areas. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture for Monterey County, there are 1,340,142 acres designated as farmland (USDA, 2017). Monterey County's gross agricultural production in 2021 totaled 4.6 billion dollars (Monterey County Crop Report, 2021). The top crops in the County include

vegetable crops, fruit, and nuts (Ibid.). The top revenue crops produced in 2021 included strawberries, leaf lettuce, head lettuce, broccoli, wine grapes, spinach, cauliflower, celery, and brussels sprouts (Ibid.).

The Proposed Project is partially located within areas where agricultural activities occur. Important farmlands within the Project are shown in **Figure 9**. The FMMP designates the agricultural lands in the Proposed Project area as *Prime Farmland* (DOC, 2024). Two (2) parcels located along the western side of a proposed pipeline alignment are enrolled in a Williamson Act contract.

CEQA requires the evaluation of forest and timber resources where they are present. The Proposed Project area does not contain 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).

Regulatory Framework

Federal

Farmland Protection Policy Act: The Farmland Protection Policy Act (“FPPA”) seeks to reduce federal program impacts on unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. This act requires federal agencies to develop and review policies to implement the FPPA every two years and comply with state and local programs and policies protecting farmland. The FPPA includes land such as forests, pastures, crop, or other land that may be used for farmland in the future. However, The FPPA does not include water or urban land. FPPA uses farmland classifications of “prime farmland,” “unique farmland,” and “land of statewide importance” (USDA, 2024).

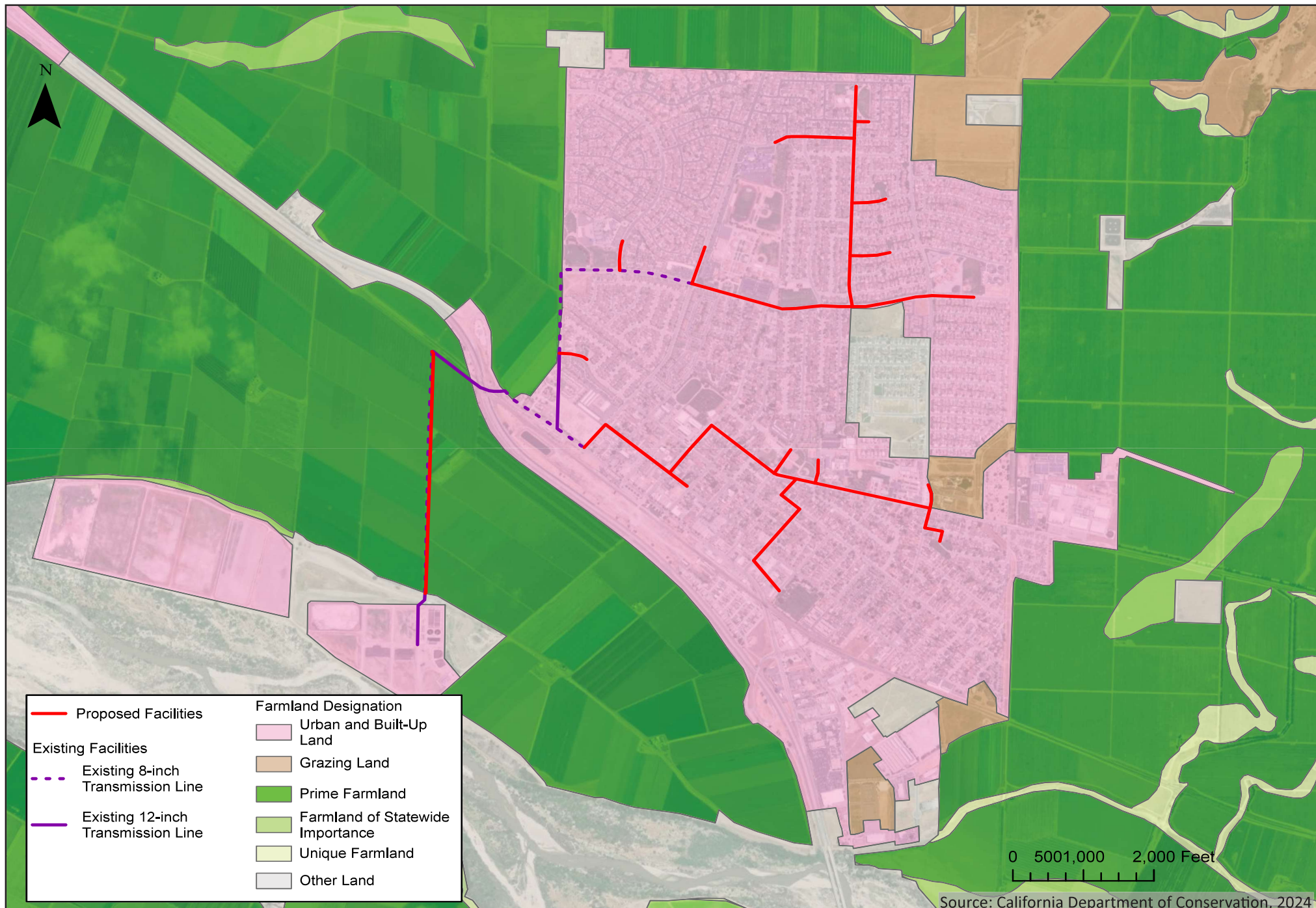
State

California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (“Williamson Act”): The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, is the State’s primary program aimed at conserving private land for agricultural use. The California Department of Conversation prepares countywide maps of lands enrolled in the Williamson Act contracts. The Williamson Act provides a voluntary, locally administered program offering reduced property taxes on lands whose owners place enforceable restrictions on land use through contracts between the individual landowners and local governments.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The City’s Land Use Element and Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan contains the following policies for agriculture applicable to the Proposed Project:

- L-1:** The land use designations and policies of this General Plan apply to the general plan area. Within the City’s planning areas, the City will support the following:
 - b.** Preserve agriculture on large lots outside the City’s sphere of influence as it may be amended by the updated general plan.
- C/OS3:** The City shall ensure that new development and public infrastructure projects do not encourage expansion of urban uses outside the general plan area into areas designated Agriculture by the Monterey County General Plan.



Title:

Important Farmland Map

Date 8/13/2024

Scale N/A

Project 2024.26



Monterey | San Jose
Denise Duffy and Associates, Inc.
 Environmental Consultants Resource Planners
 947 Cass Street, Suite 5
 Monterey, CA 93940
 (831) 373-4341

Figure
9

C/OS6: The City shall require development within or adjacent to designated agricultural areas to minimize conflicts with adjacent agricultural uses.

2010 Monterey County General Plan: None of the policies provided by the 2010 Monterey County General Plan related to agricultural or forest resources are applicable to the Proposed Project.

Would the project:		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
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))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■
d)	Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest uses?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a. Would the project 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 Proposed Project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, to non-agricultural use. While there are agricultural uses on Prime Farmland adjacent to portions of the Proposed Project (primarily along Morisoli Road and portions of Front Street), the Proposed Project would be located on existing roadway ROW and the WRF property, which are disturbed and developed areas. The proposed pipeline segment running from the WRF to Front Street would be constructed within an easement on existing farmland. However, no agricultural work occurs within the easement and the Proposed Project would not result in the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural use. This represents a less than significant impact.

b. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

The Proposed Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract. While the Proposed Project is located adjacent to areas currently zoned for agricultural use and under a Williamson Act Contract (primarily along Morisoli Road and portions of Front Street), project activities occurring within agricultural parcels would be limited to existing easements and would not conflict with agricultural use under a Williamson Act contract. This represents a less than significant impact.

c. Would the project 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 Proposed Project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land. No forest or timberland is located on or in the vicinity of the Proposed Project site. No impact would occur.

d. Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest uses?

Please refer to the discussion above. The Proposed Project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use since none existing on the site. No impact would occur.

e. Would the project 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 Proposed Project would not involve changes to the existing environment that could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use. Construction and operation of the Proposed Project within agricultural parcels would be limited to existing easements and would not result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use. There is no forest land within or adjacent to the Proposed Project area. No impact would occur.

4.3. Air Quality

Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project is in the North Central Coast Air Basin (“NCCAB”), which encompasses Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey counties. The NCCAB is under the jurisdiction of the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (“MBARD”). MBARD is responsible for producing an Air Quality Management Plan (“AQMP”) that reports air quality and regulates stationary air pollution sources throughout the NCCAB. MBARD is also responsible for measuring the concentration of pollutants and comparing those concentrations against the Ambient Air Quality Standards (“AAQS”). AAQS establish levels of air quality maintenance required to protect the public from the adverse effects of air pollution and are established for “criteria air pollutants” which include ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter, 2.5 microns in diameter, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and lead. MBARD is responsible for monitoring criteria pollutants to determine whether they are in attainment or not in attainment with the AQMP. **Table 1** illustrates the attainment status for criteria pollutants.

Table 1
Attainment Status for the NCCAB

Pollutants	State Designation	Federal Designation
Ozone (O ₃)	Nonattainment – Transitional	Attainment
Inhalable Particulates (PM ₁₀)	Nonattainment	Attainment
Fine Particulates (PM _{2.5})	Attainment	Attainment
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	Monterey Co. – Attainment	Attainment
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	San Benito Co. – Unclassified	Attainment
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	Santa Cruz Co. – Unclassified	Attainment
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂)	Attainment	Attainment
Sulfur Dioxide (SO ₂)	Attainment	Attainment
Lead	Attainment	Attainment

Source: Monterey Bay Air Resources District, 2017. 2012 – 2015 Air Quality Management Plan

MBARD has set air quality thresholds of significance for the evaluation of projects. **Table 2** illustrates the thresholds of significance used to determine if a project would have a significant air quality effect during construction. In addition to these thresholds, MBARD has also determined a significant short-term construction generated impact would occur if more than 2.2 acres of major grading or excavation, or 8.1 acres of minimal earthmoving per day was to occur (MBARD, 2008).

Table 2
Thresholds of Significance for Construction Emissions

Pollutant	Threshold of Significance (lb./day)
Nitrogen Oxides (NO _x)	173
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG)	137
Respirable Particular Matter (PM ₁₀)	82
Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5})	55
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	550

Source: Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, 2016. Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act.

Table 3 illustrates the thresholds of significance used to determine if a project would have a significant air quality effect on the environment during operation.

Table 3
Thresholds of Significance for Operational Emissions

Pollutant	Threshold of Significance (lb./day)
Nitrogen Oxides (NO _x)	137
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG)	137
Respirable Particular Matter (PM ₁₀)	82
Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5})	55
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	550

Source: Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, 2016. Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act.

The California Air Resources Board (“CARB”) defines a sensitive receptor as children, elderly, asthmatic, and others who are at elevated risk of negative health outcomes due to exposure to air pollution (CARB, 2023). Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code Sec. 42705.5, a sensitive receptor includes hospitals, schools and day cares centers and such locations as the district or state board may determine. MBARD similarly defines sensitive receptors and requires any explanation of sensitive receptors to draw

a relationship to the Proposed Project site and potential air quality impacts (MBARD, 2008). Sensitive receptors are more susceptible to the effects of air pollution than the general population. Land uses that are considered sensitive receptors include residences, schools, and health care facilities. Sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the Proposed Project area consist primarily of residences.

Common sources of odors and odor complaints include wastewater treatment plants, transfer stations, coffee roasters, painting/coating operations, and landfills.

Climate and Topography

Climatological conditions, an area's topography, and the quantity and type of pollutants released commonly determine ambient air quality. The NCCAB covers an area of 5,159 square miles along the central coast. The northwest sector of the NCCAB is dominated by the Santa Cruz Mountains. The Diablo Range marks the northeastern boundary. The Santa Clara Valley extends into the northeastern tip of the basin. Further south, the Santa Clara Valley becomes the San Benito Valley, which runs northwest-southeast, with the Gabilan Range as its western boundary. To the west of the Gabilan Range is the Salinas Valley, which extends from Salinas at the northwest end to south of King City. The coastal Santa Lucia Range defines the western side of the valley.

Climate, or the average weather condition, affects air quality in several ways. Wind patterns can remove or add air pollutants emitted by either stationary or mobile sources. Inversion, a condition where warm air traps cooler air underneath it, can hold pollutants near the ground by limiting upward mixing (dilution). Communities with cold climates may burn wood or other fuels for residential heating, whereas areas with hot climates may have higher emissions or some pollutants from automobiles. Topography also plays a part, and valleys often trap emissions by limiting lateral dispersal.

A semi-permanent high-pressure cell in the eastern Pacific, the Pacific High, is the basic controlling factor in the climate of the NCCAB. In the summer, the high-pressure cell is dominant and causes persistent west and northwest winds over the entire coast. Air descends in the Pacific High, forming a stable temperature inversion of hot air over a cool coastal layer of air. The onshore air currents pass over cool ocean waters to bring fog and relatively cool air into the coastal valleys. The warmer air aloft acts as a lid to inhibit vertical air movement. During the winter, the Pacific High migrates southward and has less influence on the NCCAB. Air frequently flows in a southeasterly direction out of the Salinas and San Benito Valleys, especially during night and morning hours. The general absence of deep, persistent inversions and the occasional storm systems usually result in good air quality for the basin in winter and early spring.

Regulatory Framework

Federal

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA"): At the federal level, the U.S. EPA implements national air quality programs. The Federal Clean Air Act ("FCAA"), signed in 1970, provides air quality mandates used by the U.S. EPA. Congress amended the FCAA in 1977 and again in 1990.

Federal Clean Air Act: The FCAA required the U.S. EPA to establish National Ambient Air Quality Standards ("NAAQS") and set deadlines for their attainment. Two (2) types of NAAQS exist: primary standards, which protect public health, and secondary standards, which protect public welfare from

non-health-related adverse effects, such as visibility restrictions. The FCAA allows states to adopt additional or more health-protective standards. **Table 4** compares the California Ambient Air Quality Standards and the NAAQS.

Table 4
Summary of Ambient Air Quality Standards

Pollutant	Averaging Time	California Standard*	National Standards (Primary)
Ozone	1-Hour	0.09 ppm	- -
Ozone	8-Hour	0.07 ppm	0.070 ppm
PM ₁₀	AAM	20 µg/m ³	- -
PM ₁₀	24-Hour	50 µg/m ³	150 µg/m ³
PM _{2.5}	AAM	12 µg/m ³	12 µg/m ³
PM _{2.5}	24-Hour	No standard	35 µg/m ³
Carbon Monoxide	1-Hour	20 ppm	35 ppm
Carbon Monoxide	8-Hour	9.0 ppm	9 ppm
Nitrogen Dioxide	AAM	0.030 ppm	0.053 ppm
Nitrogen Dioxide	1-Hour	0.18 ppm	100 ppm
Sulfur Dioxide	AAM	- -	0.03 ppm
Sulfur Dioxide	24-Hour	0.04 ppm	0.14 ppm
Sulfur Dioxide	3-Hour	- -	0.5 ppm (1300 µg/m ³) **
Sulfur Dioxide	1-Hour	0.25 ppm	75 ppm
Lead	30- day	1.5 µg/m ³	- -
Lead	Calendar quarter	- -	1.5 µg/m ³
Lead	Rolling 3-month	- -	0.15 µg/m ³
Sulfate	24-Hour	25 µg/m ³	No Federal Standards
Hydrogen Sulfide	1-Hour	0.03 ppm (42 µg/m ³)	No Federal Standards
Vinyl Chloride	24-Hour	0.01 ppm (26 µg/m ³)	No Federal Standards
Visibility Reducing Particles	8-hours	Extinction coefficient of 0.23 per kilometer —visibility of ten miles or more (0.07 — 30 miles or more for Lake Tahoe) due to particles when relative humidity is < 70%.	No Federal Standards

Source: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/aaqs2.pdf>

ppm = Parts per Million; µg/m³ = Micrograms per Cubic Meter; AAM = Annual Arithmetic Mean

* For more information on standards visit :<http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/aaqs/aaqs2.pdf>

**Secondary Standard

Source: CARB, 2016

The FCAA also required each state to prepare an air quality control plan referred to as a State Implementation Plan (“SIP”). The 1990 FCAA Amendments required states with non-attainment areas to revise their SIPs to incorporate additional control measures to reduce air pollution. The SIP is periodically modified to reflect the latest emissions inventories, planning documents, and rules and regulations of the air basins as reported by their jurisdictional agencies. The U.S. EPA has the responsibility to review all state SIPs to determine conformance with the mandates of the FCAA and FCAA amendments. The U.S. EPA also determines if implementation will achieve air quality goals. If the U.S. EPA determines a SIP to be inadequate, a Federal Implementation Plan (“FIP”) may be prepared for the non-attainment area that imposes additional control measures.

Pursuant to California Clean Air Act (“CCAA”) and CCAA amendments, a region must participate in the SIP if the state designates it as a maintenance region. The most recent Federal Plan prepared by MBARD to maintain the 1-hour ozone NAAQS is the 2007 Federal Maintenance Plan for Maintaining the National Ozone Standard in the Monterey Bay Region and adopted rules and regulations.

State

California Air Resources Board: CARB is the agency responsible for coordinating and overseeing state and local air pollution control programs in California and implementing the CCAA of 1988. Other CARB duties include monitoring air quality (in conjunction with air monitoring networks maintained by air pollution control districts and air quality management districts, establishing California Ambient Air Quality Standards (“CAAQS”), which in many cases are more stringent than the NAAQS, and setting emissions standards for new motor vehicles.¹ **Table 4** summarizes the CAAQS above.

California Clean Air Act: The CCAA requires all air districts in the state to endeavor to achieve and maintain CAAQS for Ozone, CO, SO₂, and NO₂ by the earliest practical date. The CCAA specifies that districts focus particular attention on reducing emissions from transportation and area-wide emission sources, and the act provides districts with authority to regulate indirect sources of emissions. Each district plan is required to either (1) achieve a five (5) percent annual reduction, averaged over consecutive three (3)-year periods, in district-wide emissions of each nonattainment pollutant or its precursors, or (2) provide for the implementation of all feasible measures to reduce emissions. Any planning effort for air quality attainment would thus need to consider both state and federal planning requirements.

Assembly Bills 1807 & 2588 - Toxic Air Contaminants: California Assembly Bill (“AB”) 1807 (Tanner Air Toxics Act) and AB 2588 (Air Toxics Hot Spots Information and Assessment Act of 1987) primarily regulate Toxic Air Contaminants (“TACs”). The Tanner Air Toxics Act sets forth a formal procedure for CARB to designate substances as TACs. This procedure includes research, public participation, and scientific peer review before CARB designates a substance as a TAC. Existing sources of TACs that are subject to the Air Toxics Hot Spots Information and Assessment Act are required to: 1) prepare a toxic emissions inventory; 2) prepare a risk assessment if emissions are significant; 3) notify the public of significant risk levels; and 4) prepare and implement risk reduction measures.

Local

Monterey Bay Air Resources District: MBARD is the agency primarily responsible for ensuring that NAAQS and CAAQS are not exceeded and that air quality conditions are maintained in the NCCAB. Responsibilities of the MBARD include, but are not limited to, preparing plans for the attainment of ambient air quality standards, adopting, and enforcing rules and regulations concerning sources of air pollution, issuing permits for stationary sources of air pollution, inspecting stationary sources of air pollution, responding to citizen complaints, monitoring ambient air quality and meteorological conditions, and implementing programs and regulations required by the FCAA and the CCAA. To achieve NAAQS and CAAQS and maintain air quality, the MBARD has most recently completed the 2012-2015 AQMP for achieving the state ozone standards and the 2007 Federal Maintenance Plan for maintaining federal ozone standards (MBARD 2017).

¹ The emission standards established for motor vehicles differ depending on various factors including the model year, and the type of vehicle, fuel, and engine used.

To achieve and maintain ambient air quality standards, the MBARD has adopted various rules and regulations for the control of airborne pollutants. The applicable MBARD rules and regulations to the Proposed Project include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Rule 402 (Nuisances).** The purpose of this rule is to prohibit emissions that may create a public nuisance. Applies to any source operation that emits or may emit air contaminants or other materials.
- **Rule 426 (Architectural Coatings).** The purpose of this rule is to limit emissions of volatile organic compounds from architectural coatings.
- **Rule 425 (Use of Cutback Asphalt).** The purpose of this rule is to limit emissions of vapors of organic compounds from the use of cutback and emulsified asphalt. This rule applies to the manufacture and use of cutback, slow cure, and emulsified asphalt during paving and maintenance operations.
- **Rule 424 (NESHAP-Asbestos).** Rule 424 adopts the National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants contained in the Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR Part 61) pertaining to asbestos removal and building demolitions.

City of Soledad General Plan: The City's Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan contains the following policy for air quality applicable to the Proposed Project:

C/OS-15: The City shall submit development proposals to the Air Pollution Control District for review and comment in compliance with CEQA prior to consideration by the decision-making body.

2010 Monterey County General Plan: None of the policies provided by the 2010 Monterey County General Plan related to air quality are applicable to portions of the Proposed Project.

Would the project:		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a. Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

An Air Quality Assessment was prepared for the Project by AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting (August 2024). CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(b) requires that a project be evaluated for consistency with applicable regional plans, including the AQMP. The most recent AQMP update was approved in March 2017. This plan addresses attainment of the State ozone standards and federal air quality standard. The AQMP accommodates growth by projecting growth in emissions based on population forecasts prepared by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (“AMBAG”). Consistency determinations are issued for commercial, industrial, residential, and infrastructure-related projects that have the potential to induce population growth. A project is inconsistent with the AQMP if it has not been accommodated in the forecast projections considered in the AQMP.

The Proposed Project involves the expansion of recycled water distribution to existing City parks and schools. The recycled water would be used to irrigate landscaped areas, playfields, and other areas that are currently irrigated using potable groundwater. The Proposed Project would not result in growth that was unaccounted for in population forecast contained in MBARD’s AQMP. The Proposed Project would not conflict with and/or otherwise obstruct implementation of the AQMP. This represents a less than significant impact related to clean air planning.

b. Would the project 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?

The MBARD 2016 CEQA Air Quality Guidelines contain standards of significance for evaluating potential air quality effects of projects subject to the requirements of CEQA. According to MBARD, a project would violate an air quality standard and/or contribute to an existing or projected violation if it would emit (from all sources, including exhaust and fugitive dust) less than:

- 137 pounds per day of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x),
- 137 pounds per day of reactive organic gases (ROG),
- 82 pounds per day of respirable particulate matter (PM₁₀),
- 55 pounds per day of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), and
- 550 pounds per day carbon monoxide (CO).

Potential air quality effects were quantified using CalEEMod. Air quality calculations were performed by AMBIENT and are provided in **Appendix C**.

Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project would require substantial grading and excavation (including export of 21,800 cubic yards [“cy”] of soil material and import of 24,600 cy of soil material). Ground disturbing activities would occur on approximately three and a half acres. The Proposed Project also includes approximately three acres of asphalt paving within the ground disturbing area. Construction would require equipment such as bulldozers, vibratory compactors, dump trucks, front loaders, cranes, concrete trucks, pavers, and delivery trucks. Construction related emissions would come from sources

such as exhaust or fugitive dust. Air quality effects were quantified using CalEEMod, **Table 5**, illustrates the emissions generated by construction of the Project.

Table 5
Construction Air Quality Emissions¹

Emissions in Pounds/Day by Facility	ROG	NO_x	CO	PM₁₀	PM_{2.5}
Foundation/Concrete - Unmitigated	0.57	0.43	4.99	0.37	0.1
Grading - Unmitigated	1.46	1.16	12.33	7.05	3.5
Pump Station Install - Unmitigated	0.47	0.4	3.75	0.08	0.01
Asphalt Paving - Unmitigated	0.38	0.24	3.84	0.51	0.13
Trenching - Unmitigated	0.46	0.31	4.4	0.5	0.13
Total All Facilities	3.34	2.54	29.3	8.51	3.87
MBARD Significance Threshold? ²	--	--	--	82	--
Exceed Threshold/Significant Impact?	--	--	--	No	--

¹ Based on the highest daily emissions during summer or winter conditions without the implementation of fugitive dust control measures. Assumes foundation/concrete, pump station installation, trenching (2025), and asphalt paving could potentially occur simultaneously.

² The MBARD has not identified significance thresholds for ROG, NO_x, CO or PM_{2.5}. Emissions of ROG and NO_x are accommodated in the emission inventories of State- and federally-required air plans and would not have a significant impact on the attainment and maintenance of ozone AAQS. Emissions of PM_{2.5} are a component of PM₁₀.

