Planning Commission Staff Report

May 17, 2018 **PC EXHIBIT 1**

Project: Big Springs Retreat Center
PD File No.: 1647
Staff Rec. No.: **1193-*interim***
Request: CUP amendment / Site Plan Review
Location: 32613 Hwy 49, Sierra City, CA
APN: 008-110-022-0
Planner: Brandon Pangman

Property Owner	**Applicant**	**Consultants:**
Mudita, LLC P.O. Box 679 North San Juan, CA 95960	Sharon Lane (owner)	Nevada City Engineering (planning) Bruce E. Boyd (architect) California Survey Company (site plan) Chalpin Environmental Services (septic)

1. Project Summary

Due to some last minute comments and procedural issues (which staff will discuss during the meeting on 5/17/18), the staff report and recommendation could not be completed one week before the scheduled hearing on this project. Instead, staff will request that the Planning Commission allow staff to introduce the project and go over the environmental document, but continue the public hearing and delay a decision on the project until a future date when the staff report and recommendation has been completed.

The Big Springs Retreat Center project consists of two entitlement requests: (1) amendment of an existing **Conditional Use Permit** (CUP) #1225 (2001), to expand the allowable uses at the existing outdoor restaurant and special events venue to also include additional overnight lodging, camping, and indoor meeting facilities; and (2) a **Site Plan Review** to consider the potential aesthetic impacts of non-residential development within the Scenic Corridor (-SC) overlay zoning district (ref. Sierra County Code Section 15.12.280[G]).

The complete project description is enclosed—contained within the CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) Initial Study and Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (ref. **Exhibit 7**), as well as the enclosed project maps, site plans, and building design "sketch book" (ref. **Exhibits 2** & **3**, respectively).

2. Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission open the hearing on the project; allow staff to briefly introduce the project and go through the environmental document; but before opening

the hearing for public comment, *continue* the public hearing to a specific time and location, and delay making a decision on the project until staff can complete its written report and recommendation and all public comments (including the applicant's presentation and any subsequent oral testimony) can be fully addressed.

3. <u>Enclosures</u>:

PC Exhibit 1 -- *[Reserved for Staff Rec. No. 1193]*

PC Exhibit 2 -- Project Site Plans (Rev. 2; 5 sheets)

PC Exhibit 3 -- Proposed Buildings Design Sketchbook (Rev. 1; 11 pp.)

PC Exhibit 4 -- Sierra County General Plan "countywide" land use map (1 pg.)