Operation

Based on the results of air quality assessment, the daily activities associated with long-term operations of the Project would not generate emissions of criteria air pollutants and precursors from mobile, energy use, and area sources. Daily operational emissions of criteria pollutants would not exceed any MBARD emissions thresholds and would not have a significant impact on regional air quality or attainment and maintenance of O₃ ambient air quality standards. For these reasons, operational emissions would have a less than significant impact on public health. The long-term operational activities would, therefore, have a less than significant air quality impact.

c. Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Short-Term Construction Emissions

Naturally-Occurring Asbestos (NOA): The ARB identifies NOA as a TAC. In accordance with ARB Air Toxics Control Measure, prior to any grading activities, a geologic evaluation should be conducted to determine if NOA is present within the area that would be disturbed. If NOA is not present, an exemption request form, along with a copy of the geologic report, must be filed with the local air district. If NOA is found at the site, the applicant must comply with all requirements outlined in the Asbestos Air Toxics Control Measure. The Project site is not located within an area identified as having a potential for naturally occurring ultramafic rock and serpentine soils. As a result, this impact would be considered less than significant.

Asbestos-Containing Materials: Demolition activities can have potential negative air quality impacts, including issues surrounding the proper handling, demolition, and disposal of asbestos-containing material (ACM). ACM could be encountered during the demolition of existing buildings, particularly older structures constructed prior to 1970. Asbestos can also be found in various building products, including (but not limited to) utility pipes/pipelines (transit pipes or insulation on pipes). If a project involves the disturbance or potential disturbance of ACM, various regulatory requirements may apply.

The Project would not include the demolition of existing on-site structures. As a result, this impact would be considered less than significant.

TACs (DPM Emissions): The primary TAC of concern associated with short-term construction activities is DPM. Implementation of the Project would result in the generation of DPM emissions during construction associated with the use of offroad diesel equipment for site grading, paving, and other construction activities. Health-related risks associated with diesel-exhaust emissions are primarily associated with long-term exposure and the associated risk of contracting cancer. For off-site work and residential land uses, the calculation of cancer risk associated with exposure to TACs is typically calculated based on a 25-year and 30-year period of exposure, respectively. The use of diesel-powered construction equipment would be temporary and episodic, typically only occurring over a short period (i.e., weeks or months). For this reason and given the highly dispersive nature of DPM, exposure to construction-generated DPM would not be anticipated to exceed applicable thresholds (i.e., incremental increase in cancer risk of 10 in one million or a HI greater than 1). As a result, this impact is considered less than significant.

Fugitive Dust Emissions: Construction of the Project would result in short-term emissions of fugitive particulate matter associated with ground disturbance. However, compliance with applicable MBARD rules and regulations, including but not limited to Rule 402 for the control of nuisance-related emissions would minimize potential impacts to occupants of nearby land uses. Furthermore, construction-generated PM₁₀ would be significantly less than MBARD's daily significance threshold of 82 lbs/day. As previously noted, MBARD has determined that emissions below 82 lbs/day would not be expected to exceed AAQS. As a result, this impact would be considered less than significant.

Additionally, the Proposed Project would implement standard Best Management Practices ("BMPs") to further reduce air pollution emissions. These BMPs include, but are not limited to, the following measures:

- Reduce the amount of the disturbed area where possible;
- Use of water trucks or sprinkler systems in sufficient quantities to prevent airborne dust from leaving the site. Increased watering frequency would be required whenever wind speeds exceed 15 mph. Reclaimed (non-potable) water shall be used whenever possible;
- All dirt stockpile areas shall be sprayed daily as needed;
- Permanent dust control measures identified in the approved project re-vegetation and landscape plans shall be implemented as soon as possible following completion of any soil disturbing activities;
- Exposed ground areas that are planned to be reworked at dates greater than one month after initial grading shall be sown with a fast germinating, non-invasive grass seed and watered until vegetation is established;
- All disturbed soil areas not subject to re-vegetation shall be stabilized using chemical soil binders, jute netting, or other methods approved in advance by the MBARD;
- All trucks hauling dirt, sand, soil, or other loose materials are to be covered or shall maintain at least two feet of freeboard (minimum vertical distance between top of load and top of trailer) in accordance with CVC Section 23114;
- Install track-out control devices where vehicles enter and exit unpaved roads onto streets, or wash off trucks and equipment leaving the site;

- Use of water trucks or sprinkler systems in sufficient quantities to prevent airborne dust from leaving the site. Increased watering frequency would be required whenever wind speeds exceed 15 mph. Reclaimed (non-potable) water shall be used whenever possible;
- All dirt stock pile areas shall be sprayed daily as needed;
- Permanent dust control measures identified in the approved project re-vegetation and landscape plans shall be implemented as soon as possible following completion of any soil disturbing activities;
- Exposed ground areas that are planned to be reworked at dates greater than one month after initial grading shall be sown with a fast germinating, non-invasive grass seed and watered until vegetation is established;
- All disturbed soil areas not subject to re-vegetation shall be stabilized using chemical soil binders, jute netting, or other methods approved in advance by the MBARD;
- All trucks hauling dirt, sand, soil, or other loose materials are to be covered or shall maintain at least two feet of freeboard (minimum vertical distance between top of load and top of trailer) in accordance with CVC Section 23114;
- Install track-out control devices where vehicles enter and exit unpaved roads onto streets, or wash off trucks and equipment leaving the site;
- Sweep paved/unpaved roadways boundaries (e.g.) project entrance roadways) at the end of each day if visible soil material is carried onto adjacent paved roads. Water sweepers with reclaimed water shall be used where feasible;
- Maintain all construction equipment in proper tune according to manufacturer's specifications;
- Fuel all off-road and portable diesel-powered equipment with CARB certified motor vehicle diesel fuel (non-taxed version suitable for use off-road);
- Use diesel construction equipment over 25 horsepower meeting CARB's Tier 2 certified engines or cleaner off-road heavy-duty diesel engines and comply with the State Off-Road Regulation. If Tier 2 equipment is not available, then documentation shall be maintained demonstrating equipment non-availability for verification;
- Use on-road heavy-duty trucks on-site that meet the CARB's 2007 or cleaner certification standard for on-road heavy-duty diesel engines, and comply with the State On-Road Regulation;
- Construction or trucking companies with fleets that do not have engines in their fleet that meet the engine standards identified in the above two measures (e.g. captive or NO_x exempt area fleets) may be eligible by proving alternative compliance;
- All on- and off-road diesel equipment shall not idle for more than five minutes. Signs shall be posted in the designated staging areas and at the project entrance to remind drivers and operators of the five-minute idling limit;
- Diesel idling in 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors is not permitted (applicable only along the northernmost edge of the project site);
- Electrify equipment when feasible;
- Substitute gasoline-powered in place of diesel-powered equipment, where feasible; and
- Use alternatively fueled construction equipment on-site where feasible, such as compressed natural gas ("CNG"), liquefied natural gas ("LNG"), propane or biodiesel.
- Implement Idling Restrictions Near Sensitive Receptors for Both On and off-Road Equipment

Long-term Operational Emissions

The Project would not result in the installation or operation of any major stationary sources of air pollution emissions. As a result, this impact would be less than significant.

- d. *Would the project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?*

Odors could be generated during Project construction. 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 sensitivity of the receptors. While offensive odors rarely cause any physical harm, they can be very unpleasant, leading to considerable distress among the public and often generating citizen complaints to local governments and regulatory agencies. Construction of the Project would involve the use of a variety of gasoline or diesel-powered equipment that would emit exhaust fumes. Exhaust fumes, particularly diesel exhaust, may be considered objectionable by some people. However, construction-generated emissions would occur intermittently throughout the workday and would dissipate rapidly within increasing distance from the source. As a result, short-term construction activities would not expose a substantial number of people to frequent odorous emissions. In addition, no major sources of odors have been identified in the Project area. This represents a less than significant impact.

4.4. Biological Resources

Terminology

Special-Status Species

Special-status species are those plants and animals that have been formally listed or proposed for listing as endangered or threatened or are candidates for such listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act (“ESA”) or the California Endangered Species Act (“CESA”). Listed species are afforded legal protection under the ESA and CESA. Species that meet the definition of rare or endangered under the CEQA Section 15380 are also considered special-status species. Animals on the CDFW’s list of “species of special concern” (most of which are species whose breeding populations in California may face extirpation if current population trends continue) meet this definition and are typically provided management consideration through the CEQA process, although they are not legally protected under the ESA or CESA. Additionally, the CDFW also includes some animal species that are not assigned any of the other status designations on their “Special Animals” list; however, these species have no legal or protection status.

Plants listed as rare under the California Native Plant Protection Act (“CNPPA”) or included in the California Native Plant Society (“CNPS”) California Rare Plant Ranks (“CRPR”) 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B are also treated as special-status species as they meet the definitions of Sections 2062 and 2067 of the CESA and in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15380. In general, the CDFW requires that plant species on CRPR 1A (Plants presumed extirpated in California and Either Rare or Extinct Elsewhere), CRPR 1B (Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere), CRPR 2A (Plants presumed extirpated in California, but more common elsewhere); and CRPR 2B (Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere) of the CNPS *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California* (CNPS, 2023) be fully considered during the preparation of environmental documents relating to CEQA. CNPS’ CRPR 4 species (plants of limited distribution) may, but generally do not, meet the definitions of Sections 2062 and 2067 of the CESA, and are not typically considered in environmental documents relating to CEQA. While other species (i.e., CRPR 3 or 4 species) are sometimes found in database searches or in the literature, these were not included in the analysis as they did not meet the definitions of Section 2062 and 2067 of the CESA.

Fish and Game Code Section 3503.5 protects raptors (e.g., eagles, hawks, and owls) and their nests in California. Section 3503.5 states that it is “unlawful to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto.” Additionally, fully protected species under the Fish and Game Code Section 3511 (birds), Section 4700 (mammals), Section 5515 (fish), and Section 5050 (reptiles and amphibians) are also considered special-status animal species. Species with no formal special-status designation but thought by experts to be rare or in serious decline may also be considered special-status animal species in some cases, depending on project-specific analysis and relevant, localized conservation needs or precedence.

Sensitive Habitats

Sensitive habitats include riparian corridors, wetlands, habitats for legally protected species, areas of high biological diversity, areas supporting rare or special-status wildlife habitat, and unusual or regionally restricted vegetation types. Vegetation types considered sensitive include those listed on CDFW’s *California Natural Communities List* (i.e., those habitats that are rare or endangered in the borders of California) (CDFW, 2023), those that are occupied by species listed under the ESA or are critical habitat in accordance with the ESA, and those that are defined as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas under the California Coastal Act. Specific habitats may also be identified as sensitive in city or county general plans or ordinances. Sensitive habitats are regulated under federal regulations (such as the Clean Water Act and Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands), state regulations (such as CEQA and the CDFW Streambed Alteration Program), or local ordinances or policies (such as city or county tree ordinances and general plan policies).

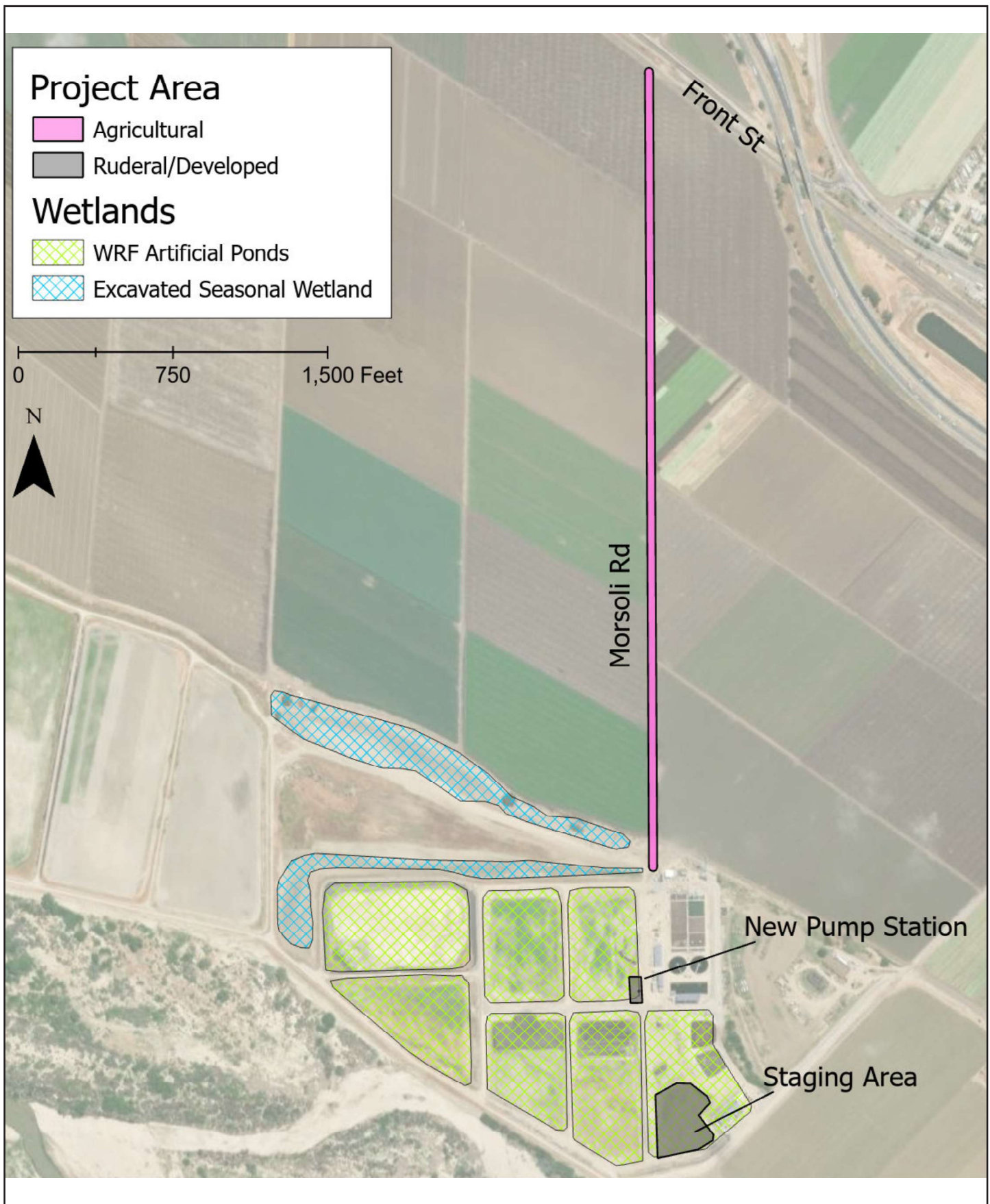
Environmental Setting

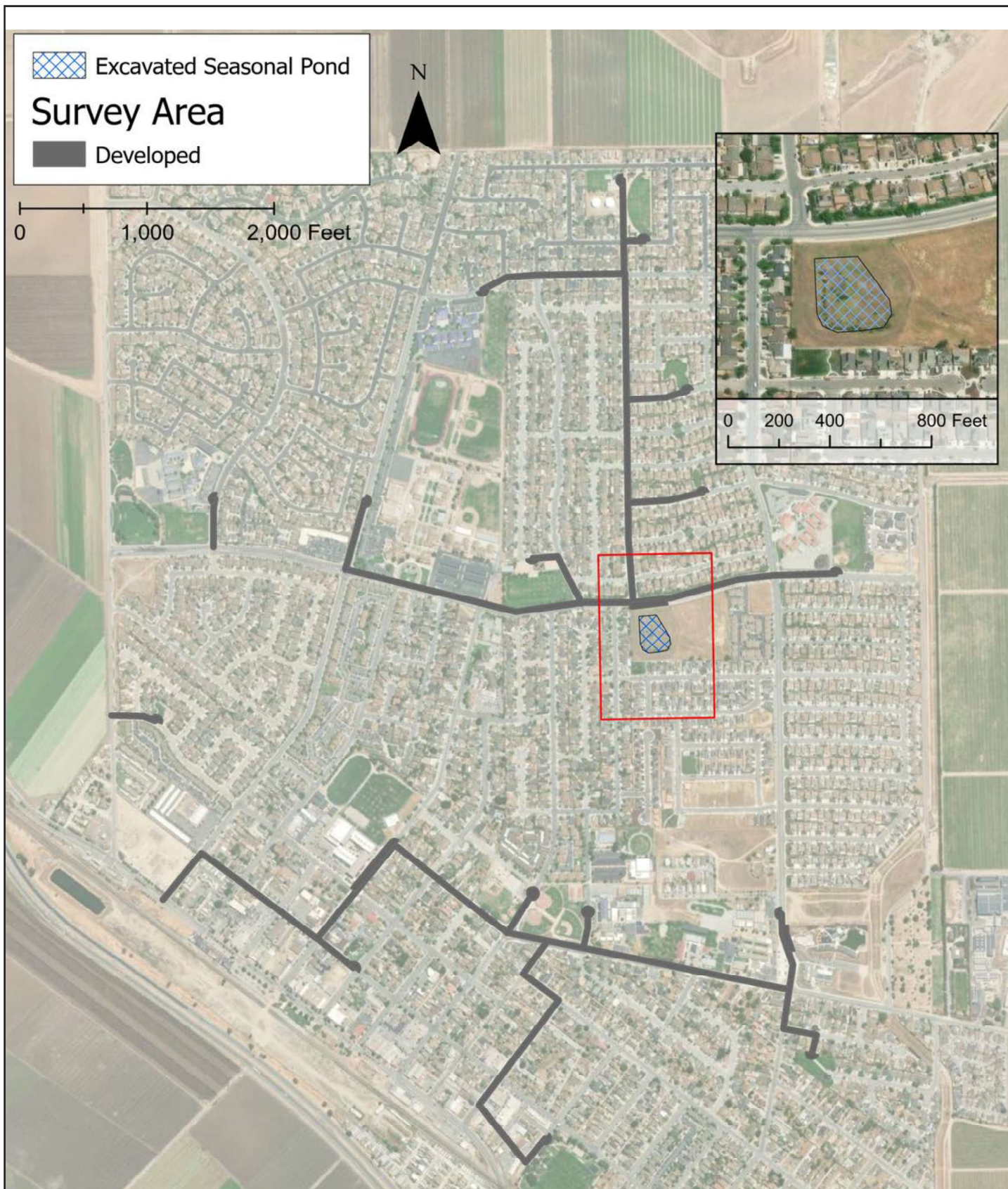
Survey Methodology

DD&A conducted a site reconnaissance and biological survey of the Proposed Project site. DD&A Senior Environmental Scientists conducted surveys of the evaluation area in August 2024. The surveys consisted of walking the site to identify general and sensitive habitat types and conducting a reconnaissance-level habitat survey to identify suitable habitat for or presence of any special-status plant or wildlife species. Data collected during the surveys was used to assess the environmental conditions of the area and its surroundings, evaluate environmental constraints at the site and within the local vicinity, and provide a basis for recommendations to minimize and avoid impacts. The biological resources report is provided in **Appendix D** and summarized below.

Habitats

Approximately 23.4 acres of the evaluation area are developed consisting of paved roads, graded dirt lots, or landscaped properties (locations for new transmission and service lines throughout the City, and the WRF new pump station and staging ground) and approximately 3.6 acres of the evaluation area is ruderal or agricultural habitat (the segments of the evaluation area along Morisoli Road), which consist of actively cultivated agricultural fields (see **Figures 10 and 11**).





Title: **Habitat Map -
Developed**

Date 09/12/2024
Scale N/A
Project 2024.26



Monterey | San Jose
Denise Duffy and Associates, Inc.
Environmental Consultants Resource Planners
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Figure
11

Access to the agricultural easement and WRF was limited during the August 22, 2024 biological survey. Most of the land surrounding the evaluation area is developed with single-family residences with the schools and city parks to be serviced by the new pipelines spread throughout. Due to the disturbed (mowed, sprayed, landscaped) nature of the evaluation area, no vegetation associations identified in *A Manual of California Vegetation* are present, and these areas are not considered sensitive by any regulatory agency. A description of each community is provided below.

Ruderal: Ruderal areas are those areas which have been developed or have been subject to historic and ongoing disturbance by human activities and are devoid of vegetation or dominated by non-native and/or invasive weed species. Within the evaluation area, ruderal land consisted primarily of mowed or graded dirt roads and access areas within the WRF. Ruderal habitat within the excavated drainage ponds (**Figure 10**) was dominated by invasive annuals and contained no emergent or riparian vegetation.

Ruderal areas are considered to have low biological value as they are generally denuded of vegetation or are dominated by non-native plant species and consist of relatively low-quality habitat from a wildlife perspective. However, some common wildlife species that do well in urbanized areas, including European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), California scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), and rock pigeon (*Columba livia*), may be found foraging within these areas.

Agricultural: Approximately 1.8 acres of the survey area are in active agricultural use at the current location of the service pipeline connecting the WRF to the City (**Figure 10**). This area is continuously managed and cultivated for food crops, and is likely subject to frequent soil tilling, weeding, and treatment with insecticides and herbicides. As such, it provides poor habitat for most plant and wildlife species of concern; however, some special-status plants, including Congdon's tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *congdonii*), have been known to occur in ditches and unmaintained edges of agricultural fields and roadways.

Developed: As identified above, developed areas within the evaluation area consist of paved roads, dirt roads, landscaped parks, and the WRF (see **Figures 10 and 11**). Developed areas are considered to have low biological value as they are generally denuded of vegetation and consist of relatively low-quality habitat from a wildlife perspective. However, the common wildlife species identified above for ruderal communities may be found foraging within these areas. Landscaped plants within the park of the evaluation area lack the continuous flowers necessary to support insect species of concern, however they may provide nesting habitat for raptor and other avian species.

Sensitive Habitats

A historic seasonal wetland feature is present approximately 20 ft south of the survey area located at the intersection of Gabilan Drive and Toledo St (**Figure 11**). The location is identified as a seasonal wetland feature on the Service's National Wetlands Mapper, but it is noted as "excavated by humans." The site also contains multiple drainage culverts and is unlikely to contain water outside of active rain storm events. Additionally, several excavated drainage ponds are located adjacent to the survey area as well as within the proposed location of the new storage reservoir and pump station at the WRF (**Figure 10**). These locations are identified by the Service as temporary wetlands that are artificially filled by pumps. This habitat is not suitable breeding habitat for any wildlife species of concern.

No emergent hydrophytic vegetation or other wetland indicators were observed within any of these locations during the August 22, 2024 biological survey. None of the ponds show up in the USGS Hydrographic Dataset (USGS, 2024) nor do they meet the definition of waters of the U.S. as identified in CFR 328.3(a)(8), and, therefore, are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers under the Clean Water Act.

Special-Status Species

Published occurrence data within the Project area and surrounding USGS quadrangles were evaluated to compile a table of special-status species known to occur in the vicinity of the evaluation area. Each of these species was evaluated for their likelihood to occur within and immediately adjacent to the site. No special-status plant species were observed within the evaluation area during biological surveys; however, based on the species-specific reasons presented in **Appendix D**, Congdon's tarplant may occur within the survey area. Three special-status wildlife species have the potential to occur within the evaluation area: Salinas pocket mouse (*Perognathus inornatus psammophilus*), San Joaquin whipsnake (*Masticophis flagellum ruddocki*), and white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*). In addition to the white-tailed kite, raptors and other nesting birds have the potential to occur in the area. These species are discussed below. All other species are assumed unlikely to occur or have a low potential to occur based on the species-specific reasons presented in **Appendix D**, and are not discussed further.

Congdon's Tarplant: Congdon's tarplant is an annual herb in the Asteraceae family that has a variable blooming period from May through November. It is found in valley and foothill grassland on heavy clay, saline or alkaline soils in low-lying disturbed areas that collect water. It is often found in disturbed areas with non-native annuals and grassland species, as well as ditches and vegetated spaces alongside roads and farmland. No individuals of this species were observed during the August 22, 2024 survey; however, the majority of the survey area that would be the most likely to have suitable habitat for Congdon's tarplant was inaccessible for the survey, therefore its presence within the evaluation area cannot be entirely ruled out.

Salinas Pocket Mouse: Salinas pocket mouse is a CDFW Species of Concern. This sub-species of the San Joaquin pocket mouse (*Perognathus inornatus*) is found within chaparral, shrubland, blue oak woodland, and annual grassland habitats of the Salinas Valley. They are most abundant in uncultivated areas and often live in areas with sandy washes and finely textured soils. They are nocturnal, foraging in the night and spending most of the day in their burrows, which are typically dug at the base of shrubs. Burrows are additionally utilized for hibernating, which occurs 2-3 times a year, and rearing young during the breeding season (March – July). Salinas pocket mouse are the most likely to occur within the agricultural easement along Morisoli Road and near the new service line hookups at Toledo Park. The nearest CNDDDB occurrence of the species is from 2006 located 1.6 km north of the site. Therefore, Salinas pocket mouse has a moderate potential to be found within the Project evaluation area.

San Joaquin Whipsnake: The San Joaquin whipsnake is a CDFW species of special concern. Whipsnakes seek cover in rodent burrows, bushes, trees, and rock piles. This species hibernates in soil or sand approximately 0.3 m below the surface, sometimes at the bases of plants. Little is known about nest sites. In desert regions, whipsnakes may be attracted to water to drink or ambush prey. Open terrestrial habitats are preferred, but whipsnakes will occasionally climb trees and bushes to bask, seek prey, or take cover. Diet consists of rodents, lizards and their eggs, snakes (including rattlesnakes), birds and their eggs, young turtles, insects, and carrion. Whipsnakes, a diurnal species, search actively for prey, with

their heads elevated. This species inserts its head in burrows or climbs trees, using both vision and olfaction to detect prey. Mating occurs in April and May, eggs are laid in June and July, and the first young appear in late August to early September.