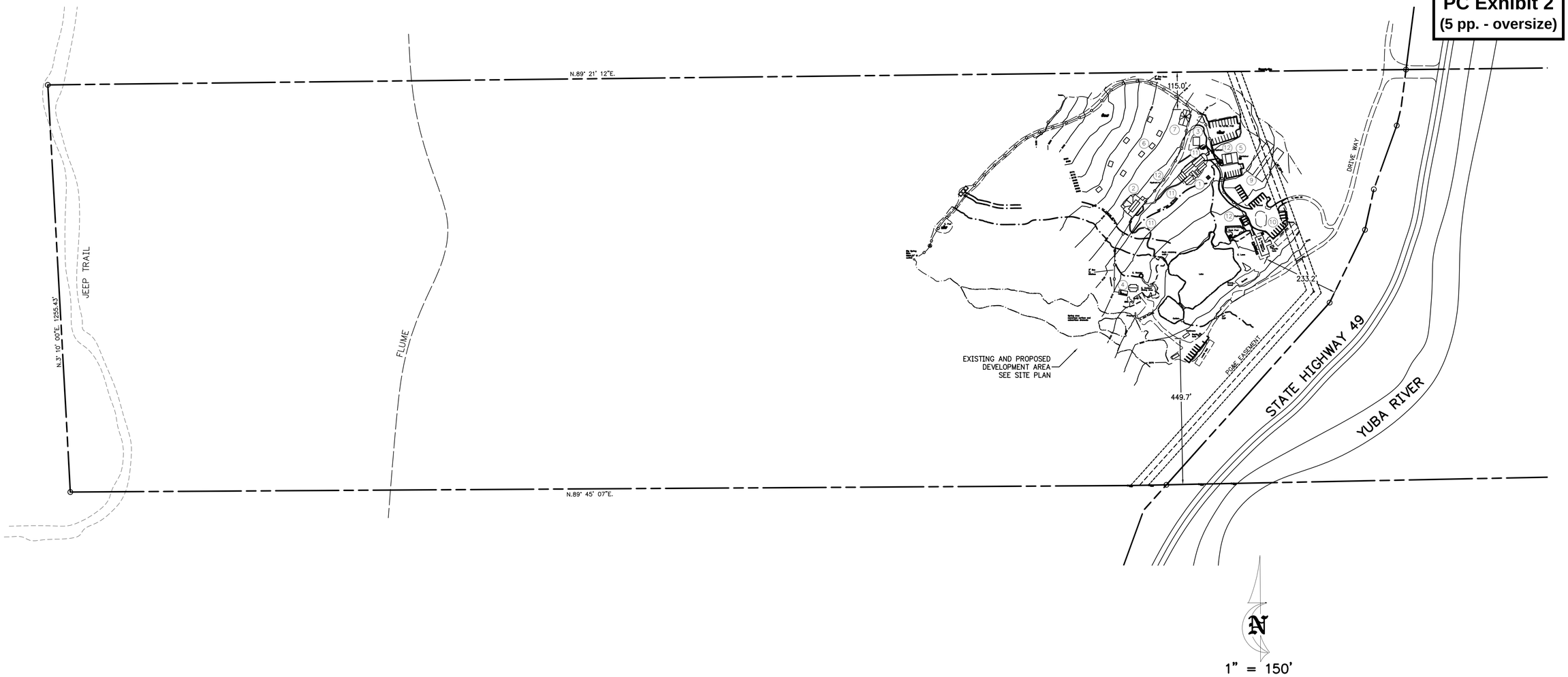
PC Exhibit 5 -- Zoning map: "countywide" General Forest with Scenic Corridor Overlay (GF-SC); (1 pg.)

PC Exhibit 6 -- Zoning map: Scenic Corridor (-SC) overlay district detail (1 pg.)

PC Exhibit 7 -- CEQA Initial Study & Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (65 pp.)

[NOTE: Detailed Project Description contained within IS/MND, beginning on p. 7. Please also note the following error on p. 11, top paragraph: max. overnight occupancy should be "41" not "fifty" as amended by applicant.]

PC Exhibit 2
(5 pp. - oversize)



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
PARCEL MAP, APN #008-110-022-0
118 ACRES

FACILITIES:

1. GUEST HOUSE: 2,400 SF, 17 ONE AND TWO PERSON GUEST ROOMS
2. MEETING HOUSE: 2,400 SF, MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY 50 PERSONS
3. BATH HOUSE AND LAUNDRY: 480 SF
4. SCREENED DINING AREA: 440 SF, MAX. OCCUPANCY 32 PERSONS
5. SERVICE BARN: 864 SF
6. TENT PLATFORMS: 5 – 8 100 SF PLATFORMS
7. RETREAT STAFF HOUSING (FUTURE): 600 SF
8. WATER STORAGE TANKS: 3 – 10,000 GAL. ENCLOSED STEEL TANKS
9. NEW SEPTIC SYSTEM (SERVES NEW FACILITIES)
10. PARKING AND DRIVEWAYS
11. PATHS (NEW)
12. FIRE PROTECTION FACILITIES

Topographic Map

FOR

Sharon Lane

A portion of Sec. 15 T.20N. R.12E. MDM
In the unincorporated territory of

SIERRA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

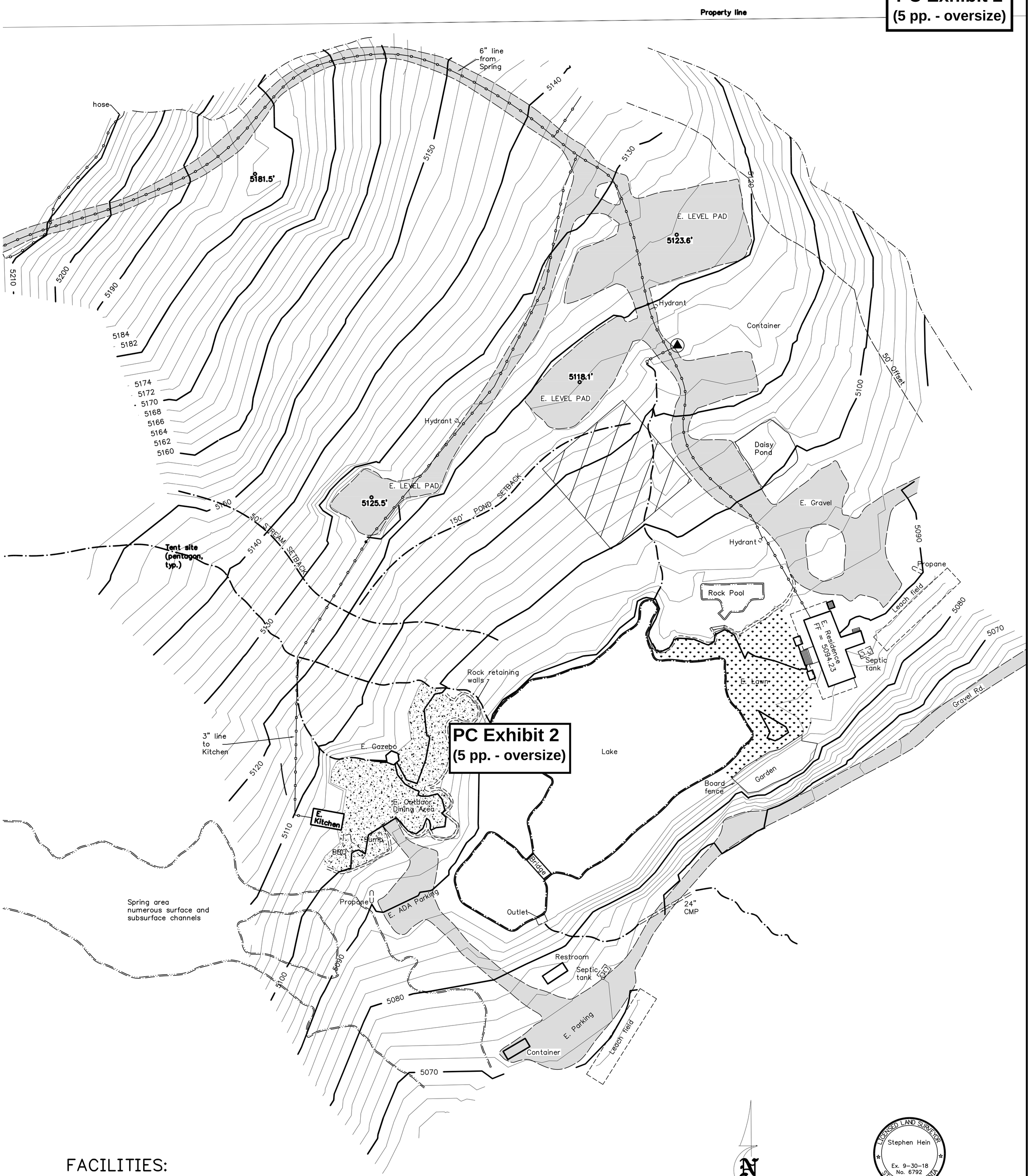
California Survey Company

(530) 273-6651

PROJECT ARCHITECT
BRUCE BOYD

6/5/17

PC Exhibit 2
(5 pp. - oversize)



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N

1" = 40'

LICENSED LAND SURVEYOR
Stephen Hein
Ex. 9-30-18
No. 6792
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

EXISTING CONDITIONS
BIG SPRINGS GARDENS

Topographic Map

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Sharon Lane

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SIERRA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

September, 2016 *Scale: 1" = 40'*
Contour Interval = 2'