The CNDDDB reports 3 occurrences of San Joaquin whipsnake within the quadrangles evaluated. The nearest occurrence is 9.8 km miles from the survey area from 1987. Habitat quality for San Joaquin whipsnake within the survey area is relatively low. The entire site is ruderal, agriculture, or developed habitat that does not provide appropriate cover or habitat conditions for San Joaquin whipsnake; however, the staging area is approximately 100 m from the Salinas River floodplain and may provide dispersal habitat for San Joaquin whipsnake.

White-Tailed Kite: White-tailed kite is a California fully-protected species and is protected by the MBTA and Fish and Game code. This raptor species is a common to uncommon, year-long resident in coastal and valley lowlands. WTK generally utilizes herbaceous lowlands with variable tree growth and an associated high population density of voles (*Microtus californicus*). Nests are made of loosely piled sticks and twigs and lined with grass, straw, or rootlets. Nests are generally placed near the top of dense oak (*Quercus* sp.), willow, or other tree stands (usually 6-20 meters above ground) and are often located near an open foraging area. Breeding occurs from February to October with peak activity occurring from May to August. This species preys predominantly on voles and other small mammals, but also takes birds, insects, reptiles, and amphibians. Foraging occurs in undisturbed open grasslands, meadows, farmlands, and emergent wetlands. Suitable nesting habitat is present within the trees directly adjacent to the evaluation area. Suitable hunting and foraging habitat are not present within the site; however, the nearby agricultural lands, vacant lots, and parks may provide suitable foraging habitat for this species.

The Project evaluation area is within the known breeding range of the white-tailed kite and the CNDDDB reports 6 occurrences of the species within the quadrangles reviewed. The nearest CNDDDB occurrence is from 2006 located approximately 9.3 km northeast from the evaluation area. Therefore, WTK has moderate potential to nest directly adjacent to the site.

Protected Avian Species

Raptors and other nesting birds are protected under the California Fish and Game Code and the MBTA. While the life histories of these species vary, overlapping nesting and foraging similarities allow for their concurrent discussion. Most raptors are breeding residents throughout most of the wooded portions of the state. Stands of live oak, riparian deciduous, or other forest habitats, as well as open grasslands, are used most frequently for nesting. Smaller avian species may also nest in scrub habitats and urban areas. Breeding occurs February through September, with peak activity May through July. Various raptors and avian species, such as red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), California scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), and sparrows (*Zonotrichia* sp.), have the potential to nest within the trees present within and directly adjacent to the evaluation area.

Regulatory Environment

Federal

Federal Endangered Species Act: Provisions of the ESA of 1973 (16 USC 1532 et seq., as amended) protect federally listed threatened or endangered species and their habitats from unlawful take. Listed species include those for which proposed and final rules are published in the Federal Register. The ESA is administered by the Service or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ("NOAA") National Marine Fisheries Service ("NMFS"). In general, NMFS is responsible for the protection of ESA-listed marine species and anadromous fish, whereas other listed species are under Service jurisdiction.

Section 9 of ESA prohibits the take of any fish or wildlife species listed under ESA as endangered or threatened. Take, as defined by ESA, is "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct." The ESA defines harm as "any act that kills or injures the fish or wildlife...including significant habitat modification or degradation that significantly impairs essential behavioral patterns of fish or wildlife." Additionally, Section 9 prohibits removing, digging up, and maliciously damaging or destroying federally listed plants on sites under federal jurisdiction. Section 9 does not prohibit the take of federally listed plants on sites not under federal jurisdiction. If there is the potential for incidental take of a federally listed fish or wildlife species, take of listed species can be authorized through either the Section 7 consultation process for federal actions or a Section 10 incidental take permit process for non-federal actions. Federal agency actions include activities on federal land, conducted by a federal agency, funded by a federal agency, or authorized by a federal agency (including issuance of federal permits).

Clean Water Act. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ("USACE") and U.S. EPA regulate discharge of dredged and fill material into waters of the U.S. under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act ("CWA"). Waters of the U.S. are defined broadly as waters susceptible to use in commerce (including waters subject to tides, interstate waters, and interstate wetlands) and other waters (such as interstate lakes, rivers, streams, mudflats, sandflats, wetlands, sloughs, prairie potholes, wet meadows, playa lakes, or natural ponds) (33 CFR 328.3). Potential wetland areas are identified as "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soils conditions."

Under Section 401 of the CWA, any applicant receiving a Section 404 permit from the USACE must also obtain a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the RWQCB. A Section 401 Water Quality Certification is issued when a project is demonstrated to comply with state water quality standards and other aquatic resource protection requirements.

State

California Endangered Species Act: The CESA was enacted in 1984. The California Code of Regulations (Title 14, §670.5) lists animal species considered endangered or threatened by the state. Sec. 2090 of CESA requires state agencies to comply with endangered species protection and recovery and to promote conservation of these species. Sec. 2080 of the Fish and Game Code prohibits "take" of any species the commission determines to be an endangered species or a threatened species. Sec. 86 of the Fish and Game Code defines "take" as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue,

catch, capture, or kill." Section 2081 Incidental Take Permit from the CDFW may be obtained to authorize "take" of any state listed species.

California Native Plant Protection Act: The CNPPA of 1977 directed CDFW to conduct the legislature's intent to "preserve, protect and enhance rare and Endangered plants in the State." The CNPPA prohibits importing rare and Endangered plants into California, taking rare and Endangered plants, and selling rare and Endangered plants. The CESA and CNPPA authorized the Fish and Game Commission to designate endangered, threatened, and rare species and to regulate the taking of these species (Sec. 2050-2098, Fish and Game Code). Plants listed as rare under the CNPPA are not protected under CESA; however, these plants may not be taken or possessed at any time and no licenses or permits may be issued for their take except for collecting these species for necessary scientific research.

California Fish and Game Code: Sec. 3503 of the Fish and Game Code states that it is "unlawful to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto." Sec. 3503.5 prohibits the killing, possession, or destruction of any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey). Sec. 3511 prohibits the take or possession of fully protected birds. Sec. 3513 prohibits the take or possession of any migratory nongame birds designated under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Sec. 3800 prohibits the take of nongame birds.

The classification of Fully Protected was the state's initial effort in the 1960's to identify and provide additional protection to those animals that were rare or faced extinction. Lists were created for fish (Sec. 5515), mammals (Sec.4700), amphibians and reptiles (Sec.5050), and birds (Sec.3511). Most Fully Protected species have also been listed as threatened or endangered species under the more recent endangered species laws and regulations. Fully Protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time and no licenses or permits may be issued for their take except for collecting these species for necessary scientific research and relocation of the bird species for the protection of livestock.

The CDFW also maintains a list of wildlife "species of special concern." Although these species have no legal status, the CDFW recommends considering these species during analysis of project impacts to protect declining populations and avoid the need to list them as endangered in the future.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The following policies from the Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan are applicable to the Proposed Project:

- C/OS9:** The City shall support the preservation and enhancement of natural landforms, natural vegetation, and natural resources to the maximum extent feasible.
- C/OS10:** The City shall support State and federal laws and policies to preserve populations of rare, threatened, and endangered species by ensuring development does not adversely affect such species in a significant way or by fully mitigating adverse effects.
- C/OS11:** The City shall require that significant natural, open space, and cultural resources be identified in advance of development and incorporated into site-specific development project design to the extent feasible.

C/OS12: The City shall require developers to use native and compatible non-native species, especially drought tolerant species, to the extent possible in fulfilling landscaping requirements imposed as conditions of project approvals or project mitigations.

2010 Monterey County General Plan: The following goals and policies of the 2010 Monterey County General Plan would apply to portions of the Proposed Project:

Goal OS-4: Protect and Conserve the Quality of Coastal, Marine, and River Environments, as Applied in Areas Not in the Coastal Zone.

Policy OS-4.1: Federal and State listed native marine and freshwater species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant shall be protected. Species designated in Area Plans shall also be protected.

Policy OS-4.2: Direct and indirect discharges of harmful substances into marine waters, rivers or streams shall not exceed state or federal standards.

Policy OS-4.3: Estuaries, salt and freshwater marshes, tide pools, wetlands, sloughs, river and stream mouth areas, plus all waterways that drain and have impact on State designated Areas of Special Biological Significance (“ASBS”) shall be protected, maintained, and preserved in accordance with state and federal water quality regulations.

Goal OS-5: Conserve Listed Species, Critical Habitat, Habitat and Species Protected in Area Plans; Avoid, Minimize and Mitigate Significant Impacts to Biological Resources.

Policy OS-5.3: Development shall be carefully planned to provide for the conservation and maintenance of critical habitat.

Policy OS-5.4: Development shall avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to listed species and critical habitat to the extent feasible. Measures may include but are not limited to:

- a. clustering lots for development to avoid critical habitat areas,
- b. dedications of permanent conservation easements; or
- c. other appropriate means.

If development may affect listed species, consultation with United States Fish and Wildlife Service (“USFWS”) and California Department of Fish and Game (“CDFG”) may be required and impacts may be mitigated by expanding the resource elsewhere on-site or in close proximity off-site. Final mitigation requirements would be determined as required by law.

Policy OS-5.6: Native and native compatible species, especially drought resistant species, shall be utilized in fulfilling landscaping requirements.

Policy OS-5.12: The California Department of Fish and Game shall be consulted and appropriate measures shall be taken to protect Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS).

Policy OS-5.16: A biological study shall be required for any development project requiring a discretionary permit and having the potential to 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, or substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species.

An ordinance establishing minimum standards for a biological study and biological surveys shall be enacted. A biological study shall include a field reconnaissance performed at the appropriate time of year. Based on the results of the biological study, biological surveys may be necessary to identify, describe, and delineate the habitats or species that are potentially impacted. Feasible measures to reduce significant impacts to a less than significant level shall be adopted as conditions of approval.

Policy OS-5.18: Prior to disturbing any federal or state jurisdictional areas, all applicable federal and state permitting requirements shall be met, including all mitigation measures for development of jurisdictional areas and associated riparian habitats.

Policy OS-5.24: The County shall require discretionary projects to retain movement corridors of adequate size and habitat quality to allow for continued wildlife use based on the needs of the species occupying the habitat. The County shall require that expansion of its roadways and public infrastructure projects provide movement opportunities for terrestrial wildlife and ensure that existing stream channels and riparian corridors continue to provide for wildlife movement and access.

Policy OS-5.25: Occupied nests of statutorily protected migratory birds and raptors shall not be disturbed during the breeding season (generally February 1 to September 15). The county shall

A. Consult, or require the developer to consult, with a qualified biologist prior to any site preparation or construction work in order to:

- (1) determine whether work is proposed during nesting season for migratory birds or raptors,
- (2) determine whether site vegetation is suitable to nesting migratory birds or raptors,
- (3) identify any regulatory requirements for setbacks or other avoidance measures for migratory birds and raptors which could nest on the site, and
- (4) establish project-specific requirements for setbacks, lock-out periods, or other methods of avoidance of disruption of nesting birds.

B. Require the development to follow the recommendations of the biologist. This measure may be implemented in one of two ways:

- (1) preconstruction surveys may be conducted to identify active nests and, if found, adequate buffers shall be provided to avoid active nest disruption until after the young have fledged; or
- (2) vegetation removal may be conducted during the non-breeding season (generally September 16 to January 31); however, removal of vegetation along waterways shall require approval of all appropriate local, state, and federal agencies.

This policy shall not apply in the case of an emergency fire event requiring tree removal. This policy shall apply for tree removal that addresses fire safety planning, since removal can be scheduled to reduce impacts to migratory birds and raptors.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

Criteria “b” and “c” were not evaluated for impacts to sensitive habitats or impacts to protected wetlands because these resources are not present within the evaluation area. Criterion “e” was not evaluated for conflicts with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance because the project will not require tree removal. Criterion “f” was not evaluated for conflicts with an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan, because the evaluation area is not located within any such plan area.

- a. *Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans,*

policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Congdon's tarplant has the potential to occur within suitable habitat within the evaluation area. (**Appendix D**). Excavation and trenching activities associated with the Project along Morisoli Road and within the WRF and Toledo Park may result in damage or loss of any individuals growing within the site at the time of construction. This is a potentially significant impact that can be minimized to less than significant with implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-1** and **BIO-2**.

Salinas pocket mouse, a CDFW species of special concern, has the potential to occur within or adjacent to the evaluation area. Shrubs within the parks that will receive new service lines and updated irrigation may be utilized by burrowing Salinas pocket mouse. Direct impacts such as excavation and shrub removal, as well as indirect impacts from construction activities (e.g., noise, vibrations) could result in injury, den abandonment, and/or mortality of Salinas pocket mouse if burrowing within or directly adjacent to the evaluation area during construction activities. This is a potentially significant impact that can be minimized to less than significant with implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-1**.

San Joaquin whipsnake have the potential to occur adjacent to the evaluation area. Construction activities associated with the staging area could result in direct mortality of this species if they were to disperse from the adjacent habitat. This would be a potentially significant impact that can be reduced to less than significant with implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-1** and **BIO-3**.

The Project is not expected to result in tree removal or direct impacts to raptors or other nesting birds, including WTK. However, it is possible that the final Project design may require tree removal. In addition, indirect impacts from construction activities (e.g., noise, vibrations) could result in injury, nest abandonment, and/or mortality of raptors and other nesting birds, if nesting within or directly adjacent to the evaluation area during construction activities. This is a potentially significant impact that can be minimized to less than significant with implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-1** and **BIO-4**.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1: A qualified biologist will conduct an Employee Education Program for the construction crew prior to any construction activities. The qualified biologist will meet with the construction crew at the onset of construction at the evaluation area to educate the construction crew on the following: 1) the appropriate access route(s) in and out of the construction area and review Project boundaries; 2) how a biological monitor will examine the area and agree upon a method which will ensure the safety of the monitor during such activities, 3) the identification of special status species that may be present; 4) the specific mitigation measures that will be incorporated into the construction effort; 5) the general provisions and protections afforded; and 6) the proper procedures if a special status species is encountered within the Project site to avoid impacts.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2: A qualified biologist will conduct protocol-level surveys for Congdon's tarplant and Salinas pocket mouse within the Project boundaries within the WRF and within the agricultural/ruderal habitat prior to construction. Protocol-level surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist at the appropriate time of year for species with the potential to occur within the site. A report describing the results of the surveys shall be provided to the project proponents prior to any ground disturbing activities. The report shall include but is not limited to 1) a description of the species observed, if any; 2) map of the location, if observed; and 3) recommended avoidance and minimization measures, if applicable.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3: Prior to construction activities in the staging area, a qualified biologist will conduct a clearance survey in suitable habitat within the Survey Area for San Joaquin whipsnake. If San Joaquin whipsnake is observed during construction, measures will be taken to avoid the individual(s) and the species will be allowed to leave on its own volition or will be relocated outside of the survey area by the qualified biologist.

Mitigation Measure BIO-4: Project activities that may affect protected nesting avian species (e.g., tree removal, noise, vibrations) shall be scheduled after September 15 and before February 1 to avoid the avian breeding and nesting season. Alternatively, a qualified biologist shall be retained by the Project applicant to conduct pre-construction surveys for nesting raptors and other protected avian species within 300 feet of proposed Project activities if work occurs between February 1 and September 15. Pre-construction surveys shall be conducted no more than 14 days prior to the start of Project activities during the early part of the breeding season (February through April) and no more than 30 days prior to the initiation of these activities during the late part of the breeding season (May through September). Because some bird species nest early in spring and others nest later in summer, and because some species breed multiple times in a season, surveys for nesting birds may be required to continue during Project activities to address new arrivals. If Project activities are halted for more than 14 days during the avian nesting season, additional surveys shall be conducted. The necessity and timing of these continued surveys shall be determined by the qualified biologist.

If raptors or other protected avian species nests are identified during the pre-construction surveys, the qualified biologist shall notify the Project applicant and an appropriate no-disturbance buffer shall be imposed within which no disturbance should take place (generally 300 feet in all directions for raptors; other avian species may have species-specific requirements) until the young of the year have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival, as determined by a qualified biologist.

b. Would the project 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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The Project would have no impact to riparian or other sensitive habitats because these resources are not present within the site.

c. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

The Project would have no impact to protected wetlands because this resource is not present within the site.

- d. *Would the project 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 evaluation area lies within an existing residential community and active agricultural land and is not located within a migratory wildlife corridor. The Project consists of the replacement of existing infrastructure and alterations to already developed land and would not result in the construction of any new development or impervious surfaces. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not interfere with the movement of any native resident or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native nursery sites. This impact is less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

- e. *Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?*

The Proposed Project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance, because the project will not require tree removal.

- f. *Would the project 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 Proposed Project is not located within an area included in an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

4.5 Cultural Resources

Basin Research Associates, Inc. ("BASIN") prepared a Cultural Resources Assessment Report for the Proposed Project in August 2024.² The Cultural Resources Assessment Report includes the results of background research and field reconnaissance of the Proposed Project's Area of Potential Effect ("APE"). Background research consisted of a records search from the Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University ("NWIC"), a Sacred Lands File ("SLF") search with the Native American Heritage Commission ("NAHC"), and Native American consultation in support of consultation under AB 52. The field reconnaissance consisted of a pedestrian survey of the APE on July 12, 2024, which investigated the APE for cultural and Tribal cultural resources.

Environmental Setting

The Project area is located in the Salinas Valley with the Gabilan Range on the east and the Sierra de Salinas on the west. The most prominent natural feature is the Salinas River which divides the South County down the middle. This shallow water course is 155 miles long prone to wide displacement during intermittent seasonal flow. It is the principal river in Monterey County and flows for 170 miles from the midpoint of San Luis Obispo County northwest through Monterey County to the Monterey Bay. Numerous creeks and streams from the neighboring mountains feed into the Salinas River. The Project is

² Due to the potentially confidential nature of items in this report, this study is not included in the IS/MND. Qualified personnel may request a copy of this report from the City.

located within the portion of Monterey County that is hot and dry, in contrast to cool and moist along the coast.

There are numerous historic resources spread throughout the County. A search of the NWIC identified 19 reports in or adjacent to the WRF and pipeline alignments with 15 additional reports within 0.5 mile. No prehistoric or combined prehistoric or historic era sites or built environment resources have been recorded or reported in or adjacent to the Proposed Project. Five resources, all historic built environment structures, have been recorded within 0.5 mile of the Proposed Project.

The most recent Monterey County archaeological sensitivity map (Monterey County, 2024) shows a “low” sensitivity in the vicinity of Soledad. The City’s Environmental Impact Report for the 2005 General Plan indicates that the potential for historic era archaeological resources is low, as only one historical site/resource is shown to be within the vicinity of the City. The potential for exposing significant subsurface archaeological materials during pipeline construction appears minimal based on the review of the available sensitivity mapping, the lack of NRHP and CRHR as well as local register resources and the absence of any unexpected construction discoveries over the past 50 years.

BASIN’s pedestrian survey of the Proposed Project APE did not encounter evidence of archaeological deposits or other potential cultural resources. The results of the SLF records search were negative for potential cultural sensitivity within the Proposed Project APE (BASIN, 2024).

Regulatory Environment

State

California Environmental Quality Act: CEQA requires regulatory compliance for projects involving historic resources throughout the State. Under CEQA, public agencies must consider the effects of their actions on historic resources (Public Resources Code, Section 21084.1). The CEQA Guidelines define a significant resource as any resource listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (“California Register”) [see Public Resources Code, Section 21084.1 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 (a) and (b)].

California Public Resources Code: Several sections of the California PRC protect cultural resources located on public land. Under PRC Section 5097.5, no person shall knowingly and willfully excavate upon, or remove, destroy, injure, or deface, any historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, archaeological or vertebrate paleontological site (including fossilized footprints), inscriptions made by human agency, rock art, or any other archaeological, paleontological, or historical feature situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency that has jurisdiction over the lands. Violation of this section is a misdemeanor.

PRC Section 5097.98 states that if Native American human remains are identified within a project area, the landowner must work with the Native American Most Likely Descendant as identified by the NAHC to develop a plan for the treatment or disposition of the human remains and any items associated with Native American burials with appropriate dignity. These procedures are also addressed in Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines. California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 prohibits disinterring, disturbing, or removing human remains from a location other than a dedicated cemetery. Section 30244 of the PRC requires reasonable mitigation for impacts on paleontological and archaeological resources that occur because of development on public lands.

California Health and Safety Code: California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 regulates the treatment of human remains. In the event of discovery or recognition of any human remains in any location other than a dedicated cemetery, there shall be no further excavation or disturbance of the site, or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains until the coroner of the county in which the human remains are discovered has determined that the remains are not subject to his or her authority. If the coroner recognizes the human remains to be those of a Native American or has reason to believe that they are those of a Native American, he or she shall contact the NAHC by telephone within 24 hours.

California Assembly Bill 52: AB 52, in effect since July 2015, provides CEQA protections for Tribal cultural resources. All lead agencies approving projects under CEQA are required, if formally requested by a culturally affiliated California Native American Tribe, to consult with such Tribe regarding the potential impact of a project on Tribal cultural resources before releasing an environmental document. Under California Public Resources Code Sec. 21074, Tribal cultural resources include site features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, or objects that are of cultural value to a Tribe and that are eligible for or listed on the California Register of Historic Resources or a local historic register, or that the lead agency has determined to be of significant Tribal cultural value.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The following policies from the Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan are applicable to the Proposed Project:

C/OS23: If development of a site uncovers cultural resources, the recommendations of Appendix K of the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code Section 15000 et seq.) shall be followed for identification, documentation, and preservation of the resource.

C/OS24: The City shall document and record data or information relevant to prehistoric and historic cultural resources which may be impacted by proposed development. The accumulation of such data shall act as a tool to assist decisionmakers in determinations of the potential development effects to prehistoric and historical resources located within the City.

2010 Monterey County General Plan: The following policies of the 2010 Monterey County General Plan are applicable to portions of the Proposed Project.

Policy OS-7.1: Important representative and unique paleontological sites and features shall be identified and protected. Developers shall be required to complete Phase I (reconnaissance level) paleontological reviews in any formation known to yield important elements of the fossil record. If significant fossil deposits are found during grading activities, data recovery shall be required to obtain a sample of materials from such deposits prior to their systematic destruction.

Policy OS-7.4: Development proposed in low sensitivity zones are not required to have a paleontological survey unless there is specific additional information that suggests paleontological resources are present.

Policy OS-8.1: Unique burial sites shall be identified and protected. All Native Californian cemeteries, burials, shrine sites, and sacred place locations shall be preserved in place to the greatest extent possible and as permitted by law. In cases where such sites and locations cannot be retained in place without modification, governing requirements in the Government Code, Health and Safety Code, California Environmental Quality Act and Native American Religious Freedom Act shall be taken into account in consulting with local Native Californian Tribal Groups with documented aboriginal ties to the study area and shall be carried out, as necessary, with the assistance and input of the California Native American Heritage Commission. Documentation of descent shall be based on Genealogical Proof Standards.

Policy OS-8.3: Development proposed at sites where known burials or human cemeteries are located shall in no case modify, disturb, excavate, or develop in such locations until all steps in compliance with CEQA, Native American Heritage Commission, Health and Safety Code and Government Code, and in accordance with any completed MOU with a local Tribe, have been completed. Routine and Ongoing Agricultural Activities are exempted from this policy in so far as allowed by state or federal law. In the case of any conflict of interpretation, state requirements for the protection of burial sites are applicable and shall be implemented in good faith.

Policy OS-8.4: Policies and procedures shall be established that encourage development to avoid impacts to burial sites including:

- a. Designing or clustering development to avoid archaeological deposits that typically contain human remains and to avoid any known cemeteries or other concentrations of human remains;
- b. Requiring dedication of permanent conservation easements if subdivisions and other developments can be planned to provide for such protective easements;
- c. In all cases where human remains are identified through CEQA review, archaeological research, ethnohistoric research, inadvertent grading disturbance, or historic record research, the County shall consult with the designated “most likely descendants” as identified by any Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) adopted pursuant to Policy OS-8.7. In the event no MOU is executed, the Native American Heritage Commission shall be consulted to help determine the appropriate Tribal Group in that portion of the County where the burial remains are identified.

Policy OS-8.6: Tribal representatives will be consulted, consistent with state preservation law, about the location of sacred places, ancestral sites, archaeological remains of village sites, burial and cemetery sites, and other significant cultural resources during the preparation of any General Plan amendment, Master Plan, Community Plan, or Specific Plan.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?

CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15064.5 defines a historical resource as one being listed in or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. Public Resources Code Section 21084.1 states that a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. No prehistoric or combined prehistoric or historic era sites or built environment resources have been recorded or reported in or adjacent to the Proposed Project. Five resources, all historic built environment structures, have been recorded within 0.5 mile of the Proposed Project. However, the Project would not affect these five resources. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not impact a historical resource.

b. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

Section 21083.2 of the Public Resources Code requires lead agencies to assess potential impacts to archaeological resources and determine whether a project may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource. BASIN conducted a records search at the NWIC, an SLF search with the NAHC, and completed a visual inspection of the Proposed Project APE. Additionally, BASIN reviewed the Proposed Project site geology and soil characterizations. BASIN did not observe archaeological resources, and none have been previously recorded within the Proposed Project APE. While unlikely, unrecorded archaeological resources could be present below ground surface and such resources could be exposed or damaged during Project construction. Therefore, to ensure impacts remain less than significant, the Proposed Project would implement **Mitigation Measure CUL-1**.

Mitigation Measure CUL-1: The City of Soledad shall note on any plans that require ground disturbing excavation that there is a potential for exposing buried cultural resources including prehistoric Native American burials. Archaeological site information supplied to the Contractor shall be considered confidential.

The City of Soledad shall retain a Professional Archaeologist on an “on-call” basis during ground disturbing construction to review, identify, and evaluate cultural resources that may be inadvertently exposed during construction. The archaeologist shall review and evaluate any

discoveries to determine if they are historical resource(s) and/or unique archaeological resources or Tribal cultural resources under CEQA.

If the Professional Archaeologist determines that any cultural resources exposed during construction constitute a historical resource and/or unique archaeological resource or Tribal cultural resource under CEQA, he/she shall notify the City of Soledad and other appropriate parties of the evaluation. The Professional Archaeologist shall recommend mitigation measures to mitigate to less than significant in accordance with California Public Resources Code Section 15064.5. Tribal cultural resources shall be evaluated with the assistance of Native American tribes and/or individual Tribal members who have previously been contacted and responded to outreach efforts by the City of Soledad. Mitigation measures may include avoidance, preservation in-place, recordation, additional archaeological testing and data recovery among other options. The completion of a formal *Archaeological Monitoring Plan* (AMP) and/or *Archaeological Treatment Plan* (ATP) that may include data recovery may be recommended by the Professional Archaeologist if significant archaeological deposits (or Tribal cultural resources) are exposed during ground disturbing construction. Development and implementation of the AMP and ATP, and treatment of significant cultural resources and/or Tribal cultural resources will be determined by the City of Soledad in consultation with any regulatory agencies and Native American Tribes and Tribal individuals.

A *Monitoring Closure Report* shall be filed with the City of Soledad at the conclusion of ground disturbing construction if archaeological and Native American monitoring was undertaken.

c. *Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?*

No known human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated or formal cemeteries, are known to occur on the Proposed Project site. Additionally, Native Americans were consulted during the preparation of the Cultural Resources Report (see **Section 4.17, Tribal Cultural Resources**). The results of an SLF for the Proposed Project APE were negative. As a result, the APE is considered unlikely to contain Native American remains. However, while the likelihood of human remains, including Native American remains and/or those interred outside of a formal cemetery, within the Proposed Project site is low, it is possible that previously unknown human remains may be present. Construction may impact previously unknown remains. To minimize potential impacts to less than significant, mitigation is necessary. The implementation of the following mitigation measure would ensure potential adverse impacts would be avoided.

Mitigation Measure CUL-2: The treatment of human remains and any associated or unassociated funerary objects discovered during any soil-disturbing activity within the project site shall comply with applicable State laws. This shall include immediate notification of the Monterey County Sheriff's Office and the City of Soledad.

In the event of the coroner's determination that the human remains are Native American, notification of the Native American Heritage Commission, is required who shall appoint a Most Likely Descendant (MLD) (PRC Section 5097.98).

The City of Soledad, Professional Archaeologist and MLD shall make all reasonable efforts to develop an agreement for the treatment, with appropriate dignity, of human remains and associated or

unassociated funerary objects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(d)). The agreement should take into consideration the appropriate excavation, removal, recordation, analysis, custodianship, curation, and final disposition of the human remains and associated or unassociated funerary objects. The California PRC allows 48 hours to reach agreement on these matters. If the MLD and the other parties do not agree on the reburial method, the project will follow PRC Section 5097.98(b) which states that ". . . the landowner or his or her authorized representative shall reinter the human remains and items associated with Native American burials with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further subsurface disturbance."

4.6 Energy

Environmental Setting

Pacific Gas and Electric ("PG&E") provides electricity and natural gas throughout Monterey County, and thus would be the energy utility provider of the Proposed Project site. Beginning in 2018, all PG&E customers in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties were automatically enrolled in Central Coast Community Energy ("3CE") (previously known as Monterey Bay Community Power ["MBCP"]). 3CE is a community choice energy agency that has committed to providing its customers with 100% carbon-free energy by the year 2030 (3CE, 2023). Community choice energy agencies allow local governments to procure power on behalf of their residents, businesses, and municipal accounts from an alternative supplier while still receiving transmission and distribution service from their existing utility provider (in this case, PG&E). This is typically an attractive option for communities that want more local control over their electricity sources, more clean energy than their default utility offers, and/or lower electricity prices. Per Public Utilities Code Section 366.2, customers have the right to opt out of the community choice energy program and continue to receive service from the incumbent utility (PG&E) if they so choose.

Regulatory Environment

State

California Renewable Energy Standards: In 2002, California established their Renewables Portfolio Standard Program, with the goal of increasing the percentage of renewable energy in the State's electricity mix to 20 percent of retail sales by 2017 through enactment of Senate Bill ("SB") 1078 (CPUC, 2023). In 2006, SB 107 revised previous elements of the Public Utilities Code so the amount of renewable energy generated per year and sold to retail customers would amount to 20 percent by 2010 (SB 107, 2006). In 2008, the governor issued Executive Order S-14-08 and requires that retail sellers of electricity serve 33 percent of their load with renewable energy by 2020 (Governor Schwarzenegger, 2008). In October 2015, Governor Brown signed SB 350 to codify California's climate and clean energy goals. A key provision of SB 350 requires retail sellers and publicly owned utilities to procure 50 percent of the State's electricity from renewable sources by 2030 (CPUC, 2023).

California Building Codes: At the State level, the California Legislature established the Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings, as specified in Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations (Title 24), in 1978 in response to a legislative mandate to reduce California's energy consumption. Title 24 is updated approximately every three years. Compliance with Title 24 is mandatory at the time new building permits are issued by city and county governments. The California Green Building Standards Code ("CalGreen") establishes mandatory green building standards for all

buildings in California. The code covers five categories: planning and design, energy efficiency, water efficiency and conservation, material conservation and resource efficiency, and indoor environmental quality. Title 24 was last updated in 2022.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: There are no applicable policies or goals from the City’s General Plan.

2010 Monterey County General Plan: There are no policies or goals from the 2010 Monterey County General Plan related to energy use that would be applicable to the Proposed Project.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a. *Would the project result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?*

Energy use associated with the Proposed Project would not constitute an adverse effect under CEQA, as described below.

Construction

The Proposed Project would require energy for the procurement and transportation of materials, as well as site preparation during construction. Petroleum-based fuels such as diesel fuel and gasoline would be the primary sources of energy for these activities. The Proposed Project would not result in inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy because: 1) the construction schedule and phased approach is designed to be efficient to avoid excess monetary costs, and 2) energy demand associated with construction would be temporary in nature. As a result, construction of the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact related to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources.

Operation

The Proposed Project would generate energy demand associated with the operation of the recycled water distribution system, as well as regular maintenance trips. City Public Works already maintains a distribution system in the vicinity of the Project area. The Proposed Project is not anticipated to result in substantial additional vehicle trips for maintenance. As a result, the operational increases from vehicle trips for maintenance trips and would be negligible compared to existing conditions.

The Proposed Project components, including the recycled water pump station at the WRF, could generate additional energy demand during operation. These facilities would be designed to comply with applicable portions of the California Green Building Code, Title 24 energy efficiency requirements, and current California Building Energy Standards requirements. In conclusion, the Proposed Project would result in a less than significant operational impact related to the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy, or wasteful use of energy resources.

b. Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

See Response a. above. Construction and operation of the Proposed Project would be subject to existing state energy standards and would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. The Proposed Project would be designed to comply with applicable portions of the California Green Building Code, Title 24 energy efficiency requirements, and current California Building Energy Standards requirements. The Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact related to energy usage and efficiency.

4.7 Geology and Soils

Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project area is not in an Alquist-Priolo Act zone but is in a seismically active region. The nearest quaternary fault to the Project area is the Reliz fault zone located approximately four miles southeast of the southernmost Project components. Additionally, the Pinnacles fault and a small unnamed fault lie approximately six and 3.5 miles northwest of the Project site, respectively (Monterey County, 2024).

The Proposed Project site is composed primarily of *Arroyo Seco gravelly sandy loam*, *Chualar Loam*, *Gloria sandy loam*, and *Cropley silty clay*. All three soil types are typical of alluvial deposits and share similar characteristics. These soils are generally well- or moderately well-drained with relatively slow permeability. Runoff potential varies between the three soil types. The *Arroyo Seco* series consists of sandy and gravelly alluvium with very slow runoff potential; the *Chualar* series consists of alluvium from mixed parent sources and has slow to medium runoff potential; and the *Gloria* series consists of fine gravel formed from granitic parent material runoff potential ranging from slow to rapid. All three soil types are considered suitable for various agricultural uses (UC Davis, 2024).

The Proposed Project is located on flat land within the City of Soledad's roadway ROWs and WRF and an agricultural easement located in a portion of unincorporated Monterey County that is developed with dirt access roads. The Project area has low landslide susceptibility and is an area with a low erosion hazard rating. However, some areas of the Proposed Project – primarily components located at the WRF – are in areas of moderate or high liquefaction susceptibility (Monterey County, 2024).

Crawford and Associates, Inc. prepared a geotechnical study for the Proposed Project in July 2024, contained in **Appendix E, Geotechnical Engineering and Engineering Geology Report**.

Regulatory Environment

Federal

National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program: Implemented by FEMA, the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (“NEHRP”) pursues research, development, and implementation of earthquake mitigation measures. Passed in 1977, NEHRP is a collaborative effort between federal, state, local governments, universities, research centers, professional societies, trade associations, and businesses. FEMA is the primary agency implementing the research and development of earthquake measures and safety materials. Implementation of these measures and materials is accomplished through the following:

- Providing federal grant programs for states and local governments to implement earthquake mitigating measures;
- engaging businesses, through the QuakeSmart program;
- providing Multi-State National Earthquake Assistance grants for public education of mitigation activities;
- collaborating with universities and non-profit organizations to encourage enforcement of building codes and use of seismic rehabilitation at a regional level;
- training for earthquake readiness and mitigation through National Earthquake Technical Assistance Program;
- providing educational materials and research reports through the FEMA Library.

NEHRP has no regulatory authority and therefore cannot enforce national earthquake standards. All the program’s provisions are incumbent upon the state, local government, and business to adopt as appropriate (FEMA, 2023; Locascio, 2023).

State

Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act: The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act, passed in 1972, seeks to mitigate surface faulting's hazard to structures for human occupancy. In accordance with this act, the State Geologist established regulatory zones, called “earthquake fault zones,” around the surface traces of active faults and published maps showing these zones. In these zones, buildings for human occupancy cannot be constructed across the surface traces of active faults. Because many active faults are complex and consist of more than one branch, each earthquake fault zone extends approximately 200 to 500 feet on either side of the mapped fault trace.

Title 14 of the CCR, Section 3601(e), defines buildings intended for human occupancy as those that would be inhabited for more than 2,000 hours per year. The Proposed Project does not cross an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. Therefore, these provisions of the Act do not apply to the Proposed Project.

Seismic Hazards Mapping Act: The purpose of the Seismic Hazards Mapping Act of 1990 (PRC Sections 2690–2699.6) is to reduce damage resulting from earthquakes. The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act addresses earthquake-related hazards, including strong ground shaking, liquefaction, and seismically induced landslides. The state is charged with identifying and mapping areas at risk of strong ground shaking, liquefaction, landslides, and other corollary hazards. Cities and counties are required to regulate development in mapped Seismic Hazard Zones. Under the Seismic Hazards Mapping Act, permit

review is the primary mechanism for local regulation of development. Specifically, cities and counties are prohibited from issuing development permits for sites in Seismic Hazard Zones until appropriate site-specific geologic and/or geotechnical investigations have been conducted and measures to reduce potential damage have been incorporated into the development plans.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The Safety Element of the City's General Plan contains the following policies applicable to portions of the Proposed Project:

HZ-5: All new development shall satisfy the applicable requirements of the Uniform Building Code.

HZ-6: The City shall require the preparation of a soils engineering and geologic seismic analysis prior to permitting development in areas prone to geologic or seismic hazards (i.e., ground shaking, landslides, liquefaction, expansive soils).

2010 Monterey County General Plan: The following policies from the 2010 Monterey County General Plan would be applicable to portions of the Proposed Project.

Policy OS-3.1: Best Management Practices (BMPs) to prevent and repair erosion damage shall be established and enforced.

Policy S-1.1: Land uses shall be sited and measures applied to reduce the potential for loss of life, injury, property damage, and economic and social dislocations resulting from ground shaking, liquefaction, landslides, and other geologic hazards in the high and moderate hazard susceptibility areas.

Policy S-1.3: Site-specific geologic studies may be used to verify the presence or absence and extent of the hazard on the property proposed for new development and to identify mitigation measures for any development proposed. An ordinance including permit requirements relative to the siting and design of structures and grading relative to seismic hazards shall be established.

Policy S-1.4: The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act shall be enforced.

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■

Impact Discussion

a. Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

a.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?

The Proposed Project is not located in an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. Additionally, there are no faults or fault zone hazard areas identified by the County of Monterey in the vicinity of the Project. The Proposed Project would be designed and constructed in accordance with standard engineering and seismic safety design techniques. No impact from the Project would occur.

a.ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

The Proposed Project is located in a seismically active region. The nearest active fault is the San Andreas fault, located approximately 10 miles northeast of the Proposed Project area (Department of Conservation, 2024a). As a result, the Proposed Project could be subject to seismically induced hazards during its design lifetime. To minimize potential seismically induced hazards, the Proposed Project would be designed to comply with all standard engineering and seismic safety design requirements and guidelines contained in the Uniform Building Code and California Building Code ("CBC"). However, the Proposed Project would involve expansion of recycled water distribution across the City and does not include the addition of any new habitable structures. Additionally, the final design of the Proposed Project would be required to comply with the recommendations of the design-level geotechnical analysis (**Appendix E**). This would include, but is not limited to, implementation of Occupational Safety

and Health Administration (“OSHA”) slopping requirements during trenching, shoring, and dewatering. In addition, the Proposed Project would be designed and constructed in accordance with standard engineering and seismic safety design techniques of the 2022 California Building Code adopted by the County of Monterey. Compliance with existing building code requirements, standard engineering and seismic safety design techniques, as well as the recommendations of the design-level geotechnical report would ensure that potential impacts would be minimized. The Proposed Project would not directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death from strong seismic ground shaking. This represents a less than significant impact.

a.iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Surface ground rupture occurs at sites that are traversed by or lie very near an active fault. The Proposed Project is not located in any mapped earthquake fault zones (Department of Conservation, 2024a). Therefore, there is a low potential for surface ground rupture within the Proposed Project area.

The geotechnical study in **Appendix E** analyzed site soils and determined that the soils within the new recycled water pump station component of the Proposed Project at the existing WRF site have the potential to result in liquefaction. To ensure impacts associated with of seismic related ground failure (including liquefaction) are minimized, the new recycled water pump station component of the Proposed Project would be designed and constructed in accordance with the recommendations of the design-level geotechnical report. Additionally, all components of the Proposed Project would be constructed in accordance with applicable standard engineering and seismic safety design techniques contained in the Uniform Building Code and CBC. The Proposed Project is the expansion of recycled water distribution across the City and does not include the addition of any new habitable structures.

For the reasons provided above, the Proposed Project would not directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death from seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction. Therefore, this represents a less than significant impact.

a.iv) Landslides?

Landslides are common in Monterey County due to the combination of uplifting mountains, fractured and weak rocks, and periodic intense rainfall along the coast. The level of susceptibility of an area is dependent on the local geologic conditions. The Proposed Project area is generally flat and is considered to have a low susceptibility to landslide hazards (Monterey County, 2024). As a result, the Proposed Project is unlikely to be exposed to potential landslide hazards. In addition, the Proposed Project would be designed and constructed in accordance with standard engineering and seismic safety design techniques of the 2022 California Building Code adopted by the County of Monterey. The Proposed Project would not directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death from landslides, which represents a less than significant impact.

b. Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

The County’s GIS database identifies the soils within the Proposed Project area as having a low to moderate erosion potential (Monterey County, 2024). The majority of the Project area, including the new recycled water pump station at the existing WRF plant, is classified as having low erosion susceptibility, while portions of the pipeline alignment along Gabilan Road and Toledo Street will pass through an area classified with moderate erosion susceptibility (Monterey County, 2024). To ensure

impacts remain less than significant, the Proposed Project would be designed and constructed in accordance with standard engineering and seismic safety design techniques of the 2022 California Building Code. The Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact related to substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil.

- c. Would the project 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?*

Soils within the new recycled water pump station component at the existing WRF site have the potential to result in liquefaction, and Project site conditions (i.e., moderate soil plasticity) have the potential for expansive soils. To ensure that the Project would minimize ground instability on- or off-site potentially resulting in liquefaction, lateral spreading, and subsidence, the new recycled water pump station component of the Proposed Project would be designed and constructed according to the recommendations of the design-level geotechnical report. All components of the Proposed Project would be constructed in accordance with all applicable standard engineering and seismic safety design techniques contained in the Uniform Building Code and CBC (see **Appendix E**). Furthermore, any imported fill used for the Proposed Project must adhere to the recommendations for expansive potential outlined in **Appendix E**. As discussed above, the Proposed Project area is generally flat and is considered to have a low susceptibility to landslide hazards, therefore; the Project site would be unlikely to experience landslide hazards (Monterey County, 2024). For these reasons, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact.

- d. Would the project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?*

Soils within the Proposed Project area have moderate plasticity (**Appendix E**). As a result, components of the Proposed Project could potentially be located on expansive soil. However, the Proposed Project would involve expansion of recycled water distribution across the City and would not create substantial risks to life or property as no habitable structures are proposed. In addition, any imported fill used for the Proposed Project would be required to meet the recommendations for expansive potential outlined in **Appendix E**. This represents a less than significant impact.

- e. Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?*

The Proposed Project site does not have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal system where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater. The Proposed Project would involve expansion of recycled water distribution across the City and does not include the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal system; therefore no impact would occur.

- f. Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?*

Significant paleontological resources are fossils or assemblages of fossils that are unique, unusual, rare, uncommon, and diagnostically or stratigraphically important, as well as those that add to an existing

body of knowledge in specific areas, stratigraphically, taxonomically, or regionally. They include fossil remains of large to very small aquatic and terrestrial vertebrates, remains of plants and animals previously not represented in certain portions of the stratigraphy and assemblages of fossils that might aid stratigraphic correlations – particularly those offering data for the interpretation of tectonic events, geomorphologic evolution, paleoclimatology, and the relationships of aquatic and terrestrial species. Most of the fossils found in Monterey County are of marine life forms and create a record of the region's geologic history of advancing and retreating sea levels. A review of nearly 700 known fossils localities in the County was conducted in 2001; 12 fossil sites were identified as having outstanding scientific value. The Proposed Project site is not located on or near any of those sites based on GIS data provided by the County (Rosenberg, 2001). The Proposed Project would not directly or indirectly destroy a paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature, as none exist within the Proposed Project area. No impact would occur.

4.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Environmental Setting

Global temperatures are affected by naturally occurring and anthropogenic-generated atmospheric gases, such as water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. Greenhouse gases (“GHGs”) are gases that absorb and re-emit infrared radiation in the atmosphere. The gases that are widely seen as the principal contributors to human-induced climate change include carbon dioxide (“CO₂”), methane (“CH₄”), nitrous oxide (“N₂O”), fluorinated gases such as hydrofluorocarbons (“HFCs”) and perfluorocarbons (“PFCs”), and sulfur hexafluoride (“SF₆”). Water vapor is excluded from the list of GHGs because it is short-lived in the atmosphere and its atmospheric concentrations are largely determined by natural processes, such as oceanic evaporation.

Emissions of GHGs from human activities, such as electricity production, motor vehicle use, and agriculture, are elevating the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. GHG emissions from anthropogenic sources are causing a trend of unnatural warming of the earth's climate, known as global warming or global climate change.

MBARD has not yet adopted a threshold for construction-related GHG emissions but recommends utilizing thresholds set by neighboring districts (e.g., Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District [“SMAQMD”]). The SMAQMD GHG threshold is defined in terms of carbon dioxide equivalent (“CO₂e”), a metric that accounts for emissions from various GHGs based on their global warming potential. According to SMAQMD, a Project would result in a significant GHG-related impact if the Project would emit more than 1,100 metric tons of CO₂e per year (“MTCO₂e/year”). Operation of a stationary source project would not have a significant GHG impact if the project emits less than 10,000 MTCO₂e/year. Climate change has a cumulative impact; a project contributes to this impact through its incremental contribution of GHG emissions combined with the cumulative increase of all other sources of GHGs. If annual emissions of GHGs exceed these threshold levels, the Proposed Project would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution of GHG emissions and must implement mitigation measures (MBARD, 2016).

Regulatory Environment

Federal

Federal Regulation and the Clean Air Act - Executive Order 13514: Executive Order 13514 is focused on reducing GHGs internally in federal agency missions, programs, and operations. Additionally, the executive order directs federal agencies to participate in the Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force, which is engaged in developing a national strategy for adaptation to climate change.

On April 2, 2007, in *Massachusetts v. U.S. EPA*, 549 U.S. 497 (2007), the Supreme Court found that GHGs are air pollutants covered by the FCAA and that the U.S. EPA has the authority to regulate GHGs. The Court held that the U.S. EPA Administrator must determine whether emissions of GHGs from new motor vehicles cause or contribute to air pollution that may be anticipated to endanger public health or welfare, or whether the science is too uncertain to make a reasoned decision.

On December 7, 2009, the U.S. EPA Administrator signed two (2) distinct findings regarding GHGs under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act:

- **Endangerment Finding:** The Administrator found that the current and projected concentrations of the six (6) key well-mixed GHGs (CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, HFCs, PFCs, and SF₆) in the atmosphere threaten the public health and welfare of current and future generations.
- **Cause or Contribute Finding:** The Administrator found the combined emissions of these well-mixed GHGs from new motor vehicles and new motor vehicle engines contribute to the GHG pollution which threatens public health and welfare.

Although these findings did not impose any requirements on industry or other entities, this action was a prerequisite to finalizing the U.S. EPA's *Proposed Greenhouse Gas Emission Standards for Light-Duty Vehicles* published on September 15, 2009. On May 7, 2010, the final *Light-Duty Vehicle Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards and Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards* was published in the Federal Register.

U.S. EPA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ("NHTSA") are taking coordinated steps to enable the production of a new generation of clean vehicles with reduced GHG emissions and improved fuel efficiency from on-road vehicles and engines. These next steps include developing the first-ever GHG regulations for heavy-duty engines and vehicles and additional light-duty vehicle GHG regulations. President Obama outlined these steps in a Presidential Memorandum on May 21, 2010.

The final combined U.S. EPA and NHTSA standards making up the first phase of this national program apply to passenger cars, light-duty trucks, and medium-duty passenger vehicles, covering model years 2012 through 2016. The standards require these vehicles to meet an estimated combined average emissions level of 250 grams of Carbon dioxide ("CO₂") per mile (the equivalent to 35.5 miles per gallon if the automobile industry were to meet this CO₂ level solely through fuel economy improvements). Together, these standards will cut GHG emissions by an estimated 960 million metric tons ("MMT") and 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the lifetime of the vehicles sold under the program (model years 2012-2016). On August 28, 2012, U.S. EPA and NHTSA issued their joint rule to extend this national program of coordinated GHG and fuel economy standards to model years 2017 through 2025 passenger vehicles.

State

Assembly Bill 32 – California Global Warming Solutions Act: AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, codifies the State of California’s GHG emissions target by directing CARB to reduce the state’s global warming emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. Governor Schwarzenegger signed and passed into law AB 32 on September 27, 2006. Since that time, the CARB, the California Energy Commission (“CEC”), the California Public Utilities Commission (“CPUC”), and the Building Standards Commission (“BSC”) have all been developing regulations that will help meet the goals of AB 32 and Executive Order S-3-05.³

A Scoping Plan for AB 32 was adopted by CARB in December 2008. It contains the State of California’s main strategies to reduce GHGs from business as usual (“BAU”) emissions projected in 2020 back down to 1990 levels. BAU is the projected emissions in 2020, including increases in emissions caused by growth, without any GHG reduction measures. The Scoping Plan has a range of GHG reduction actions, including direct regulations, alternative compliance mechanisms, monetary and non-monetary incentives, voluntary actions, and market-based mechanisms such as a cap-and-trade system. This plan required CARB and other state agencies to develop and adopt regulations and other initiatives reducing GHGs by 2012.