California Survey Company
(530) 273-6651

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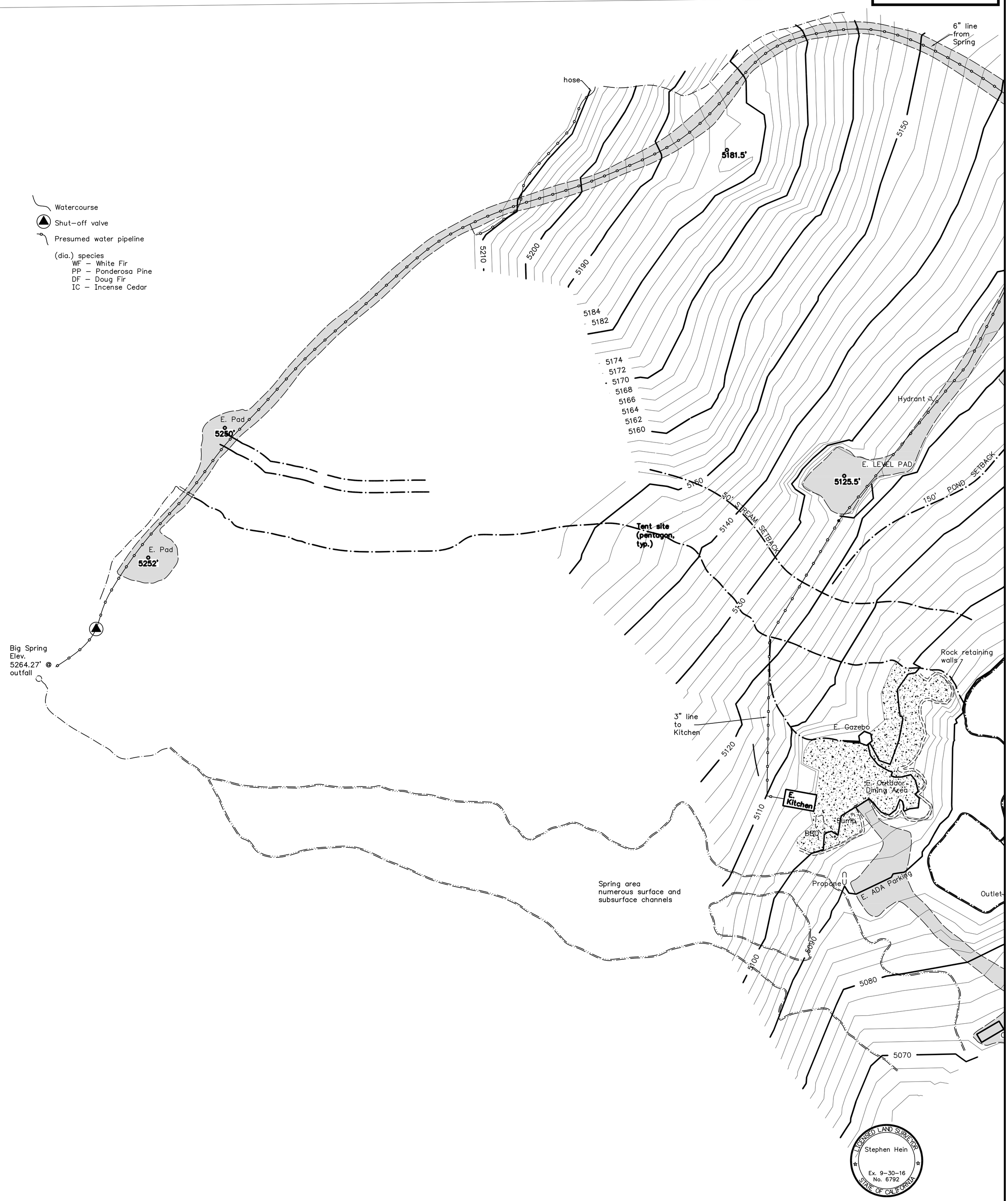
(5 pp. - oversize)



EXISTING CONDITIONS
BIG SPRINGS GARDENS

Topographic Map

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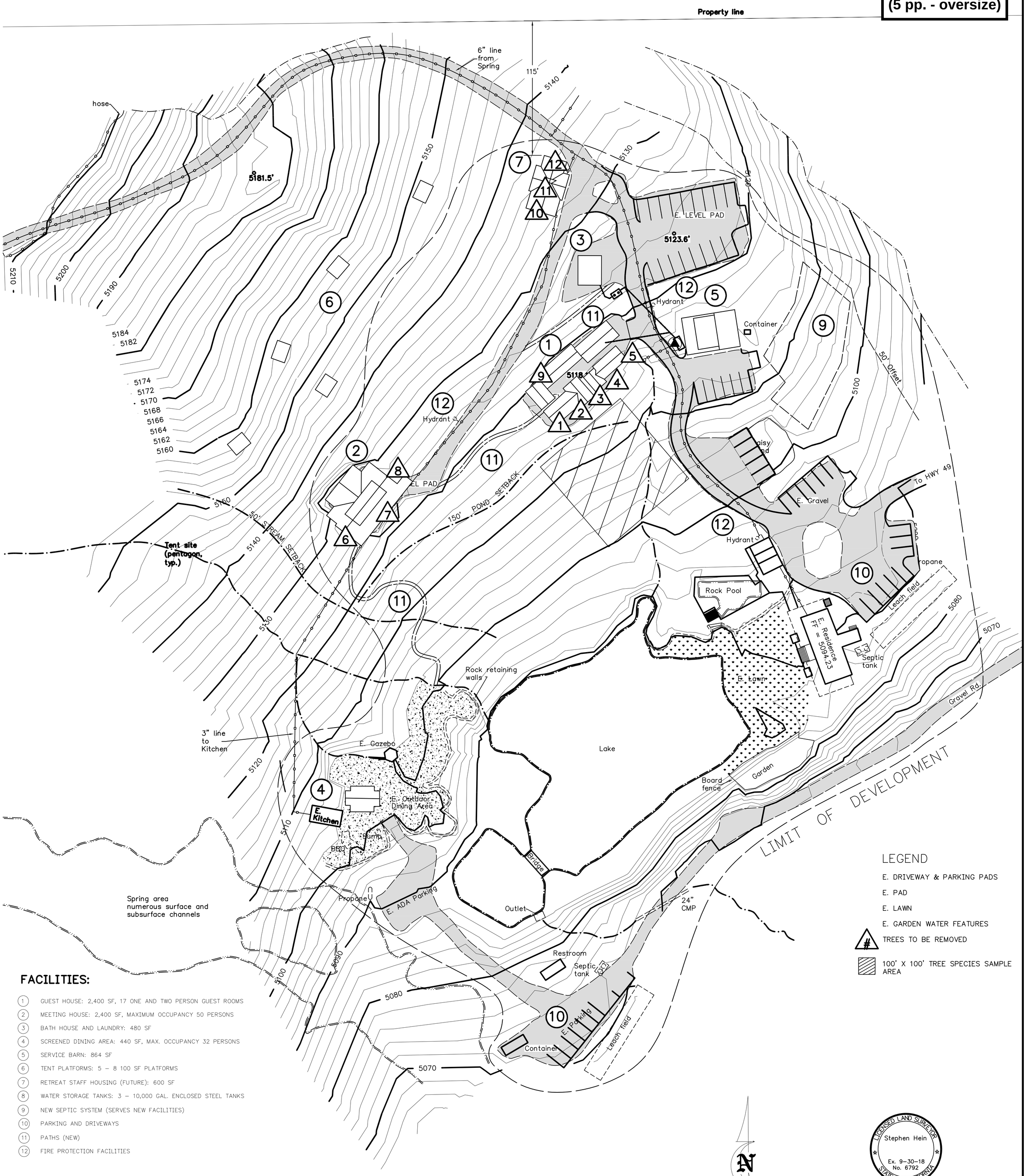

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12. FIRE PROTECTION FACILITIES

LEGEND

- E. DRIVEWAY & PARKING PADS
- E. PAD
- E. LAWN
- E. GARDEN WATER FEATURES
- # TREES TO BE REMOVED
- 100' X 100' TREE SPECIES SAMPLE AREA

N

1" = 40'

LICENSED LAND SURVEYOR
Stephen Hein
Ex. 9-30-18
No. 6792
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT NOTES

1 THE INTEGRITY OF THE EXISTING MIXED CONIFER FOREST TREE COVER SHALL BE MAINTAINED ON THE PROPERTY. NEW CONSTRUCTION HAS BEEN SITED ON EXISTING CLEARED PADS TO MINIMIZE INCIDENTAL TREE REMOVAL.