As directed by AB 32, CARB has also approved a statewide GHG emissions limit. On December 6, 2007, CARB staff resolved an amount of 427 MMT of CO₂e as the total statewide GHG 1990 emissions level and 2020 emissions limit. The limit is a cumulative statewide limit, not a sector-or facility-specific limit. CARB updated the future 2020 BAU annual emissions forecast because of economic downturn, to 545 MMT of CO₂e. Two (2) GHG emissions reduction measures currently enacted that were not previously included in the 2008 Scoping Plan baseline inventory were included, further reducing the baseline inventory to 507 MMT of CO₂e. Thus, an estimated reduction of 80 MMT of CO₂e is necessary to reduce statewide emissions to meet the AB 32 target by 2020.

CARB prepared an updated Scoping Plan which was released in 2017. The 2017 Scoping Plan identifies ways for California to reach the statewide 2030 climate target and next steps for reaching the 2050 target goal.

Senate Bill 1368: SB 1368 is the companion bill of AB 32 and was signed by Governor Schwarzenegger in September 2006. SB 1368 required the CPUC to establish a greenhouse gas emission performance standard. Therefore, on January 25, 2007, the CPUC adopted an interim GHG Emissions Performance Standard to help mitigate climate change. The Emissions Performance Standard is a facility-based emissions standard requiring all new long-term commitments for baseload generation to serve California consumers be with power plants that have emissions no greater than a combined cycle gas turbine plant. That level is established at 1,100 pounds of CO₂ per megawatt-hour. "New long-term commitment" refers to new plant investments (new construction), new or renewal contracts with a term of five (5) years or more, or major investments by the utility in its existing baseload power plants. Additionally, the CEC established a similar standard for local publicly owned utilities that cannot exceed the greenhouse gas emission rate from a baseload combined-cycle natural gas fired plant. On July 29, 2007, the Office of Administrative Law disapproved the CEC’s proposed Greenhouse Gases Emission Performance Standard rulemaking action and subsequently, the CEC revised the proposed regulations. SB 1368 further requires that all electricity provided to California, including imported electricity, must be generated from plants that meet the standards set by the CPUC and CEC.

³ Note that AB 197 was adopted in September 2016 to provide more legislative oversight of CARB.

Senate Bill 350 – Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act: In September 2015, the California Legislature passed SB 350 (de Leon 2015), which increases the State’s Renewables Portfolio Standard Program for content of electrical generation from the 33 percent target for 2020 to a 50 percent renewables target by 2030.

Executive Order S-03-05: On June 1, 2005, Governor Schwarzenegger signed Executive Order S-03-05, the purpose of which was to implement requirements for the California Environmental Protection Agency (“CalEPA”) to provide ongoing reporting on a biennial basis to the State Legislature and Governor’s Office on how global warming is affecting the state. Required areas of impact reporting include public health, water supply, agriculture, coastline, and forestry. The CalEPA secretary is required to prepare and report on ongoing and upcoming mitigation designed to counteract these impacts.

Executive Order B-30-15: On April 15, 2015, Governor Brown signed Executive Order B-30-15, the purpose of which is to establish a GHG reduction of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. The Executive Order intended to help the state work towards a further emissions reduction target of 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050. The order directed state agencies to prepare for climate change impacts through prioritization of adaptation actions to reduce GHG emissions, preparation for uncertain climate impacts through implementation of flexible approaches, protection of vulnerable populations, and prioritization of natural infrastructure approaches.

Executive Order B-55-18 and SB 100 – 100 Percent Clean Energy Act of 2018: On September 10, 2018, Governor Brown signed both SB 100 – 100 Percent Clean Energy Act of 2018 and Executive Order B-55-18 to Achieve Carbon Neutrality. SB 100 sets California on course to achieving carbon-free emissions from the electric power production sector by 2045. SB 100 also increases the required emissions reduction generated by retail sales to 60 percent by 2030, an increase of 10 percent compared to previous goals. B-55-18 establishes a new goal of achieving statewide “carbon neutrality as early as possible and no later than 2045, and to achieve and maintain net negative emissions thereafter” (Governor Brown, 2018).

California Building Code: The CBC contains standards regulating the method of use, properties, performance, or types of materials used in the construction, alteration, improvement, repair, or rehabilitation of a building or other improvement to real property. The CBC is adopted every three (3) years by the BSC. In the interim, the BSC also adopts annual updates to make necessary mid-term corrections. The CBC standards apply statewide. However, a local jurisdiction may amend a CBC standard if it makes a finding the amendment is reasonably necessary due to local climatic, geological, or topographical conditions.

Local

Monterey Bay Air Resources District: To date, MBARD has not adopted regulations or CEQA guidance for analysis of GHG effects of land use projects; nor has it prepared a qualified GHG reduction plan for use or reference by local agencies. MBARD recommends utilizing thresholds set by neighboring districts, such as the SMAQMD.

City of Soledad General Plan: There are no applicable policies or goals from the City’s General Plan.

2010 Monterey County General Plan: There are no policies or goals from the 2010 Monterey County General Plan that would be applicable to the Proposed Project.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

- a. *Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?*

A GHG evaluation was completed for the Project as part of the air quality assessment by AMBIENT (August 2024). This report is contained in **Appendix C**. Implementation of the Project would contribute to increases in GHG emissions that are associated with global climate change. Short-term and long-term GHG emissions associated with the development of the Project are discussed in greater detail below.

Short-term Construction

Short-term construction emissions associated with the Project were quantified using the CalEEMod, version 2022.1.1.26. Emissions modeling included the analysis of proposed foundation/concrete, grading, pump station installation, asphalt paving, and trenching. Emissions were quantified based on project-specific data provided, and default modeling parameters contained in the model for Monterey County. Since equipment may not be used every day of the construction phase, phase durations in CalEEMod were based on the number of days of equipment use. CalEEMod offsite worker emissions were scaled based on the number of working days in the phase. Construction generated GHG emissions were amortized over an approximate 30-year project life and included with operational emissions estimates. Construction generated GHG emissions attributable to the Project are presented for informational purposes.

Short-term annual GHG emissions are summarized in **Table 6**. Based on the modeling conducted, emissions of GHGs associated with the construction of the Project would total approximately 396 MTCO₂e. There would also be a small amount of GHG emissions from waste generated during construction; however, this amount is speculative. Actual emissions would vary, depending on various factors including construction schedules, equipment required, and activities conducted. Assuming an average project life of 30 years, amortized construction-generated GHG emissions would total approximately 13 MTCO₂e/yr.

Table 6
Amortized Construction GHG Emissions

Construction	GHG Emissions (MTCO₂e)
Foundation/Concrete	5.73
Grading	62.15
Pump Station Installation	2.01
Asphalt Paving	70.03
Trenching	256.48
Total	396.39
Amortized Construction Emissions	13.21

Based on CalEEMod computer modeling. Amortized construction-generated GHG emissions assume a 30-year project life.

Long-term Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Long-term operational emissions of the Project were quantified using energy intensity factors for Monterey County from CalEEMod, version 2022.1.1.26. CalEEMod does not provide adjusted energy intensity factors to account for anticipated reductions in energy use in future years. Therefore, year 2027 energy intensity factors were conservatively used for turbine pump emission calculations. Two turbine water pumps would be in use during standard operation and the third used as a back-up. Based on information provided by the Project proponent, the water pumps would operate at 150 horsepower (hp) each. This is the equivalent of approximately 112 kW (kilowatts) per pump. Each of the two primary pumps were estimated to operate approximately 1,664 hours annually. Refer to Appendix A of **Appendix C** for turbine pump operation schedule, emissions modeling assumptions and results.

Estimated long-term increases in GHG emissions for future target years 2027 and year 2045 were calculated to ensure consistency with SB 32 and are depicted in **Table 7**. As depicted in this table, the annual operational GHG emissions associated with the Project would total approximately 35 MTCO₂e/year. With the inclusion of amortized construction emissions, operational GHG emissions would total approximately 48 MTCO₂e/year.

Table 7
Annual Operational GHG Emissions – Unmitigated

Emissions Source	GHG Emissions (MTCO₂e/year)¹
Turbine Water Pumps ²	34.8
Total Project Operational Emissions	34.8
Amortized Construction Emissions	13.2
Total with Amortized Construction Emissions	48.0

¹ Project-generated emissions were quantified using intensity factors from the CalEEMod computer program.

² Includes operation of two electrified 150 hp (112 kW) turbine water pumps for an annual total of 3,328 hours.

As mentioned above quantified emissions are provided for informational purposes only. Project impacts relating to GHG emissions are discussed below and assessed by determining consistency with the State's 2022 Climate Scoping Plan and contributing its fair share of what would be required to meet the State's long-term climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045.

Consistency with Applicable Plans

Applicable GHG-reduction plans include the AMBAG 2022-245 MTP/SCS and ARB's Climate Change Scoping Plan. Project consistency with these plans is discussed in greater detail below.

AMBAG 2022-2045 MTP/SCS Consistency: To support the State’s GHG-reduction goals, including the goals mandated by SB 32, California established the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375). SB 375 requires regional metropolitan planning organizations, such as AMBAG, to develop SCSs that align transportation, housing, and land use decisions toward achieving the State’s GHG emissions-reduction targets. Under SB 375, the development and implementation of SCSs, which link transportation, land use, housing, and climate policy at the regional level, are designed to reduce per capita mobile-source GHG emissions, which is accomplished through the implementation of measures that would result in reductions in per capita VMT.

As previously noted, the AMBAG 2022-2045 MTP/SCS was developed in accordance with state and federal requirements including SB 375 which aims to reduce GHG emissions related to mobile sources. Based on AMBAG guidelines, the Project would not have an impact on regional VMT. As a result, the Project would not conflict with any goals or objectives identified in the AMBAG 2022-2045 MTP/SCS.

Climate Change Scoping Plan: The previously adopted 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan incorporated the State’s GHG emissions reduction target of 40 percent below 1990 emissions levels by 2030, as mandated by SB 32. On November 16, 2022, the ARB approved the 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality. The recently adopted 2022 Scoping Plan continues the path to achieve the SB 32 2030 target and expands upon earlier Scoping Plans by targeting an 85 percent reduction in GHG below 1990 levels by 2045. A significant part of achieving the SB 32 goals are strategies to promote sustainable communities, such as the promotion of zero net energy buildings, and improved transportation choices that result in reducing VMT. Other measures include the increased use of low-carbon fuels and cleaner vehicles, as well as measures that promote the conservation of energy and water use.

California has begun to implement major policies to build resilience to combat the effects of climate change, including droughts. Such policies include the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014, the governor’s Water Resilience Portfolio (2020), the governor’s Water and Supply Strategy (August 2022), and new standards for indoor, outdoor, and industrial water use. In addition, Executive Order B-55-18 establishes a statewide goal to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible, and no later than 2045, and to achieve and maintain net negative emissions thereafter. As part of this effort, policies and programs undertaken to achieve this goal include the protection of the state’s water supply through, in part, the promotion of efforts to build a climate-resilient water infrastructure to insulate our communities from increasing and more intense drought conditions. The increased use of recycled water promotes a long-term reliable water supply sources and is an important water resource strategy for increasing drought resiliency in regions throughout California. Water recycling is also a critically important environmental and water use efficient strategy for the state. By effectively reusing water for potable and/or non-potable purposes, many areas of the state are able to reduce existing and future reliance on environmentally stressed imported water sources. The State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) recently updated California’s Recycled Water Policy and added new ambitious recycled water goals for the state (ARB 2022, WateReuse 2019).

Implementation of the Project would help to support the state’s energy and water-conservation efforts. As a result, this impact would be less than significant.

- b. Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?*

As described above, the Proposed Project is not expected to generate GHG emissions that would exceed applicable thresholds. In addition, the Proposed Project would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. This represents a less than significant impact.

4.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Environmental Setting

Hazardous materials, as defined by the California Code of Regulations, are substances with certain physical properties that could pose a substantial present or future hazard to human health or the environment when improperly handled, disposed, or otherwise managed. Hazardous waste is any hazardous material that is discarded, abandoned, or slated to be recycled. Hazardous materials and waste can result in public health hazards if improperly handled, released into the soil or groundwater, or through airborne releases in vapors, fumes, or dust. Soil and groundwater having concentrations of hazardous constituents higher than specific regulatory levels must be handled and disposed of as hazardous waste when excavated or pumped from an aquifer.

Government Code Section 65962.5 requires CalEPA to develop a Cortese List that is updated at least annually. While CalEPA no longer maintains a single Cortese List, CalEPA uses the following database and list to meet the requirements of Government Code Section 65962.5.

- List of Hazardous Waste and Substances sites from Department of Toxic Substances Control (“DTSC”) EnviroStor database.
- List of Leaking Underground Storage Tank (“LUST”) Sites from the State Water Board’s GeoTracker database.
- List of solid waste disposal sites identified by State or Regional Water Board with waste constituents above hazardous waste levels outside the waste management unit.
- List of “active” Cease and Desist Orders (“CDO”) and Clean-up and Abatement Orders (“CAO”) from State Water Board.
- List of hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action pursuant to Section 25187.5 of the Health and Safety Code, identified by DTSC.

In addition to these databases, the State Water Board and the DTSC maintain databases of other hazardous material release sites with documented environmental contamination (GeoTracker, 2024 and EnviroStor, 2024). No hazardous materials release records are known to occur within the Proposed Project area based on a search of DTSC regulatory databases. There are seven closed LUST sites within the City of Soledad with four located near the intersection of Front Street and Soledad Street, one located near the intersection of Front Street and San Vicente Road, one located near the intersection of Front Street and 4th Street, and one located at Soledad Middle School (GeoTracker, 2024).

Regulatory Environment

Federal

Environmental Protection Agency: The EPA is responsible for enforcing regulations at the federal level pertaining to hazardous materials and wastes. The primary federal hazardous materials and wastes laws are contained in the Resources Conservation and Recovery Act (“RCRA”) of 1976 and in the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (“CERCLA”) of 1980.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act: CERCLA, more commonly known as Superfund, established the National Priorities List for identifying and obtaining funding for remediation of severely contaminated sites. Federal regulations pertaining to hazardous materials and wastes are contained in the Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR). The regulations contain specific guidelines for determining whether a waste is hazardous, based on either the source of generation or the characteristics of the waste.

U.S. Department of Transportation: The U.S. Department of Transportation (“DOT”) regulates transportation of hazardous materials by truck and rail. DOT regulations establish criteria for safe handling procedures. The California Administrative Code also includes federal safety standards.

Solid Waste Disposal Act/Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act: RCRA manages solid waste, landfills, and medical wastes. Under this act, solid wastes include hazardous materials. The act provides provisions for the generation, storage, treatment, and disposal of hazardous waste.

Toxic Substances Control Act: The Toxic Substances Control Act (“TSCA”), passed in 1976, requires the EPA to report, test, place restriction on, and keep record of chemical substances and mixtures. The EPA has authority over the use, production, importation, and disposal of specific chemicals. Some chemicals include polychlorinated biphenyls (“PCBs”), asbestos, radon, and lead paint.

State

California Environmental Protection Agency: The EPA has delegated much of its regulatory authority to individual states whenever adequate state regulatory programs exist. The Department of Toxic Substance Control Division of CAL EPA is the agency empowered to enforce federal hazardous materials and waste regulations in California, in conjunction with the EPA.

California hazardous materials and waste laws incorporate federal standards, but in many respects, are stricter. For example, the California Hazardous Waste Control Law, the state equivalent of RCRA, contains a much broader definition of hazardous materials and waste. The California Code of Regulations, Titles 22 and 26, contain state hazardous materials waste laws. Regulations implementing the California Hazardous Waste Control Law list hazardous chemicals; establish criteria for identifying, packaging, and labeling hazardous wastes; prescribe management of hazardous wastes; establish permit requirements for hazardous waste treatment, storage, disposal, and transportation; and identify hazardous wastes that cannot be disposed of in landfills.

Local

Regional Water Quality Control Board: The Central Coastal RWQCB is the lead agency responsible for identifying, monitoring, and remediating leaking underground storage tanks on the Central Coast. Local jurisdictions may take the lead agency role as a Local Oversight Program (“LOP”) entity, implementing State as well as local policies.

City of Soledad General Plan: The Public Service and Facilities Element of the City’s General Plan contains the following policies applicable to portions of the Proposed Project:

S-28: The City, to the extent feasible, will enforce the applicable provisions of the Monterey County Hazardous Waste Management Plan and all other applicable State, federal and local regulations dealing with the use, storage, disposal and transportation of hazardous materials.

2010 Monterey County General Plan: Relevant policies are listed below:

Policy PS-8.3: Programs for the routine inspection of food, water systems, sewage disposal, public housing, institutions, labor camps, swimming pools, recreation facilities, locations of hazardous substances, and noise hazards shall be established or maintained.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste in one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located in an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, in two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a and b. Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials? Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

The Proposed Project would entail the use of hazardous materials (e.g., fuel, cleaning materials, etc.) during construction. The types and amounts of hazardous materials used would vary according to the type of activity. In addition, use of hazardous materials may periodically be required during operation of the Proposed Project for on-going maintenance.

Construction

The Proposed Project would result in the handling and use of hazardous materials during construction activities. Hazardous materials may include gasoline, diesel fuel, oil lubricants, welding gases, solvents, and paints. It is unlikely that construction of the Proposed Project would create a significant impact due to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials, as the Proposed Project would include implementation of runoff and erosion control measures, as well as standard construction BMPs to minimize potential impacts due to contaminated runoff. In addition, all hazardous materials would be stored, moved, and used in accordance with all local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to hazardous materials, as well as all applicable manufacturer's specifications. To further ensure impacts related to hazardous materials are minimized, a Spill Prevention and Control Plan ("SPCP") (see **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1**) would be developed prior to construction to address any accidental spills. The SPCP would identify applicable safety and clean-up procedures in the event of a spill, designate construction staging areas where hazardous materials may be stored, identify applicable emergency notification procedures, identify locations where spill kits will be maintained during construction, and identify dedicated storage areas where material may be stored. This impact is less than significant with mitigation.

Operation

Operation of the Proposed Project would entail the use of hazardous materials for routine maintenance. Hazardous materials would be handled and stored in compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to hazardous materials. Furthermore, any hazardous materials would be limited in quantity and concentrations set forth by the manufacture and/or applicable regulations. While **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1** focuses on construction related impacts, the SPCP would be implemented throughout operation. Risk of release or hazard due to the routine transport, use, or disposal would be minimized through implementation of the mitigation measures identified below. The City will be

responsible for implementing the SPCP on-site for the duration of construction and during operation. With mitigation this represents a less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1: Prior to issuance of a grading permit, the contractor shall prepare a Hazardous Materials Spill Prevention and Control Plan that addresses potential impacts associated with hazardous material usage during construction and operation. The plan shall, at a minimum, consist of the following:

- Identify applicable safety and clean-up procedures in the event of a spill.
- Designate construction staging areas where hazardous materials may be stored. All staging areas shall be located outside of sensitive biological areas. Staging areas shall be designed to contain runoff to prevent contaminants (e.g., oil, grease, fuel products, etc.) from draining towards receiving waters and sensitive areas.
- Identify appropriate emergency notification procedures and emergency contacts (e.g., County of Monterey Environmental Health, City of Soledad Fire, etc.).
- Designated location where a spill kit shall be maintained on-site throughout the Project.
- Identify dedicated storage areas where hazardous material may be stored and/or used during operation.

c. *Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste in one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?*

There are multiple schools located in a ¼ mile of the Proposed Project, including Rose Ferraro Elementary School (400 Entrada Dr., Soledad, CA 93960), Soledad High School (425 Gabilan Dr., Soledad, CA 93960), Jack Francioni School (779 Orchard Ln., Soledad, CA 93960), Soledad Middle School (441 Main St., Soledad, CA 93960), and Frank Ledesma Elementary School (973 Vista De Soledad, Soledad, CA 93960). None of these schools are within a ¼ mile of the new recycled water pump station located at the existing WRF; however, construction of the distribution pipelines, requiring the use and transportation of hazardous materials (e.g., fuel, cleaning materials, etc.) would occur within a ¼ mile of the above listed schools. The Proposed Project's pipeline components would not emit hazardous materials during operation; however, small quantities of hazardous materials could be used for system maintenance within a ¼ mile of one of the above listed schools. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1** would help prevent inadvertent spills of hazardous materials and ensure that any release of hazardous materials during construction and operation of the Proposed Project would be promptly remedied and reported. This represents a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.

d. *Would the project 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?*

As discussed above, CalEPA uses the DTSC EnviroStor and the State Water Board's GeoTracker databases in conjunction with lists of solid waste disposal sites and active CDO and CAO from the State Water Board to identify hazardous materials sites across the state. No active hazardous materials sites are known to occur within the vicinity of the Proposed Project. There is one school investigation site at Jack Francioni Elementary School and one military site on Serra Lane within the City; however, both sites require "no further action" (EnviroStor, 2024). Additionally, there are seven closed LUST sites within the City of Soledad with four located near the intersection of Front Street and Soledad Street, one located near the intersection of Front Street and San Vicente Road, one located near the intersection of Front Street and 4th Street, and one located at Soledad Middle School (GeoTracker, 2024). Since no active

hazardous materials sites exist within the vicinity of the Proposed Project (all are closed or require no further action), the Project would have a less than significant impact.

- e. For a project located in 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 excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?*

The airport closest to the Proposed Project area is Mesa Del Rey Airport, located approximately 17.5 miles southeast of the existing WRF. The Proposed Project would not result in a safety hazard or exposure to excessive noise for people residing or working in the Proposed Project area as there are no airports within two (2) miles of the site. No impact would occur.

- f. Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

The Monterey County 2021 Evacuation and Transportation Plan does not identify specific designated evacuation routes, since evacuation routes are considered dynamic and would change based on the nature and location of an emergency. As a result, all local roadways within the Proposed Project area could potentially be utilized as evacuation routes during an emergency. While the Proposed Project would result in short-term lane or road closures, all such closures would be conducted in accordance with a traffic control plan reviewed and approved by the City as part of the encroachment permit process. This would ensure that the proposed road or lane closures would not interfere with emergency response vehicles or area evacuation in an emergency. In addition, lane or road closures from the Proposed Project would be short-term and construction activities and equipment would not be located in a single location for long periods of time primarily due to the linear nature of installing the distribution pipelines. The Proposed Project would not generate additional traffic once operational. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not impair implementation or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. This represents a less than significant impact.

- g. Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?*

The Proposed Project is not located in a state responsibility area or a local responsibility area classified as a very high fire hazard severity zone (County of Monterey, 2024). Construction activities would utilize mechanized equipment that has the potential to produce sparks. However, construction vehicles would be fitted with spark arrestors in compliance with all applicable state and local regulations, which would substantially reduce the risk of wildland fire as a result of construction. Once completed, the pipeline components of the Proposed Project would be largely underground and would not require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk. The new recycled water pump station would be located at the existing WRF site, a developed and disturbed site with low potential for wildfire. In addition, the Proposed Project does not include the construction of any new habitable structures. For these reasons, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact related to directly or indirectly exposing people or structures to wildland fire.

4.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Environmental Setting

The Project site is located in an alluvial plain in the Salinas Valley watershed. Precipitation drains downward into the valley from the slopes of the Santa Lucia Mountains to the north and west, and the Gabilan Mountains to the southeast. The primary drainage feature in the valley is the Salinas River. The river is approximately 170 miles in length and is the largest river on California's Central Coast. The Salinas River flows northerly and drains into Monterey Bay (Bureau of Reclamation, 2017).

The City of Soledad draws its water supply from groundwater from the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin – Forebay Aquifer Subbasin, which is managed jointly by the Salinas Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency ("SVGSA") and the Arroyo Seco Groundwater Sustainability Agency ("ASGSA"). ASGSA manages the Arroyo Seco Cone Management Area of the Forebay Aquifer and the SVGSA manages the remainder.

The Project lies within the portion of the Forebay Aquifer managed by SVGSA. The Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin consists of one large hydrologic unit comprised of four subareas: Upper Valley Subarea, Forebay Subarea, 180-Foot/400-Foot Subarea, and East Side Subarea. The subareas have different hydrogeologic and recharge characteristics, but barriers to horizontal flow do not separate them, and water can move between them. Therefore, extraction of water in the Soledad area for agricultural and urban use can affect overdraft and seawater intrusion conditions within the overall basin, including in the subareas nearest the Monterey Bay where seawater intrusion and overdraft are of significant concern. However, groundwater elevations have generally been stable, with decreases in groundwater levels in dry years and rebounding levels in wet years. Additionally, the 2023 water-year resulted in a substantial increase in groundwater levels throughout the basin (Montgomery & Associates, 2023).