2 NO TREES WILL BE REMOVED ALONG HIGHWAY 49 OR THE APPROACH DRIVEWAY TO THE MEDITATION CENTER. THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ARE FULLY SCREENED FROM VIEW. ALL DEVELOPMENT IS WITHIN THE SCENIC CORRIDOR. MINIMUM DISTANCE FROM DEVELOPMENT TO HIGHWAY 49 IS 233 FEET.

3 TREE COVERAGE IS APPROXIMATELY 75% WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT AREA AS ESTABLISHED BY THE EXISTING SPECIAL CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT. A SURVEY OF A 100'X 100' SAMPLE SECTION OF INTACT FOREST WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT AREA SHOWED THE FOLLOWING COMPOSITION OF TREE SPECIES:

SPECIES	NUMBER	DBH
DOUGLAS FIR	10	> 18"
DOUGLAS FIR	4	> 20"
WHITE FIR	1	> 12"
WHITE FIR	1	> 16"
WHITE FIR	4	> 20"
PONDEROSA	1	> 20"
PONDEROSA	5	> 25"
PONDEROSA	1	> 34"
INCENSE CEDAR	3	> 15"
INCENSE CEDAR	2	> 23"
TOTAL TREES/10,000 SF	32	

4 A FEW TREES WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT AREA WILL NEED TO BE REMOVED TO ALLOW BUILDING CONSTRUCTION. THE TREES TO BE REMOVED ARE SHOWN ON THE SITE PLAN AND AS LISTED BELOW. IN ADDITION A FEW HAZARD AND DISEASED TREES (AS DETERMINED BY CALFIRE) WILL NEED TO BE REMOVED CLOSE TO EACH PROPOSED STRUCTURE.

TREES TO BE REMOVED DUE TO PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION

#	LOCATION	SPECIES	> SIZE	NUMBER
	GUEST LODGE SITE			
1		DOUGLAS FIR	16"DBH	1
2		PONDEROSA PINE	20"DBH	1
3		PONDEROSA PINE	25"DBH	1
4		DOUGLAS FIR	19"DBH	1
5		PONDEROSA PINE	20"DBH	1
9		PONDEROSA PINE	28"DBH	1
	MEETING HALL SITE			
6		DOUGLAS FIR	29"DBH	1
7		I. CEDAR	12"DBH	1
8		DOUGLAS FIR	34"DBH	1
	STAFF HOUSING SITE			
10		I. CEDAR	11"DBH	1
11		WHITE FIR	19"DBH	1
12		I. CEDAR	14"DBH	1
	TOTAL TREES REMOVED			12

5 PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHT LIMITATIONS: ALL PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURES COMPLY WITH SCC 15.12.17OF LIMITING BUILDING HEIGHT TO 35 FEET WITHIN GENERAL FOREST ZONING. THE TALLEST PROPOSED BUILDING,THE MEETING HALL, HAS A MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT OF 28 FEET. ALL PROPOSED BUILDINGS ARE SINGLE STORY. SEE DESIGN SKETCHES FOR BUILDING HEIGHTS. THE TALLEST BUILDING ON SITE IS THE EXISTING RESIDENCE AT 33 FEET.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
BIG SPRINGS GARDENS