Regulatory Environment

Federal

National Flood Insurance Program: FEMA established the National Flood Insurance Program ("NFIP") to reduce flooding on private and public properties. The program provides subsidized flood insurance to communities that comply with FEMA regulations protecting development in floodplains. As part of the program, FEMA publishes Flood Insurance Rate Maps ("FIRM") that identify Special Flood Hazard Areas ("SFHA"). An SFHA is an area that would be inundated by the one-percent annual chance flood, which is also referred to as the base flood or 100-year flood.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act: The Porter-Cologne Act delegates authority to the SWRCB to establish regional water quality control boards. The Central Coast Area RWQCB has authority to use planning, permitting, and enforcement to protect beneficial uses of water resources in the project region. Under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code Sections 13000 - 14290), the RWQCB is authorized to regulate the discharge of waste that could affect the quality of the state's waters, including projects that do not require a federal permit through the USACE. To meet RWQCB 401 Certification standards, all hydrologic issues related to a project must be addressed, including the following:

- Wetlands

- Watershed hydrograph modification
- Proposed creek or riverine related modifications
- Long-term post-construction water quality

Any construction or demolition activity that results in land disturbance equal to or greater than one (1) acre must comply with the Construction General Permit (“CGP”), administered by the SWRCB. The CGP requires the installation and maintenance of BMPs to protect water quality until the site is stabilized. The Proposed Project would disturb more than one acre of soil and is required to obtain coverage under the RWQCB National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (“NPDES”) General Storm Water Permit.

State

Statewide Construction General Permit: The SWRCB has implemented a NPDES CGP for the State of California. For projects disturbing one acre or more, a Notice of Intent (“NOI”) and SWPPP must be prepared by a qualified professional prior to commencement of construction. The CGP includes requirements for training, inspection, record keeping, and for projects of certain risk levels, monitoring. The general purpose of the requirements is to minimize the discharge of pollutants and to protect beneficial uses and receiving waters from the adverse effects of construction-related storm water discharges.

Local

Forebay Aquifer Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan: The 2014 California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (“SGMA”) requires that medium and high-priority groundwater basins and subbasins develop Groundwater Sustainability Plans (“GSP”) that outline how groundwater sustainability will be maintained for 50 years. The Forebay Aquifer Subbasin is designated as moderate priority by the SGMA. The Forebay Aquifer Subbasin GSP identifies potential management actions and projects that ensure the sustainable use of groundwater. Management actions and projects include but are not limited to establishing technical advisory committees, implementing best management practices for conservation and agriculture, and water quality coordination. The Forebay Aquifer Subbasin GSP establishes management criteria that specify minimum thresholds and measurable objectives to ensure sustainability goals are met and maintained.

The Project site is located almost entirely within Zone X (both Shaded and Unshaded), in accordance with FEMA. FEMA defines Zone X (shaded) as an area of moderate flood hazard (between the limits of the 100- year and 500-year floods) and defines Zone X (Unshaded) as an area of minimal flood hazard (an area as having a 0.2 percent chance of annual flooding). Approximately 1,035 feet of pipeline, located in the eastern extent of the Project site at the corner of Metz Road and Orchard Lane is located within Zone AE. FEMA defines Zone AE as a special flood hazard zone with a one percent annual chance of flooding. The Project site does not contain any waterways or other drainage features. The nearest waterway to the Project site is a channelized agricultural ditch (Bryant Canyon Channel), located immediately east of the City and approximately 715 feet from the easternmost extent of the Project. Additionally, the Salinas River is located approximately 1,050 feet south of the southernmost extent of the Project.

City of Soledad General Plan: The City’s Public Services and Facilities Element of the General Plan contains the following policies applicable to the Proposed Project:

- S10:** The City will manage the increase in water demand from new development to help ensure groundwater resources are not over drafted. The City will work with Monterey County and public and private water entities to plan for the efficient, long-term management of groundwater resources.
- S14:** The City shall strive to improve the quality of urban stormwater runoff and quality of groundwater recharge through the use of appropriate mitigation measures including, but not limited to, infiltration/sedimentation basins, oil/grit separators, and other management practices, including storm water retention.
- S16:** The City shall encourage project designs that minimize drainage concentrations and impervious coverage and maintain, to the extent feasible, natural site drainage conditions. Drainage onto adjacent properties shall be restricted to pre-project levels minus any runoff from the area to be developed.
- S17:** The City shall require projects to allocate land as necessary for the purpose of retaining flows and/or for the incorporation of mitigation measures for water quality and supply impacts related to urban runoff.

Monterey County General Plan Policies: The 2010 Monterey County General Plan includes policies related to hydrology and water quality that would apply to the Proposed Project:

- Policy PS-2.8:** The County shall require that all projects be designed to maintain or increase the site's pre-development absorption of rainfall (minimize runoff), and to recharge groundwater where appropriate. Implementation shall include standards that could regulate impervious surfaces, vary by project type, land use, soils and area characteristics, and provide for water impoundments (retention/detention structures), protecting and planting vegetation, use of permeable paving materials, bioswales, water gardens, and cisterns, and other measures to increase runoff retention, protect water quality, and enhance groundwater recharge.
- Policy S-3.1:** Post-development, off-site peak flow drainage from the area being developed shall not be greater than pre-development peak flow drainage. On-site improvements or other methods for storm water detention shall be required to maintain post-development, off-site, peak flows at no greater than predevelopment levels, where appropriate, as determined by the Monterey County Water Resources Agency.
- Policy S-3.2:** Best Management Practices to protect groundwater and surface water quality shall be incorporated into all development.
- Policy S-3.9:** In order to minimize urban runoff affecting water quality, the County shall require all future development within urban and suburban areas to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) as approved in the Monterey Regional Storm Water Management Program which are designed to incorporate Low Impact Development techniques. BMPs may include, but are not limited to, grassy swales, rain gardens, bioretention cells, and tree box filters. BMPs should preserve as much native vegetation as feasible possible on the project site.

Would the project:		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a)	Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii)	substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv)	impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

- a. Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?*

The Proposed Project's potential to result in violation of water quality standards or waste discharge requirements during construction and operation is described below.

Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project would require grading and excavation that could result in temporary water quality impacts. Additional water quality impacts could come from the use of hazardous materials (e.g., diesel fuel, gasoline, lubricants, oils, hydraulic fluids, etc.). To minimize construction generated water quality impacts, the Proposed Project would implement standard construction BMPs (e.g., control/minimize grading, re-vegetate disturbed areas). Moreover, the Proposed Project would be required to comply with the requirements of the NPDES General Construction Permit to manage construction and post construction runoff. As part of this process, the Proposed Project would be required to submit an NOI with the SWRCB and prepare a SWPPP. Construction of the Proposed Project would result in a less than significant impact with respect to

violating water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrading surface or groundwater quality.

Operation

The Proposed Project would utilize Title 22 treated recycled water to irrigate City parks and schools once operational. Title 22 recycled water consists primarily of municipal sewage treated in a wastewater facility for non-potable uses such as irrigation (SWRCB, 2024). The Proposed Project would transfer recycled water from the WRF to schools and parks throughout the City for irrigation. This recycled water would comply with all Title 22 requirements as defined in the Water Recycling Criteria, Title 22, Division 4, Chapter 3 of the California Code of Regulations. Use of recycled water for irrigation would not conflict with State or local water quality standards. The Proposed Project would not generate substantial waste during operation. This represents a less than significant impact.

- b. Would the project 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 is located in the Forebay Aquifer Subbasin of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin, which is regulated by the SGMA. The Proposed Project consists of the expansion of a recycled water distribution system to allow irrigation of City parks and schools with recycled water. The Proposed Project would replace existing use of potable water sourced from groundwater for irrigation at 13 existing parks and six (6) schools throughout the City. In addition, irrigation at the future Toledo Park would also be supplied recycled water from the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would reduce the City's reliance on groundwater supply and would not interfere with groundwater recharge. No impact would occur.

- c. Would the project 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, ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or-off site, 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?*

The Proposed Project is the expansion of a recycled water distribution system. The distribution system components of the Project would be located primarily within roadway ROWs which consist of paved areas. All paved areas disturbed by installation of the Proposed Project would be restored to their pre-project condition following completion of construction and would not alter existing drainage patterns of the site or area. The transmission main component of the Project would be located within an existing agricultural easement. The area of disturbance for installation of this component would also be restored to pre-project condition following completion of construction and would not alter existing drainage patterns of the site or area. The recycled water pump station would be located at the existing WRF site where drainage is already managed. Construction of the recycled water pump station would not alter existing drainage patterns of the site or area. The Project would not result in substantial erosion or siltation on-or-off site, increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or-off site, or create runoff which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned

stormwater drainage systems or impede or redirect flood flows. This represents a less than significant impact.

d. Would the project, in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

The Proposed Project is located in an inland area that is not subject to significant seiche or tsunami effects. As a result, the Proposed Project would not result in the risk or release of pollutants due to inundation from a tsunami or seiche.

According to FEMA, the Project site is located within Zone X (Shaded and Unshaded) and Zone AE (FEMA, 2024). The portions of the Project within Zone X (Unshaded) are considered to be of minimal flood hazard and, therefore, would not risk release of pollutants due to project inundation. The portions of the Project within Zone X (Shaded) and Zone AE have greater risk of flooding. Flooding in these areas during project construction could potentially result in the risk of pollutant release. However, compliance with the Project's SWPPP (see impact a. above) would ensure that construction-based pollutants are not released during flood events. The Proposed Project would involve expansion of recycled water distribution across the City and would not present a significant risk release of pollutants due to project inundation once operational. This represents a less than significant impact.

e. Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

The Proposed Project is located in the Forebay Aquifer of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin; the Forebay Aquifer is not an adjudicated sub-basin and the portion of the Forebay Aquifer underlying the proposed project site is under the jurisdiction of the SVGSA. The Proposed Project involves expansion of a recycled water distribution system and does not represent an intensification of existing water use that would be incompatible with the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Forebay Aquifer. The Proposed Project would reduce the City's reliance on groundwater for irrigation of parks and schools. The recycled water used for irrigation would meet Title 22 requirements for treatment and use of this water would not conflict with any applicable water quality control plans. Therefore, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact related to conflicting with or obstructing applicable water quality control plans or sustainable groundwater management plans.

4.11 Land Use and Planning

Environmental Setting

The Project is located in the City of Soledad and within an existing easement running through agricultural land in unincorporated Monterey County. The Soledad General Plan and the 2010 Monterey County General Plan regulate land use policies in the Proposed Project area.

Project components located within the City would be within City ROWs, on the WRF property, and within SUSD property. The Soledad General Plan designates the WRF and SUSD properties as "Public Facility." Project components located within unincorporated Monterey County are designated in the County General Plan as "Farmlands 40-Acre Minimum."

Regulatory Environment

City of Soledad General Plan: The Land Use Element of the City’s General Plan defines the General Plan area and includes specific plans for the existing and planned development areas within the City. The City’s planning area includes the incorporated limits in addition to land outside the City boundaries that the City deemed to be related to planning objectives. The General Plan defines the planning area as “the ridgeline of the Gabilan Range to the east and the foothills of the coast range to the west, extending north past the Soledad prison, and to the south about mid-way between Soledad and Greenfield” (City, 2005a). **Table 8** below summarizes the General Plan definitions of land use designations:

Table 8
Land Use Designations

Land Use Designations	Land Use Descriptions
Single Family Residential	This land use designation allows for single family residential development with up to six dwellings per acre and allows a range of other uses that includes schools, churches, and public facilities.
Duplex Residential	This designation allows for the construction of duplexes (two attached units on the same lot) and attached housing clusters.
Multiple Residential	The Multiple Residential designation allows for development of multi-family housing such as apartments, condominiums, and townhouses.
General Commercial	The General Commercial designation support uses of a community retail nature such as appliance stores, food stores, offices, banks, and other uses for the community as a whole.
Neighborhood Commercial	Neighborhood Commercial land uses provide goods and services for a specific neighborhood, such as convenience stores, food stores, drug stores, etc.
Downtown Commercial	A mix of retail, office, and other service uses appropriate for the Central Business District, also potentially including some residential uses on upper floors.
Service Commercial	Uses such as wholesale and retail stores and shops of a heavy commercial and business park character conducted inside or outside a building, such as auto repair shops, from equipment repair and sales, etc.
Industrial	Manufacturing, processing, repair, storage, and/or agricultural related industries in a conventional industrial or business park setting.
Public/Institutional	Schools, government buildings, libraries, churches, hospitals, etc.
Recreational	Open space lands that provide active recreation areas with maintained landscaping facilities.
Open Space/Grazing Land	Undisturbed open space uses that maintain scenic and natural habitat values as well as flood zone safety and safety from other hazards. Grazing land is generally located on hillsides above the 400-foot contour elevation.
Agriculture	Agriculture lands intended for soil-dependent uses.

Source: City, 2005a.

Front Street Improvement Plan and Downtown Specific Plan: The Front Street Improvement Plan and Downtown Specific Plan seeks to achieve goals related to improving business and attracting tourism. The plan provides a framework for the revitalization of downtown Soledad as the social and business center of the community. This plan encourages amenities such as street trees, benches, open plazas, and walkways that provide protection from the heat and wind (City, 2005a). The Proposed Project would install water distribution pipelines within this specific plan area. All infrastructure would be underground and would not conflict with the goals and policies defined by the Front Street Improvement Plan and Downtown Specific Plan.

Monterey County General Plan: The Proposed Project would occur partially on farmland in unincorporated Monterey County. The following land use policies from the Monterey County General Plan relevant to the Proposed Project are identified below:

- LU-3.1:** The County shall establish regulations for and designate three categories of Agricultural Land:
- a. Farmlands (F): Farmlands are typically 40-acre minimum sites and allow a range of uses to conserve and enhance the use of the important farmlands in the County of Monterey while also providing opportunity to establish necessary support and ancillary facilities for those agricultural uses. The extent of use of land for this designation shall be limited to building coverage of 5% of the subject property, except for commercial greenhouse operations, which are permitted coverage of 50%.
 - b. Permanent Grazing (PG): Permanent Grazing lands are typically 40-to-160-acre minimums and allow a range of land uses to conserve and enhance the productive grazing lands in the County. The extent of use of land for this designation shall be limited to building coverage of 5% of the subject property, except for commercial greenhouse operations, which are permitted coverage of 50%.
 - c. Rural Grazing (RG): Rural Grazing lands are typically a range of 10-to-40-acre minimums and allow uses to conserve and enhance the use of productive grazing lands in the County of Monterey while also providing the opportunity to establish support facilities for grazing uses and clustered residential uses. The extent of use of land for this designation shall be limited to building coverage of 5% of the subject property, except for commercial greenhouse operations, which are permitted coverage of 50%.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a. Would the project physically divide an established community?

The division or disruption of an established community would occur if a project created a physical barrier that separates, isolates, or divides portions of a built community. The physical division of a community is traditionally associated with large projects such as the construction of large-scale transportation improvements such as a highway, the creation of large university campuses, or new stadiums with parking areas. The Proposed Project consists of construction and operation of a recycled water pump station located at the WRF and installation of a transmission pipeline and distribution pipelines within part of unincorporated Monterey County and roadway ROWs within the City limits. The Project would install all pipeline components underground and would not physically divide an established community. Since the Proposed Project would not create a barrier that would divide an established community, no impact would occur.

b. Would the project 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 not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigation an environmental effect. Construction would occur at the WRF, an easement within farmland in unincorporated Monterey County, and roadway ROWs within the City limits. Construction and operation of the recycled water pump station is consistent with activities at the WRF. Construction of the transmission pipeline through agricultural County land would not conflict with County agricultural land use policies as pipeline installation would not convert existing farmland to non-agricultural uses nor would the easement occur on land currently supporting agricultural work. Construction of the distribution pipelines within the City roadway ROWs would partially occur within the planning area of the Front Street Improvement Plan and Downtown Specific Plan. However, construction and operation of the Proposed Project would not conflict with policies, goals, and objectives from both the General Plan and the Front Street Improvement Plan and Downtown Specific Plan adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect, since proposed facilities would be located underground. For these reasons, the Project would have a less than significant impact.

4.12 Noise

Environmental Setting

Noise is generally defined as sound that is loud, disagreeable, or unexpected. Sound is mechanical energy transmitted in the form of a wave because of a disturbance or vibration. Sound levels are described in terms of both amplitude and frequency. Noise is commonly defined as unwanted sound. Airborne sound is a rapid fluctuation of air pressure above and below atmospheric pressure. Sound levels are usually measured and expressed in decibels ("dB") with 0 decibels corresponding to the threshold of hearing. **Table 9, Definitions of Acoustical Terms Used**, in this Report contains definitions of key technical terms. Most sounds consist of a broad band of frequencies, with each frequency differing in sound level. The intensities of each frequency add together to generate a sound.

Table 9
Definitions of Acoustical Terms Used in this Report

Term	Definitions
Decibel, dB	A unit describing the amplitude of sound, equal to 20 times the logarithm to the base 10 of the ratio of the pressure of the sound measured to the reference pressure. The reference pressure for air is 20.
Sound Pressure Level	Sound pressure is the sound force per unit area, usually expressed in micro-Pascals (or 20 micro-Newtons per square meter), where 1 Pascal is the pressure resulting from a force of 1 Newton exerted over an area of 1 square meter. The sound pressure level is expressed in decibels as 20 times the logarithm to the base 10 of the ratio between the pressures exerted by the sound to a reference sound pressure (e.g., 20 micro-Pascals). Sound pressure level is the quantity that is directly measured by a sound level meter.
Frequency, Hz	The number of complete pressure fluctuations per second above and below atmospheric pressure. Normal human hearing is between 20 Hz and 20,000 Hz. Infrasonic sound are below 20 Hz and Ultrasonic sounds are above 20,000 Hz.
A-Weighted Sound Level, dBA	The sound pressure level in decibels as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting filter network. The A-weighting filter de-emphasizes the very low and very high frequency components of the sound in a manner similar to the frequency response of the human ear and correlates well with subjective reactions to noise.
Equivalent Noise Level, L_{eq}	The average A-weighted noise level during the measurement period. The hourly L_{eq} used for this report is denoted as dBA $L_{eq[h]}$.
Community Noise Equivalent Level, CNEL	The average A-weighted noise level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of 5 decibels in the evening from 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM and after addition of 10 decibels to sound levels in the night between 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM.
Day/Night Noise Level, Ldn or DNL	The average A-weighted noise level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of 10 decibels to levels measured in the night between 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM.
Ln Values L_{01} , L_{10} , L_{50} , L_{90}	The A-weighted noise levels that are exceeded 1%, 10%, 50%, and 90% of the time during the measurement period.
Ambient Noise Level	The composite of noise from all sources near and far. The normal or existing level of environmental noise at a given location.
Intrusive	That noise which intrudes over and above the existing ambient noise at a given location. The relative intrusiveness of a sound depends upon its amplitude, duration, frequency, and time of occurrence and tonal or informational content as well as the prevailing ambient noise level.

The method commonly used to quantify environmental sounds consists of evaluating all the frequencies of a sound in accordance with a weighting that reflects the facts that human hearing is less sensitive at low frequencies and extreme high frequencies than in the frequency mid-range. This is called "A" weighting, and the decibel level measured is called the A-weighted sound level ("dBA"). Although the A-weighted noise level may adequately indicate the level of environmental noise at any instant in time, community noise levels vary continuously. Most environmental noise includes a conglomeration of noise from distant sources, which creates a relatively steady background noise in which no particular source is identifiable. To describe the time-varying character of environmental noise, the statistical noise descriptors, L_{01} , L_{10} , L_{50} , and L_{90} , are commonly used. They are the A-weighted noise levels equaled or exceeded during 1%, 10%, 50%, and 90% of a stated time period. A single number descriptor called the

L_{eq} is also widely used and represents the average, or a weighted noise level during a stated period of time.

The Soledad General Plan and County General Plan provide land use compatibility guidelines for community noise levels. Normally acceptable noise levels range between 50 and 60 dBA for single-family residential land uses and between 50 and 70 dBA for neighborhood parks, schools, and commercial uses. Additionally, normally acceptable noise levels for agricultural land use range between 50 and 75 dBA (City of Soledad, 2005; Monterey County, 2010). Based on the City and County guidelines, sensitive noise receptors within the vicinity of the Proposed Project would include private residences, schools, and hospitals. The City's General Plan does not include specific policies pertaining to construction noise. In the absence of specific General Plan policies, the County General Plan policies are applicable. Additional guidance is provided by the California Department of Transportation ("Caltrans") 2018 *Standard Specifications* document (Section 14-8.02A), which suggests that construction equipment should not exceed 86 dBA L_{max} at a distance of 50 feet from job site activities between 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM.

Project components would be located within City ROWs, on school and park properties, agricultural land, and at the WRF. The distribution pipeline component of the Project is primarily surrounded by Single-Family Residential and Public Facility land uses (please refer to **Figure 2**). Sensitive receptors within the vicinity of the Project include residences adjacent to pipeline alignments and three (3) schools (i.e., Soledad High School, San Vicente Elementary School, and Jack Francioni School) (see **Figure 8**). The Proposed Project is not located in the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan, or within two miles of a public airport or public use airport.

Regulatory Environment

State

The State of California regulates vehicular and freeway noise affecting classrooms, sets standards for sound transmission and occupational noise control, and identifies noise insulation standards and airport noise/land-use compatibility criteria.

California General Plan Guidelines: The State of California General Plan Guidelines, published by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research ("OPR"), also provides guidance for the acceptability of projects in specific CNEL/Ldn contours. The guidelines also present adjustment factors that may be used to arrive at noise acceptability standards that reflect the noise control goals of the community, the community's sensitivity to noise, and the community's assessment of the relative importance of noise pollution. For multi-family land uses, the State of California General Plan Guidelines identify a "normally acceptable" exterior noise level of up to 65 dBA CNEL/Ldn. Multi-family land uses are considered "conditionally acceptable" in noise environments of 60 to 70 dBA CNEL/Ldn, "normally unacceptable" in exterior noise environments of 70 to 75 dBA CNEL/Ldn, and "clearly unacceptable" in exterior noise environments exceeding 75 dBA CNEL/Ldn. Assuming a minimum exterior-to-interior noise reduction of 25 dB, an exterior noise environment of 70 dBA CNEL/Ldn would allow for a normally acceptable interior noise level of 45 dBA CNEL/Ldn.

California Code of Regulations: The California Commission of Housing and Community Development officially adopted noise insulation standards in 1974. In November 1988, the Building Standards Commission approved revisions to these standards (Title 24, Part 2, California Code of Regulations). Title 24 requires interior noise levels attributable to exterior sources must not exceed 45 dB in any habitable

room. Additionally, the code specifies that multi-family residential buildings or structures that will be located in exterior CNEL (or Ldn) contours of 60 dBA, or greater, of sources such as a freeway, expressway, parkway, major street, thoroughfare, airport, rail line, rapid transit line or industrial noise source shall require an acoustical analysis showing that the building has been designed to limit intruding noise to an interior CNEL (or Ldn) of 45 dBA. Predictions must also be made for future noise levels for a period of at least ten years from the time of building permit application.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The City's General Plan includes interior and exterior noise standards presented in **Table 10** below.

Table 10
Interior and Exterior Noise Standards

Categories	Uses	Interior ¹ Energy Average CNEL	Exterior ² Energy Average CNEL
Residential	Single Family, Duplex, Multi-Family	45 ³	65
Residential	Mobile Home	---	65 ⁴
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional	Motel, Hotel, Transient Lodging	45	65 ⁵
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional	Commercial Retail, Bank, Restaurant	55	---
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional	Office Building, Research and Development, Professional Office, Government Office	50	---
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional	Amphitheater, Concert Hall, Auditorium, Meeting Hall	45	---
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional	Gymnasium	50	---
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional	Sports Club	55	---
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional	Manufacturing, Warehousing, Wholesale, Utilities	65	---
Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional	Movie Theaters	45	---
Institutional	Hospitals, Schools	45	65
Institutional	Church, Library	45	---
Open Space	Parks	---	65

Table 10 Notes:

1. Indoor environment excluding bathrooms, closets, and corridors.
2. Outdoor environment limited to private yards of single-family residences, multi-family private patio or balcony served by a means of exit from inside, mobile home parks, hospital patio, park picnic area, school playground, hotel/motel recreation area.
3. Noise level requirements with closed windows. Mechanical ventilation systems or other means of natural ventilation shall be provided per Chapter 12 Section 1205 of the Uniform Building Code.
4. Exterior noise level should be such that interior level will not exceed 45 CNEL.
5. Except areas affected by aircraft noise.

Source: City, 2005a

Additionally, the Noise Element of the City's General Plan has the following goals and policies relevant to the Proposed Project:⁴

⁴ Refer to the Noise Element of the City's General Plan for copies of the figures referenced here.

- Goal-1:** To preserve the quiet rural setting of the City and protect citizens from exposure to excessive levels of noise.
- N2:** Where nonresidential land uses are likely to generate noise levels exceeding those shown on Figure X1 on adjacent or nearby existing or planned noise sensitive uses, the City shall require preparation of an acoustical analysis as part of the environmental review process so that noise mitigation may be included in the project design.
- N5:** Where noise mitigation measures are required to achieve the standards described in Figure X2, the emphasis of such measures shall be placed on site planning and project design. The use of noise barriers shall be considered as a means of achieving the noise standards only after all other practical design-related mitigation measures have been integrated into the project.

Monterey County General Plan: The 2010 County General Plan provides the following policy for mitigating noise impacts applicable to the Proposed Project:

Policy PS-8.3: Programs for the routine inspection of food, water systems, sewage disposal, public housing, institutions, labor camps, swimming pools, recreation facilities, locations of hazardous substances, and noise hazards shall be established or maintained.

Would the project result in:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) For a project located in the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, in 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

- a. *Would the project result in 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?*

The Proposed Project would result in temporary construction-related noise and ongoing operational noise, as discussed below.

Construction

Construction noise typically occurs intermittently and varies depending upon the location or phase of construction (e.g., land clearing, grading, building construction). Noise generated by construction equipment, including earth movers, material handlers, and portable generators, can reach high levels. Initial site preparation phases, including grading and excavation activities, tend to involve the most equipment and result in the highest average-hourly noise levels. **Table 11** summarizes noise levels commonly associated with construction equipment. As noted in **Table 11**, instantaneous noise levels (in dBA L_{max}) generated by individual pieces of construction equipment typically range from approximately 80 dBA to 85 dBA L_{max} at 50 feet. Typical operating cycles may involve two (2) minutes of full power, followed by three (3) or four (4) minutes at lower settings. Average-hourly noise levels for individual equipment range from 73 to 82 dBA L_{eq} . Based on typical off-road equipment usage rates and assuming multiple pieces of equipment operating simultaneously in a localized area, average-hourly noise levels could reach levels of approximately 80 dBA L_{eq} at roughly 100 feet.

Table 11
Construction Equipment Noise Emission Levels

Equipment	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 50 ft from Source	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 100 ft from Source ¹	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 200 ft from Source ¹	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 400 ft from Source ¹
Air Compressor	81	75	69	63
Backhoe	80	74	68	62
Ballast Equalizer	82	76	70	64
Ballast Tamper	83	77	71	65
Compactor	82	76	70	64
Concrete Mixer	85	79	73	67
Concrete Pump	82	76	70	64
Concrete Vibrator	76	70	64	58
Dozer	85	79	73	67
Generator	81	75	69	63
Grader	85	79	73	67
Impact Wrench	85	79	73	67
Jack Hammer	88	82	76	70
Loader	85	79	73	67
Paver	89	83	77	71
Pneumatic Tool	85	79	73	67
Pump	76	70	64	58
Roller	74	68	62	56

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment, 2006
Construction generated noise levels drop off at a rate of about 6 dBA per doubling of distance between the source and receptor.

Construction of the recycled water pump station at the WRF would occur approximately 1,800 feet west of the nearest sensitive residential receptor and is not anticipated to result in construction noise impacts. Likewise, installation of the transmission pipeline through the agricultural easement in unincorporated Monterey County would occur approximately 1,400 feet northeast of the nearest sensitive residential receptor and is not anticipated to result in construction noise impacts at this location. However, agricultural workers, if present, could potentially be impacted by construction of this component of the Project. Many residential and educational sensitive receptors located in the areas where the distribution pipelines would be installed in roadway ROWs throughout the City. Construction

activities associated with the distribution system could occur within 25-feet of these residences and within 150 feet of schools (depending on final pipeline alignment). Limited improvements at some of the park and school sites to connect the distribution system to existing water system may also generate noise during construction that could impact park users or students.

The Proposed Project could result in temporary significant noise impacts from installation of the transmission main (impacts to agricultural workers) and the distribution pipeline (residential and educational receptors) based on the noise emissions identified in **Table 11**. However, construction activities would be temporary in nature and would not be concentrated in a single location due to the linear nature of pipeline installation. Project construction would be limited to the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, with no nighttime, weekend, or holiday construction proposed. No permanent noise increase would occur as a result of construction of the Proposed Project. In addition, the Project includes construction BMPs, including use of mufflers on construction equipment and use of temporary noise barriers to reduce noise during construction. This represents a less than significant impact.

Operation

Once operational, the Proposed Project would not result in a substantial permanent noise increase. The pipeline and transmission main components would be located underground and would not generate substantial noise. The aboveground components of the Proposed Project would be limited to the recycled water pump station at the existing WRF. As stated previously, there are no sensitive receptors in close proximity to the WRF site. In addition, the existing WRF already generates operational noise and the recycled water pump station is not anticipated to substantially increase operational noise compared to existing conditions. In addition, the recycled water pump station at the existing WRF would not introduce new sources of noise in closer proximity to sensitive residential receptors compared to existing conditions. The Proposed Project would not result in new sources of substantial operational noise during operation and would not result in a permanent increase in ambient noise levels. This represents a less than significant impact.

b. Would the project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Construction

The Proposed Project would generate temporary groundborne vibration during construction. A vibration impact could occur where noise-sensitive land uses are exposed to excessive vibration levels. The nearest sensitive receptors are located as close as 25 feet from distribution pipeline installation. People residing or attending school adjacent to the Proposed Project area could be exposed to temporary groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels during construction. Vibratory compactors or rollers and pavement breakers can generate perceptible vibration. Heavy trucks can also generate groundborne vibration, which varies depending on vehicle type, weight, and pavement conditions. The Federal Transit Authority has published standard vibration levels and peak particle velocities for construction equipment. **Table 12** below summarizes these standards for construction equipment.

Table 12
Vibration Velocities for Construction Equipment

Equipment	Approximate Velocity Level at 25 Feet ("VdB")	Approximate Peak Particle Velocity at 25 Feet ("inches/second")	Approximate Peak Particle Velocity at 50 feet ("inches/second")	Approximate Peak Particle Velocity at 400 feet ("inches/second")
Pile Driving (sonic)	104	0.644	N/A ¹	0.006
Pile Driver (impact)	112	1.518	N/A ¹	0.015
Large Bulldozers	87	0.089	0.031	0.001
Small Bulldozer	58	0.003	0.001	0.000
Loaded Trucks	86	0.076	0.027	0.001
Jackhammer	79	0.035	N/A ¹	0.000

Note: Data reflects typical vibration level. Source: (U.S. Department of Transportation, May 2006)

For purposes of this analysis, excessive groundborne vibration would be 0.2 inches per second (as derived from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Earthborne Vibrations Technical Advisory equation for attenuation of vibration) which is the level at which vibration could cause damage to masonry and wood buildings. Vibration levels from construction equipment attenuate as they radiate from the source (U.S. Department of Transportation, May 2006).

Sensitive receptors in the area could be exposed to groundborne vibrations of varying magnitudes depending on the type of equipment and proximity to construction activities, as shown in **Table 12**. Ground disturbing activities associated with project grading and excavation could involve the operation of bulldozers, compactors, and loaded trucks. These activities could impact sensitive receptors in the area. The vibration level associated with these types of equipment would attenuate to a maximum of approximately 0.089 inches per second at 25 feet, which would be barely perceptible and would be well under the threshold of 0.2 inches per second (U.S. Department of Transportation, May 2006). Construction activities could occur in 25-feet of residences in the Project area to install pipelines in the roadway ROWs. Construction activities would be temporary in nature and would not be concentrated in a single location due to the linear nature of pipeline installation. Installation of the transmission pipeline would require similar construction equipment as the distribution system pipeline and would be located approximately 1,400 feet from the nearest residential receptor. More extensive construction activities for the recycled water pump station would occur at the existing WRF site. The nearest sensitive receptor is 1,800 feet east of the WRF site and would not be impacted by construction vibration. Vibration associated with the construction of the Proposed Project would be below levels that could cause damage to structures, would not result in prolonged interference for sensitive receptors, and would barely be perceptible. This represents a less than significant impact.

Operation

Once operational, the Proposed Project would not generate excessive or substantial vibration. The majority of Proposed Project components would be located underground and would not produce substantial vibrations. The aboveground components of the Proposed Project would be limited to the recycled water pump station, which would not result in substantial vibration during operation.

Operation of the Proposed Project would not introduce new sources of substantial vibration. This represents a less than significant impact.

- c. *For a project located in 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 be residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?*

The Proposed Project is not located in the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan, or within two (2) miles of a public or public use airport. Therefore, no impact would occur.

4.13 Population and Housing

Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project is located primarily in the City of Soledad, with a segment of proposed pipeline located in unincorporated Monterey County. The City has an approximate population of 24,925 persons inhabiting 4,524 housing units (US Census Bureau, 2024). The Proposed Project is intended to serve existing parks and schools within the Proposed Project area with recycled water. The Proposed Project does not involve new residential or commercial development or additional residential or commercial water connections.

Regulatory Setting

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The Housing Element of the City's General Plan contains the following policy related to the Proposed Project:

- H-10.** The City of Soledad shall ensure the availability of adequate public facilities for the expected housing need of the city.

Monterey County General Plan: The 2010 Monterey County General Plan includes a Housing Element that identifies policies to address population and housing.

- Policy H-2.13** Assist in infrastructure and public facility improvements that support existing and new affordable housing.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in the area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■

Impact Discussion

- a. *Would the project induce substantial unplanned population growth in the 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 involves augmentation of the City's recycled water infrastructure to offset the use of potable water for irrigation of sports fields and parks across the City. The recycled water associated with the Proposed Project would irrigate park facilities and school fields and would not augment the City's drinking water supply. Therefore, the Project would not supply water to new or existing homes and would not induce, directly or indirectly, substantial unplanned population growth. For these reasons, no impact would occur.

- b. *Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?*

The Proposed Project would reduce the demand for groundwater by providing recycled non-potable water for irrigation of school fields and parks across the City. Improvements to expanding recycled water infrastructure to provide this recycled water to school and recreational facilities within the City would occur within existing roadway ROWs, agricultural easements, and the existing WRF site. These improvements would not displace people or housing, and the Proposed Project would not require construction of replacement or additional housing elsewhere. Therefore, no impact would occur.

4.14 Public Services

Environmental Setting

Key public services to the Proposed Project area (police protection, fire protection, etc.) are provided by the following agencies.

Police

The Soledad Police Department provides police protection services for Project components in the City. The department consists of 21 law enforcement officers and three civilian personnel and is located at 236 Main Street, adjacent to proposed pipeline alignments along Main Street and Monterey Street and approximately 0.8 miles from the WRF (City of Soledad, 2024a). Additionally, the Monterey County Sheriff's Office provides police protection services for unincorporated areas of Monterey County, and would provide police protection for project components within County jurisdiction. The Department's headquarters are located at 1414 Natividad Road in Salinas, which is approximately 25 miles northwest of the Booster Pump Station 66 site (Monterey County Sheriff's Office, 2024).

Fire

The City of Soledad contracts with CALFIRE to provide fire services to the City and the unincorporated Mission-Soledad Fire Protection District. The Soledad Fire Department, in coordination with CALFIRE, serves approximately 34,000 citizens within approximately 97 square miles of City and County land (City of Soledad, 2024b). The Soledad Fire Department is located at the corner of Monterey Street and Main

Street, approximately 50 feet from pipeline alignments along these roads and approximately 0.8 miles from Project components located at the WRF.

Schools

The SUSD serves the schools within the Project area. These include four preschools, five elementary schools, one middle school, two high schools, and one special education, one adult, and one alternative school. The Project would provide recycled water to six of the 15 schools in the City, which would require connections to existing water systems within school properties. Please see **Section 1.5, Proposed Project** for a list of schools that would be served by the Proposed Project.

Parks

The Proposed Project would serve 14 total parks in the City, consisting of 13 existing City parks and the future Toledo Park to be located south of the intersection of Gabilan Drive and Vista Avenue, which would require connections to existing water systems within park properties. Please refer to **Section 1.5, Proposed Project** for a list of parks that the Proposed Project would serve.

Regulatory Setting

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The City's fire department oversees the Mission Soledad Rural Fire Protection District, a special district comprising approximately 42,000 acres bounded by the foothills of the Gabilan Range and the Santa Lucia Mountains. The City also has a mutual aid agreement with CALFIRE for fire protection services. The Public Services and Facilities Element of the City's General Plan contains the following policies applicable to the Proposed Project:

- S2:** The City shall plan for the expansion of needed water and sewer infrastructure including, but not limited to, the expansion of water production, storage and distribution facilities, the expansion of wastewater collection and treatment capacity, and storm drainage facility expansion.
- S38:** The City shall ensure that all proposed developments are reviewed for compliance with fire safety standards per the Uniform Fire Code and other City standards and ordinances.

Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Element of the City's General Plan contains the following policies applicable to the Proposed Project:

- PR15:** Parks shall include adequate support facilities such as parking and restrooms.
- PR25:** New development shall not adversely impact adjacent parks, recreation, or open space lands.

Monterey County General Plan: None of the policies provided in the 2010 County General Plan related to public services are applicable to the Proposed Project.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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:				
a) Fire protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Police protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Other public facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■

Impact Discussion

- a. *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 fire protection?*

The Proposed Project involves construction of a recycled water pump station at the WRF and a transmission pipeline and water distribution pipelines within farmland easements in unincorporated Monterey County and the City roadway ROWs. Construction within the City roadway ROWs would involve grading and trenching for installation of the distribution pipelines across the City. Construction of the pipelines would occur within approximately 50 feet of the City's fire station. However, while the Proposed Project would result in short-term lane or road closures, all such closures would occur in accordance with a traffic control plan reviewed and approved by the City as part of the encroachment permit process. This would ensure that the proposed road or lane closures would not interfere with emergency response vehicles or area evacuation in an emergency. Although unlikely, potential construction-related emergencies could require both CALFIRE and the Soledad Fire Department to respond. The Proposed Project would have no post-construction impacts. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

- b. *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 police protection?*

The Proposed Project involves construction and operation of a recycled water pump station and associated transmission and distribution pipelines across the City and unincorporated Monterey County. Although unlikely, potential construction-related emergencies could require both the Monterey County Sheriff's Office and the Soledad Police Department to respond. Construction would occur over 18-24

months and would not significantly impact police protection services or require construction of new or remodeled facilities. Once operational, the Proposed Project would not require additional demand for police services. Therefore, this impact is less than significant.

- c. *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 schools?*

Construction of the Proposed Project would occur at the WRF, easements in unincorporated Monterey County, and within City roadway ROWs. While the Proposed Project would supply recycled water for irrigation at local schools, the majority of construction would occur within the roadways to connect the new distribution pipelines to existing water infrastructure, with additional work within some City parks/schools to connect the recycled water distribution system to the existing sites' water infrastructure. Work at the schools and parks includes installing irrigation meters, disconnecting the potable water system from the irrigation system, installing irrigation piping, and replacing sprinkler heads with Title 22 compliant purple colored recycled water sprinkler heads. Construction would occur over 18-24 months and some construction would occur adjacent to or within the grounds of local schools. However, the Proposed Project would not significantly impact school operation or performance objectives. No post-construction impacts would occur in relation to local school operation and performance standards. This represents a less than significant impact.

- d. *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 parks?*

While the Proposed Project would supply recycled water for irrigation at local parks, the majority of construction would occur within the roadway ROWs to connect the new distribution pipelines to existing water infrastructure, with additional work within some City parks/schools to connect the recycled water distribution system to the water infrastructure at the existing sites. Construction would occur over 18-24 months and some construction would occur adjacent to or within the grounds of local parks. However, parks would remain open during construction and the Proposed Project would not significantly impact park services. No post-construction impacts would occur in relation to local park operation and performance standards. This represents a less than significant impact.

- e. *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 other public facilities?*

The Proposed Project would involve expansion of recycled water distribution across the City and would have no physical impacts on other public facilities. The Project would not require the construction of new or remodeled facilities. Therefore, no impact would occur.

4.15 Recreation

Environmental Setting

The Proposed Project would primarily be located in City ROWs and at the WRF; however, the Project would replace or convert existing irrigation connections on park properties throughout the City. Construction would occur at 14 City parks comprising primarily of baseball and soccer fields, open lawn areas, and pedestrian pathways. Schools can also provide limited recreational facilities to the community (e.g., turf areas). Please refer to **Section 1.5, Proposed Project** for a list of parks that would be served by the Proposed Project.

Regulatory Environment

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: the Parks and Recreation Element of the City's General Plan contains the following policies applicable to the Proposed Project:

PR15: Parks shall include adequate support facilities such as parking and restrooms.

PR25: New development shall not adversely impact adjacent parks, recreation, or open space lands.

Monterey County General Plan: None of the policies provided in the 2010 County General Plan related to recreational facilities are applicable to the Proposed Project.

Would the project:		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a. and b. Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreation facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated? Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

The Proposed Project would provide recycled non-potable recycled water for irrigation to local parks and recreational facilities on school campuses within the City. Construction of the required recycled

water pump station would occur at the WRF, and construction of the necessary transmission and distribution pipelines would occur on County farmland and within City roadway ROWs. To supply recycled water to irrigation infrastructure at local parks and school fields, the Proposed Project would connect new pipeline infrastructure to existing infrastructure within the roadways adjacent to local parks and schools. The Proposed Project would require some limited construction within some school/park sites to connect the recycled water distribution pipeline to the sites' existing water systems.

Work at the schools and parks includes installing irrigation meters, disconnecting the potable water system from the irrigation system, installing irrigation piping, and replacing sprinkler heads with Title 22 compliant purple colored recycled water sprinkler heads. Excavation and disturbance at the schools and parks are anticipated to be minimal. Closures of the schools and parks is not anticipated. Work areas are anticipated to be limited to locations at irrigation facilities and restored to pre-project conditions.

Operation of the Proposed Project would provide recycled water for irrigation as a part of general maintenance of recreational fields. Therefore, the Project would not increase the use of existing parks or other recreational facilities. For these reasons, this impact is less than significant.

4.16 Transportation

Environmental Setting

Regional access to the Proposed Project area is provided via Highway 101 and SR 146. Local access to the WRF site is provided via Morisoli Road. The distribution system installation would occur within various local roadways within the City. Installation would occur within the following roadway ROWs:

- Front Street
- Market Street
- West Street
- Monterey Street
- Main Street
- North Street
- Andalucia Drive
- Metz Road/SR 146
- Dixi Street
- Palm Avenue
- Oak Street
- State Street
- Park Street
- Walker Drive
- Orchard Lane
- 3rd Street
- Vineyard Drive
- Vista de Soledad
- Gabilan Drive
- Prado Drive
- Mirada Street
- Toledo Street
- San Antonio Street

- Santa Barbara Street
- Vista Avenue
- Vida Street
- Entrada Drive

These local roadways are two-directional, typically with two to four total lanes. The Proposed Project does not include any Caltrans designated scenic highways, although SR 146 is listed as an eligible scenic highway (see **4.1 Aesthetics**).

The City's 2005 General Plan qualitatively evaluated existing traffic conditions using the Level of Service ("LOS") metric. LOS is a qualitative assessment of motorist and passenger perceptions of traffic conditions. LOS generally reflects traveling conditions such as travel time and speed and freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, and volume to capacity ratios to approximate driver satisfaction. The LOS measures differ by roadway type and are designated as LOS A to LOS F. LOS A represents free-flow conditions, while LOS F indicates excessive delays and congestion. However, as of July 2020, the current CEQA metric for evaluating transportation impacts is Vehicle Miles Traveled ("VMT") as described further below. The City has not adopted a threshold of significance for CEQA impacts from VMT.

Regulatory Environment

State

Senate Bill 743: SB 743 required that starting July 2020 transportation impact for projects per CEQA be based on a project's VMT. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)(1) calls for the evaluation of transportation impacts of projects based on VMT. CEQA uses the VMT metric to evaluate a project's transportation impacts. The publication *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA*, State of California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, December 2018, suggests that a significant environmental impact would occur if a project would generate more than 110 trips per day.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The following policies from the Circulation Element of the City's General Plan are applicable to the approved project:

C6: The City shall not approve new commercial or industrial development that encourages customers, employees or deliveries to use residential streets. The circulation system shall be designed so that nonresidential traffic (especially truck traffic) is confined to nonresidential areas.

C19: On street truck parking shall be prohibited where such parking restricts adequate sight distances or otherwise poses a potentially hazardous situation.

Monterey County General Plan: The 2010 Monterey County General Plan includes policies related to transportation and circulation. Relevant policies are listed below.

Policy C-2.7: New development shall be located and designed with convenient access and efficient transportation for all intended users and, where possible, consider alternative transportation modes.

Policy C-4.3: The needs of bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as provisions for utilities and drainage, shall be considered and, where appropriate, provided in all public rights-of-way in a manner that minimizes impacts to adjacent land uses.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	■

Impact Discussion

a. and b. Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities? Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

At each school and park, a new recycled water lateral pipeline is anticipated to be installed beneath the sidewalk requiring a temporary closure of the sidewalk for pedestrian safety during construction. Traffic control plans will be developed to temporarily re-route pedestrian traffic around the work area during construction.

Pipeline construction beneath crosswalks is anticipated requiring a temporary closure of the crosswalk for pedestrian safety during construction. Traffic control plans will be developed to temporarily re-route pedestrian traffic around the work area during construction.

Pipeline construction beneath bike lanes and bikes paths is anticipated to be minimal. If construction requires temporary closure of a bike lane and bike path for safety traffic control plans will be developed to temporarily re-route bicycle traffic around the work area during construction.

The Proposed Project would result in temporary construction related traffic due to construction worker vehicle trips and temporary lane closures. The Project would result in a nominal increase in operational traffic associated with regular maintenance of the system components. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.2 subdivision (b)(1) calls for the evaluation of transportation impacts of projects based on VMT. CEQA uses the VMT metric to evaluate a project's transportation impacts. The City has not yet adopted VMT thresholds. In the absence of City and County VMT standard metrics, this IS/MND relies on the Office of Planning and Research's recommended small project screening threshold to determine whether the Proposed Projects VMT effects would be significant. For the IS/MND the Proposed Project would result in a significant traffic-related effect if the Proposed Project would exceed 110 daily trips.

Construction

The Proposed Project would result in temporary construction-related traffic. Construction would require 10 workers onsite at any given time during the duration of construction. Most of the equipment for the distribution pipeline and transmission pipeline would be brought to the construction site and would be stored at temporary staging areas along the pipeline and transmission alignment. These locations would change over the course of construction due to the linear nature of the pipeline component. Construction materials and equipment for the recycled water pump station would be located at the existing WRF site throughout construction.

Trucks would bring materials such as water pipes, gravel, and asphalt for the road, etc. to the site. These deliveries would take place over the course of construction of the Proposed Project. Construction of the Project would be phased over the course of 18-24 months, and construction hours would be limited to 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. No construction would occur on weekends or holidays. Based on the construction schedule, and the temporary nature of construction, it is unlikely that construction traffic would exceed the threshold of 110 daily trips. Due to the temporary nature of construction, and phased approach, this impact would be less than significant.

The Proposed Project could require temporary closures to pedestrian sidewalks and bicycle lanes during installation of the distribution pipeline. All closures would be in accordance with a traffic control plan included as part of the encroachment permit. All closures would be temporary, would last only as long as required to install specific segments of pipeline, and would cease following completion of construction. This represents a less than significant impact.

Operation

Once operational, the pipeline components of the Proposed Project would be located underground and would not interfere with roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian systems. Upon Project completion, the project would not impact bike or pedestrian facilities. The Proposed Project may generate additional traffic trips during operation compared to existing conditions. These trips would occur in connection with periodic deliveries of material and maintenance related activities of the Project components, as well as routine daily traffic trips associated with on-site operational employees, similar to existing conditions. Anticipated operational traffic trips would be well below the threshold of 110 daily trips. This represents a less than significant impact.

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

The Proposed Project would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersection) or incompatible uses. The Proposed Project would implement a traffic control plan to manage lane and road closures due to construction, which would ensure no temporary hazards would occur due to a geometric design feature. Once completed, the distribution pipelines would be located underground and would not create any hazards from geometric design features. The transmission main and recycled water pump station would not be located within public roadways. The Proposed Project is the extension of recycled water service to City parks and schools and would not introduce incompatible uses. This represents a less than significant impact.

d. Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

The Proposed Project would not result in inadequate emergency access. The Proposed Project consists of new pipelines and would not impact emergency access. While the Proposed Project would result in short-term lane or road closures, all such closures would be conducted in accordance with a traffic control plan reviewed and approved by the City as part of the encroachment permit process. This would ensure that the proposed road or lane closures would not result in adequate emergency access (see **Section 4.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials**). No impact would occur.

4.17 Tribal Cultural Resources

Basin Research Associates, Inc. (“BASIN”) prepared a Cultural Resources Assessment Report for the Proposed Project in August 2024. The Cultural Resources Assessment Report includes the results of background research and field reconnaissance of the Proposed Project’s APE. Background research consisted of a records search from the Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University, a Sacred Lands File search with the Native American Heritage Commission, and Native American consultation in support of consultation under AB 52. The field reconnaissance consisted of a pedestrian survey of the APE on July 12, 2024, which investigated the APE for cultural and Tribal cultural resources.

Environmental Setting

Regional History

Prior to Euro-American contact, the area now known as Monterey County was inhabited by native speakers of the Costanoan, Esselen, and Salinan languages. The traditional way of life for the native inhabitants was largely destroyed in the 1760s with the arrival of Euro-Americans.

The Ohlone inhabited a large range along the coast of California that extended from the San Francisco Peninsula south to the Monterey Peninsula and included inland areas from the Santa Clara Valley through San Juan Batista. While first contact between Indigenous communities and Europeans took place in 1542, followed half a century later in 1602, European settlement began in the 1760’s when the Spanish decided to establish colonies. The establishment of Misión San Carlos de Borromeo de Carmelo marked the beginning of a period of intense Native American conversion to Catholicism. After Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1820, the government granted most land around Monterey to wealthy Mexican families as large tracts of lands known as ranchos. Following the 1846 capture of California by the United States, industry in the Salinas valley shifted away from grazing lands and towards agriculture. As the competition for land increased with the arrival of Anglo settlers, Native American communities continued to disappear.

Regulatory Environment

Federal

National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. § 300301 et seq.), as amended, requires that a federal agency with direct or indirect jurisdiction over a proposed federal or federally assisted undertaking, or issuing licenses or permits, consider the effect of the proposed undertaking on historic properties. A historic property may include a prehistoric or historic-era building, structure, object, site or district included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the

National Register maintained by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Federal agencies must also allow the ACHP to comment on the proposed undertaking and its potential effects on historic properties. The implementing regulations for Section 106 of the NHPA (36 CFR 800) require consultation with the SHPO, the ACHP, federally recognized Indian tribes and other Native Americans, and interested members of the public throughout the compliance process. The four principal steps are:

- Initiate the Section 106 process, including consultation with interested parties (36 CFR 800.3);
- Identify historic properties, i.e., resources included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register (36 CFR 800.4);
- Assess the effects of the undertaking on historic properties within the area of potential effect (36 CFR 800.5); and
- Resolve adverse effects (36 CFR 800.6).

Adverse effects on historic properties are often resolved through preparation of a Memorandum of Agreement or Programmatic Agreement developed in consultation between the federal agency, the SHPO, Indian tribes, and interested members of the public. The ACHP is also invited to participate. The agreement describes stipulations to mitigate adverse effects on historic properties listed in or eligible for the National Register (36 CFR 60).

State

California Public Resources Code: Several sections of the California PRC protect cultural resources located on public land. Under PRC Section 5097.5, no person shall knowingly and willfully excavate upon, or remove, destroy, injure, or deface, any historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, archaeological or vertebrate paleontological site (including fossilized footprints), inscriptions made by human agency, rock art, or any other archaeological, paleontological, or historical feature situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency that has jurisdiction over the lands. Violation of this section is a misdemeanor.

PRC Section 5097.98 states that if Native American human remains are identified within a project area, the landowner must work with the Native American Most Likely Descendant as identified by the NAHC to develop a plan for the treatment or disposition of the human remains and any items associated with Native American burials with appropriate dignity. Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines also addresses these procedures. California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 prohibits disinterring, disturbing, or removing human remains from a location other than a dedicated cemetery. Section 30244 of the PRC requires reasonable mitigation for impacts on paleontological and archaeological resources that occur because of development on public lands.

California Health and Safety Code: California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 regulates the treatment of human remains. In the event of discovery or recognition of any human remains in any location other than a dedicated cemetery, there shall be no further excavation or disturbance of the site, or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains until the coroner of the county in which the human remains are discovered has determined that the remains are not subject to his or her authority. If the coroner recognizes the human remains to be those of a Native American or has reason to believe that they are those of a Native American, he or she shall contact the NAHC by telephone within 24 hours.

Native American Heritage Commission: The NAHC was created by statute in 1976, is a nine-member body appointed by the Governor to identify and catalog cultural resources (i.e., places of special religious or social significance to Native Americans and known graves and cemeteries of Native Americans on private lands) in California. The Commission is responsible for preserving and ensuring accessibility of sacred sites and burials, the disposition of Native American human remains and burial items, maintaining an inventory of Native American sacred sites located on public lands, and reviewing current administrative and statutory protections related to these sacred sites.

State Assembly Bill 52: Prior to the enactment of Assembly Bill 52, the State of California found current laws provided limited protection for sites, features, places, objects, and landscapes with cultural value to California Native American Tribes. These items and locations included the protection of Native American sacred places such as places of worship, religious or ceremonial sites, and sacred shrines. California Native Americans have used, and continue to use, natural settings in the conduct of religious observances, ceremonies, and cultural practices and beliefs. These resources reflect the Tribes' continuing cultural ties to the land and their traditional heritage. Many of these archaeological, historical, cultural, and sacred sites are not located in the current boundaries of California Native American reservations and rancherias, and therefore are not covered by the protectionist policies of Tribal governments. To recognize California Native American Tribal sovereignty and the unique relationship of California local governments and public agencies with California Native American Tribal governments, and respecting the interests and roles of project proponents, the Legislature enacted AB 52 Native Americans: California Environmental Quality Act.

AB 52 formally recognizes that California Native American prehistoric, historic, archaeological, cultural, and sacred places are essential elements in Tribal cultural traditions, heritages, and identities. California Native American Tribes are experts regarding their Tribal history and practices for which they are traditionally and culturally affiliated. Due to this unique history, and to uphold existing rights of all California Native American Tribes to participate in, and contribute their knowledge to, environmental analysis, projects should include Tribal knowledge about the land and Tribal cultural resources at issue. Projects should also consider a potential significant impact on those resources. Therefore, a meaningful consultation between California Native American Tribal governments and lead agencies, respecting the interests and roles of all California Native American Tribes and project proponents, and the level of required confidentiality concerning Tribal cultural resources shall occur. Doing so will allow identification of potential Tribal cultural resources onsite and incorporation of culturally appropriate mitigation measures considered by the decision-making body of the lead agency. Doing so also enables California Native American Tribes to manage and accept conveyances of, and act as caretakers of, Tribal cultural resources and ultimately establishes that a substantial adverse change to a Tribal cultural resource has a significant effect on the environment.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The City's General Plan includes policies related to the preservation of cultural resources. Please see **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources** for further discussion.

Monterey County General Plan: The 2010 Monterey County General Plan includes policies related to the preservation of cultural resources, please see **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources**.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code § 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:				
i) 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), or	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) 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 Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	■	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

a.i. and a.ii, Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code § 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: 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), or 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 Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

The City sent letters containing a brief project description and maps of the Project Area to the Native American tribes identified by the NAHC on September 18, 2024 per AB 52. The City received letters from the following tribes: the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of San Juan Bautista and the Salinas Tribe. The Amah Mutsun Tribe expressed concerns about cultural or historic sensitivity within one (1) mile of the Project and, if so, the need to provide cultural sensitivity training before construction and Native American archaeological monitoring during earthmoving activities. The Salinas Tribe stated that unknown buried cultural resources and burials may be impacted by the Project and requested that areas near known sites be monitored by a Native American cultural resource specialist from their tribe.

BASIN conducted a records search at the NWIC, an SLF search with the NAHC, and completed a visual inspection of the Proposed Project APE. Additionally, BASIN reviewed the geology and soil

characterizations of the Proposed Project site. BASIN did not observe archaeological resources, and none have been previously recorded within the Proposed Project APE. However, previously unrecorded archaeological resources could be present below ground surface and such resources could be exposed or damaged during Project construction. The City will implement **Mitigation Measures CUL-1** and **CUL-2**, as discussed in **Section 4.5 Cultural Resources** to avoid potential impacts to underground cultural and Tribal resources. Additionally, the City would implement **Mitigation Measure TR-1**. Implementation of these mitigation measures would ensure the Project has a less than significant impact on Tribal cultural resources.

Mitigation Measure TR-1: Prior to ground disturbance activities, a Tribal Cultural monitor shall provide cultural sensitivity training to all construction personnel. The training shall explain applicable statutes, regulations, enforcement provisions; the prehistoric and historic environmental setting and context, local Tribal groups; show sample artifacts; and what prehistoric and historic archaeological deposits look like at the surface and when exposed during construction. Construction personnel shall not be permitted to operate equipment within the construction area unless they have attended the training. A list of the names of all personnel who attended the training, and copies of the signed acknowledgement forms shall be submitted to the City of Soledad Director of Public Works or a designee.

4.18 Utilities and Service Systems

Environmental Setting

Water Supply and Wastewater

The City of Soledad draws its water supply from the groundwater of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin – Forebay Aquifer Subbasin. The City owns and operates a water distribution system comprised of a W3 pump station, which draws water from an existing reclaimed water pump station wet well; 12-inch and eight-inch diameter transmission pipelines leading from the City to the WRF, located on Morisoli Road. The WRF produces disinfected, tertiary treated effluent that meets Title 22, Division 4, Chapter 3, California Code of Regulations for recycled water. It is operating at approximately 2.45 million gallons per day (MGD) average daily flow and the effluent is currently discharged to rapid infiltration basins adjacent to the WRF for aquifer recharge. The current discharge permit limits recharge to 4.3 MGD with the remaining 1.2 MGD of peak flow capacity designated for non-potable reuse (Carollo, 2024).

Solid Waste

Tri-Cities Disposal and Recycling provides solid waste and recycling collection services for the City. Additionally, Waste Management, Inc. provides solid waste and recycling collection services for the unincorporated portions of Monterey County, including a portion of the Proposed Project area. Solid waste and recycling in the Project area are disposed of at the Johnson Canyon Landfill in Gonzales, California. The Johnson Canyon Landfill has a maximum permitted capacity of 18,500,000 cubic yards per day (1,694 tons per day) and is estimated to have disposal capacity through year 2066 (CalRecycle, 2024).⁵

⁵ In December 2021, the Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority submitted a Revised Solid Waste Facilities Permit that would increase the permitted maximum tonnage, with a phased increase beginning in 2026. The revised permit would similarly increase

Regulatory Environment

State

Assembly Bill 939: California AB 939 established the California Integrated Waste Management Board (“CalRecycle”), which required all California counties to prepare Integrated Waste Management Plans. Additionally, AB 939 required all municipalities to divert 50 percent of their waste stream by the year 2000.

California Green Building Standards Code: In 2022, California adopted the most recent version of the California Green Building Standards Code, which establishes mandatory green building standards for new and remodeled structures in California. These standards include a mandatory set of guidelines and more stringent voluntary measures for new construction projects, to achieve specific green building performance levels as follows:

- Reduce indoor water use by 20 percent;
- Reduce wastewater by 20 percent;
- Recycle and/or salvage 50 percent of nonhazardous construction and demolition debris; and
- Provide readily accessible areas for recycling by occupant.

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The City’s General Plan provides the following policies for utilities applicable to the Proposed Project:

- L-44:** The City shall require that all new development be designed to complement the scale and character of existing development. Views of the surrounding hills and mountains shall be preserved through such means as design review, sign control, undergrounding of utilities, grading and tree removal standards.
- S10:** The City will manage the increase in water demand from new development to help ensure groundwater resources are not over drafted. The City will work with Monterey County and public and private water entities to plan for the efficient, long-term management of groundwater resources.
- S11:** Gravity flow for sewer and water service shall be employed wherever feasible.
- S26:** The City shall promote maximum use of solid waste source reduction, recycling, composting and environmentally safe transformation of wastes.
- S27:** The City shall require that all new development complies with applicable provisions of the Monterey County Integrated Waste Management Plan.

the daily disposal capacity and extend the closure date from 2055 to 2066. <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/PublicNotices/Details/4558#:~:text=Increase%20in%20the%20disposal%20Design%20Capacity%20from%2013%2C834%2C328,Capacity%20from%2026%2C000%20tons%20to%2057%2C276%20cubic%20yards.>

Monterey County General Plan: The 2010 Monterey County General Plan contains policies concerning utilities and services applicable to the Proposed Project:

Policy PS-2.1: Coordination among, and consolidation with, those public water service providers drawing from a common water table to prevent overdrawing the water table is encouraged.

Policy PS-5.3: Programs to facilitate recycling/diversion of waste materials at new construction sites, demolition projects, and remodeling projects shall be implemented.

Policy PS-5.4: The maximum use of solid waste source reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, and environmentally-safe transformation of wastes, consistent with the protection of the public's health and safety, shall be promoted.

Policy PS-13.2: All new utility lines shall be placed underground, unless determined not to be feasible by the Director of the Resource Management Agency.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which would cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statuses and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Discussion

- a. Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which would cause significant environmental effects?*

The Proposed Project consists of construction and operation of a recycled water pump station at the WRF, installation of a transmission main within an easement of County farmland, and installation of distribution pipelines throughout the City roadway ROWs and at connection points within or adjacent to City parks and schools. The Project would provide recycled water to school and park facilities for the irrigation of fields and landscaped areas. In supplying recycled water for school and park facility irrigation, the City would reduce reliance on and use of groundwater resources. The Proposed Project is an expansion of the City's existing wastewater utility service and would not require additional utility construction beyond what is included in the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would not require relocation of or construction of new wastewater treatment plant, storm water drainage infrastructure, electrical power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities. This represents a less than significant impact.

- b. Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?*

The Proposed Project consists of new infrastructure (i.e., recycled water pump station, transmission pipeline, and distribution pipelines) to supply school and park facilities with Title 22 recycled water produced by the existing WRF facility to irrigate fields and landscaped areas. In using recycled water, the City would reduce their use of local groundwater resources that supply the City. Therefore, the Proposed Project would have sufficient water supplies for the foreseeable future, as the school and park facilities would use recycled water from the WRF for irrigation as opposed to further use of local groundwater resources. For these reasons, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact regarding sufficient water supplies.

- c. Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which 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 result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that the wastewater treatment facility has inadequate capacity to serve the Project. The Proposed Project consists of new infrastructure to supply school and park facilities with recycled water to irrigate fields and landscaped areas. The Project would expand the recycled water distribution system and supply recycled water for irrigation generated from existing wastewater treatment processes at the WRF. Additionally, irrigating local school and park facilities would not return wastewater to the local wastewater treatment provider. Therefore, the Proposed Project would have no impact regarding service capacity of the local wastewater treatment provider.

- d. and e. Would the project 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?*

Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

The Proposed Project would not generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards or in excess of the capacity of the local Johnson Canyon Landfill as the Project would comply with all federal, state, and local statutes regulating and encouraging reduction in solid waste as outlined above. Solid waste generated from the Project would be disposed of offsite at the Johnson Canyon Landfill located in Gonzales, California. The Johnson Canyon Landfill has a maximum permitted capacity of 18,500,000 cubic yards per day (1,694 tons per day) and is estimated to have disposal capacity through year 2066 (CalRecycle, 2024). The Proposed Project does not include demolition of existing structures and would generate minimal amounts of waste from construction. Compliance with applicable solid waste regulations outlined above would ensure that the Project has a less than significant impact regarding generation of solid waste and compliance with local plans, policies, and programs regulating solid waste.

4.19 Wildfire

Environmental Setting

The State Fire Marshal is mandated to classify lands within State Responsibility Areas (“SRA”) into Fire Hazard Severity Zones (“FHSZ”). FHSZ are defined by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (“CALFIRE”) based on the presence of fire-prone vegetation, climate, topography, assets at risk (e.g., high population centers), and a fire protection agency’s ability to provide service to the area (CALFIRE, 2024). FHSZs are designated as “Very High,” “High,” or “Moderate.” The Proposed Project area is not located within an SRA or in an area classified as a very high FHSZ. The nearest SRA is a High FHSZ located approximately 0.3 miles northeast of the City.

Regulatory Setting

Local

City of Soledad General Plan: The City’s fire department oversees the Mission Soledad Rural Fire Protection District, a special district comprising approximately 42,000 acres bounded by the foothills of the Gabilan Range and the Santa Lucia Mountains. The City also has a mutual aid agreement with CALFIRE for fire protection services. The following goal and policies from the Safety element of the City’s General Plan is applicable to the Proposed Project:

- Goal 1:** To protect the lives and property of the residents of Soledad from unnecessary risk due to fire, flooding, earthquakes, and other natural and humanmade hazards.
- HZ9:** New development shall provide fire flow, emergency access and hydrants consistent with Fire Department requirements.
- HZ10:** The City will continue to participate in the State Emergency Preparedness Program.
- HZ11:** The City shall maintain mutual aid agreements with Monterey County and other jurisdictions for assistance in emergencies.

Monterey County General Plan: The following goals and policies from the County General Plan are applicable to the Proposed Project:

Goal S-4: Minimize the risks from fire.

Policy S-4.4: Detailed scientific analysis of fire hazards in the County shall be provided periodically.

Policy S-4.5: The wildland fire hazard severity map should be updated periodically as more precise information becomes available.

Policy S-4.6: Structural and other non-wildland fire risks within wildland urban interface areas should be identified and maintained as a layer in the County's GIS in cooperation with fire officials and updated periodically.

Policy S-4.7: The County and authorities having jurisdiction shall develop and maintain a procedure to inform potential developers of the requirements for development in high and very high fire hazard areas. This information shall be made available through the Planning Department.

Policy S-4.8: Fire hazards shall be reduced to an acceptable level of risk by prescribing the use, location, type, and design of roadways.

Policy S-4.9: Roadways shall be constructed and maintained in accordance with Monterey County Code Chapter 18.56 or the California Fire Code, as they may be updated from time to time, as determined by the fire authority having jurisdiction.

Policy S-4.11: The County shall require all new development to be provided with automatic fire protection systems (such as fire breaks, fire-retardant building materials, automatic fire sprinkler systems, and/or water storage tanks) approved by the fire jurisdiction.

Policy S-4.13: The County shall require all new development to have adequate water available for fire suppression. The water system shall comply with Monterey County Code Chapter 18.56, NFPA Standard 1142, or other nationally recognized standards. The fire authority having jurisdiction, the County Departments of Planning and Building Services, and all other regulatory agencies shall determine the adequacy and location of water supply and/or storage to be provided.

Policy S-4.14: Water systems constructed, extended, or modified to serve a new land use or a change in land use or an intensification of land use, shall be designed to meet peak daily demand and recommended fire flow.

Policy S-4.18: All access roads and driveways shall be maintained by the responsible parties to ensure the fire department safe and expedient passage at all times.

Policy S-4.21: All permits for residential, commercial, and industrial structural development (not including accessory uses) shall incorporate requirements of the fire authority having jurisdiction.

Policy S-4.22: Every building, structure, and/or development shall be constructed to meet the minimum requirements specified in the current adopted state building code, state fire code, Monterey County Code Chapter 18.56, and other nationally recognized standards.

Policy S-4.26: When public facilities and above-ground utilities are located in high or very high fire hazard areas, special precautions shall be taken to mitigate the risks from wildfire and to ensure uninterrupted operation.

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Require the installation or maintenance 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

a. *Would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

The distribution system of the Proposed Project would be located entirely within roadway ROWs and at existing parks and schools throughout the City. The components of the Proposed Project located within roadway ROWs may require temporary road or lane closures, depending on the final alignment of these components. During construction, the Proposed Project would implement a traffic control plan to ensure the safe passage of traffic, including emergency vehicles, through construction areas located in the City in fulfillment of the requirements for an encroachment permit. This traffic control plan would allow for the safe passage of vehicular traffic during construction of the Proposed Project under regular conditions and in the event of an event requiring emergency response and/or evacuation. In addition, construction would not be concentrated in a single location for long periods of time, which would reduce temporary construction impacts as lane and/or road closure would be limited to the time required to install each pipeline segment. Furthermore, these components would be located underground and would not impair adopted emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans once operational. The Project components located at the existing WRF site and within the agricultural easement north of the WRF would not interfere with adopted emergency response and/or emergency evacuation plans. This represents a less than significant impact.

- b. Would the project, 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 involve expansion of recycled water distribution to the City's existing parks and schools and does not include any new habitable structures. Components of the Proposed Project are located at the existing WRF site (the recycled water pump station), easements within agricultural properties in unincorporated Monterey County, and within existing roadway ROWs throughout the City (see Site Plans in **Figures 7a** and **7b**). The WRF site is relatively flat and lacks physical and biological features that would be conducive to wildland fire. The transmission main connecting the distribution system and the WRF would be located within an easement going through actively managed agricultural lands and is not considered to be within an area conducive to wildland fire. The distribution system located within the City would be located underground and within roadway ROWs and is not located in an area conducive to wildland fire. The Proposed Project area is located within a Local Responsibility Area ("LRA") FHSZ as designated by CALFIRE. The Proposed Project's northernmost component at Lum Memorial Park is located approximately 0.25 miles from an SRA FHSZ. The Proposed Project would involve expansion of recycled water distribution across the City and would not exacerbate wildfire risks and expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire. This represents a less than significant impact.

- c. Would the project require the installation or maintenance 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 involve expansion of recycled water distribution to the City's existing parks and schools. Components of the Proposed Project are located at the existing WRF site (the recycled water pump station), easements within agricultural properties in unincorporated Monterey County, and within existing road ROWs throughout the City (see **Figures 7a** and **7b**). The majority of Project infrastructure, excluding the recycled water pump station at the existing WRF site, would be located underground following completion of construction. In addition, the components of the Project would not be located within areas conducive to wildland fire as discussed above under impact b). Therefore, extension of this infrastructure as part of the Proposed Project would not exacerbate fire risk during operation. The Proposed Project does not include other types of new or expanded infrastructure facilities (i.e. electricity, wastewater collection, telecommunications facilities) that could exacerbate fire risk. This represents a less than significant impact.

- d. Would the project 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 site is relatively flat and is not located in the vicinity of slopes that would be susceptible to landslides or downstream flooding under post-fire conditions. The Proposed Project does not include any new habitable structures and would not increase the post-fire risk to existing structures during construction or operation. The Proposed Project is not located within an SRA FHSZ. Therefore, no impact would occur.

4.20 Mandatory Findings of Significance

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact 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 a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?*

The Proposed Project is the expansion of recycled water distribution to the City's existing parks and schools; components are located at the existing WRF site (the recycled water pump station), easements within agricultural properties in unincorporated Monterey County, and within existing road ROWs throughout the City. As described below, the Proposed Project would not 1) degrade the quality of environment, 2) substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, 3) cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, 4) threaten or eliminate a plant or animal community, 5) reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or 6) eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory.

The Proposed Project would result in temporary construction-related impacts to biological resources, undiscovered cultural or Tribal resources, undiscovered human remains interred outside of a formal cemetery, and potential releases of hazardous materials. These impacts would be mitigated to less than significant through the incorporation of mitigation measures identified in this IS/MND. The operational impacts associated with the Proposed Project, which consist of potential releases of hazardous materials, would also be reduced to less than significant through the incorporation and implementation

of identified mitigation measures. This represents a less than significant impact. No additional mitigation is necessary beyond the mitigation identified in each of the respective topical CEQA sections contained in this IS/MND.

- 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.)*

The Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable adverse environmental effect. To determine whether a cumulative effect requires an Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”), the lead agency shall consider whether the impact is significant and whether the effects of the project are cumulatively considerable (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(h)(1)). This IS/MND contains mitigation to ensure that all potential impacts are minimized to a less than significant level. CEQA allows a lead agency to determine that a project’s contribution to a potential cumulative impact is not considerable and thus not significant when mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study will render those potential impacts less than considerable (CEQA Guidelines 15064(h)(2)).

This IS/MND contains mitigation to ensure that all potential impacts of the Project are minimized to less than significant. CEQA allows a lead agency to determine that a project’s contribution to a potential cumulative impact is not considerable and, thus, not significant when mitigation measures identified in the initial study will render those potential impacts less than considerable (CEQA Guidelines 15064(h)(2)).

The Proposed Project would involve expansion of recycled water distribution to the City’s existing parks and schools. The recycled water distribution Project would serve only the existing school and park facilities and would not cause a cumulative effect by potentially serving future development in the City. Additionally, construction and operation of the Proposed Project would occur in previously disturbed and developed areas. Where construction and operational effects are identified, mitigation measures are presented in this IS/MND to reduce these impacts to less than significant.

- c. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?*

The Proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on human beings, either directly or indirectly. This IS/MND contains mitigation measures to ensure that all potential direct and indirect impacts to human beings would be reduced to less than significant. In addition, the Proposed Project would have a beneficial impact by providing recycled water to replace potable water currently used for irrigation of City parks and schools.

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Chapter 5. List of Preparers and References

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