Topographic Map

FOR

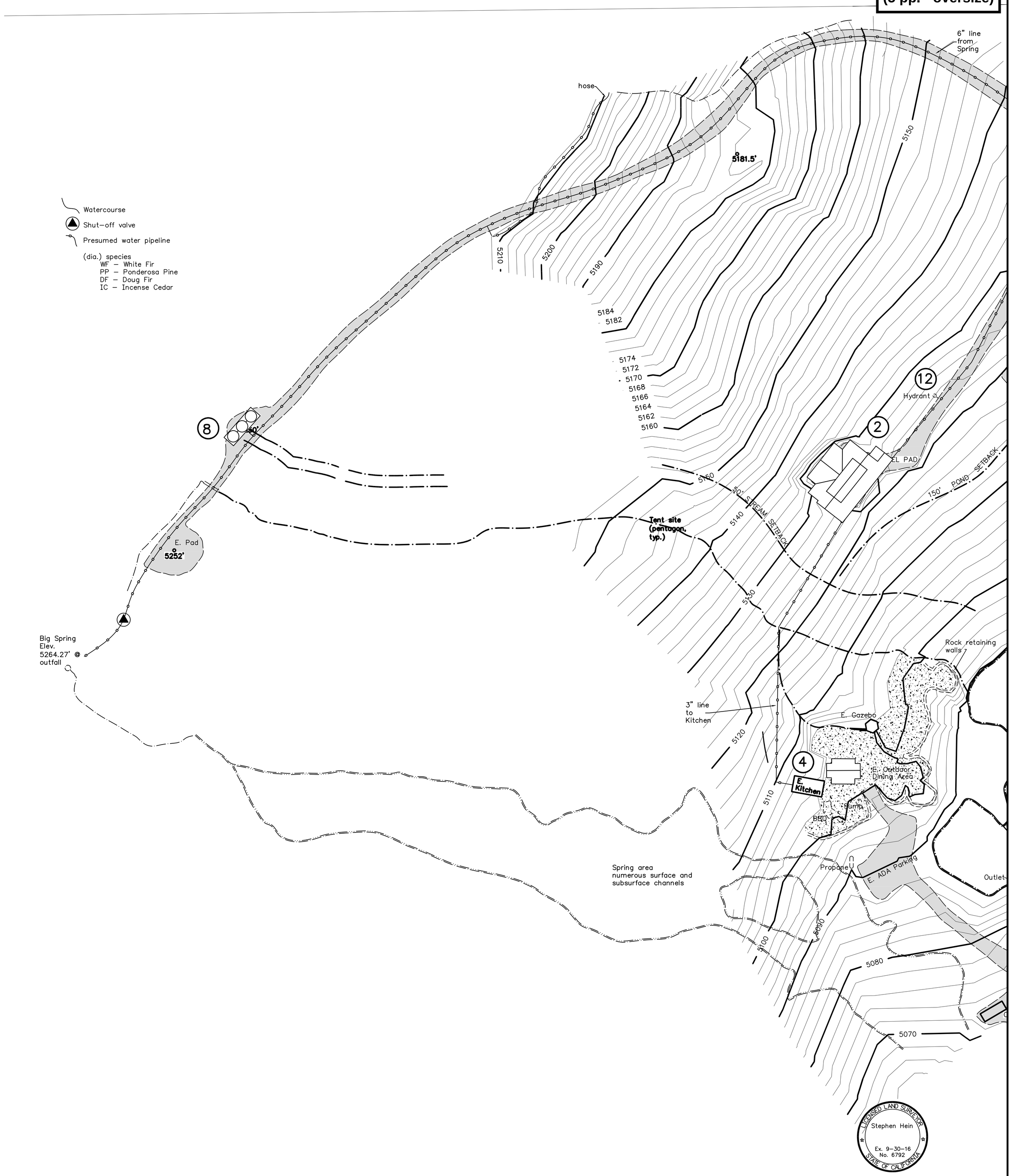
Sharon Lane

A portion of Sec. 15 T.20N. R.12E. MDM
In the unincorporated territory of
SIERRA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

September, 2016 *Scale: 1" = 40'*
Contour Interval = 2'

California Survey Company
(530) 273-6651

PC Exhibit 2
(5 pp. - oversize)



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PC Exhibit 3
(11 pp. - 11"x17")

FACILITIES

1 – GUEST HOUSE : 2,400 SF, 17 ONE AND TWO PERSON GUEST ROOMS

2 – MEETING HOUSE : 2,400 SF, MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY 50 PERSONS

3 – BATH HOUSE AND LAUNDRY : 480 SF,

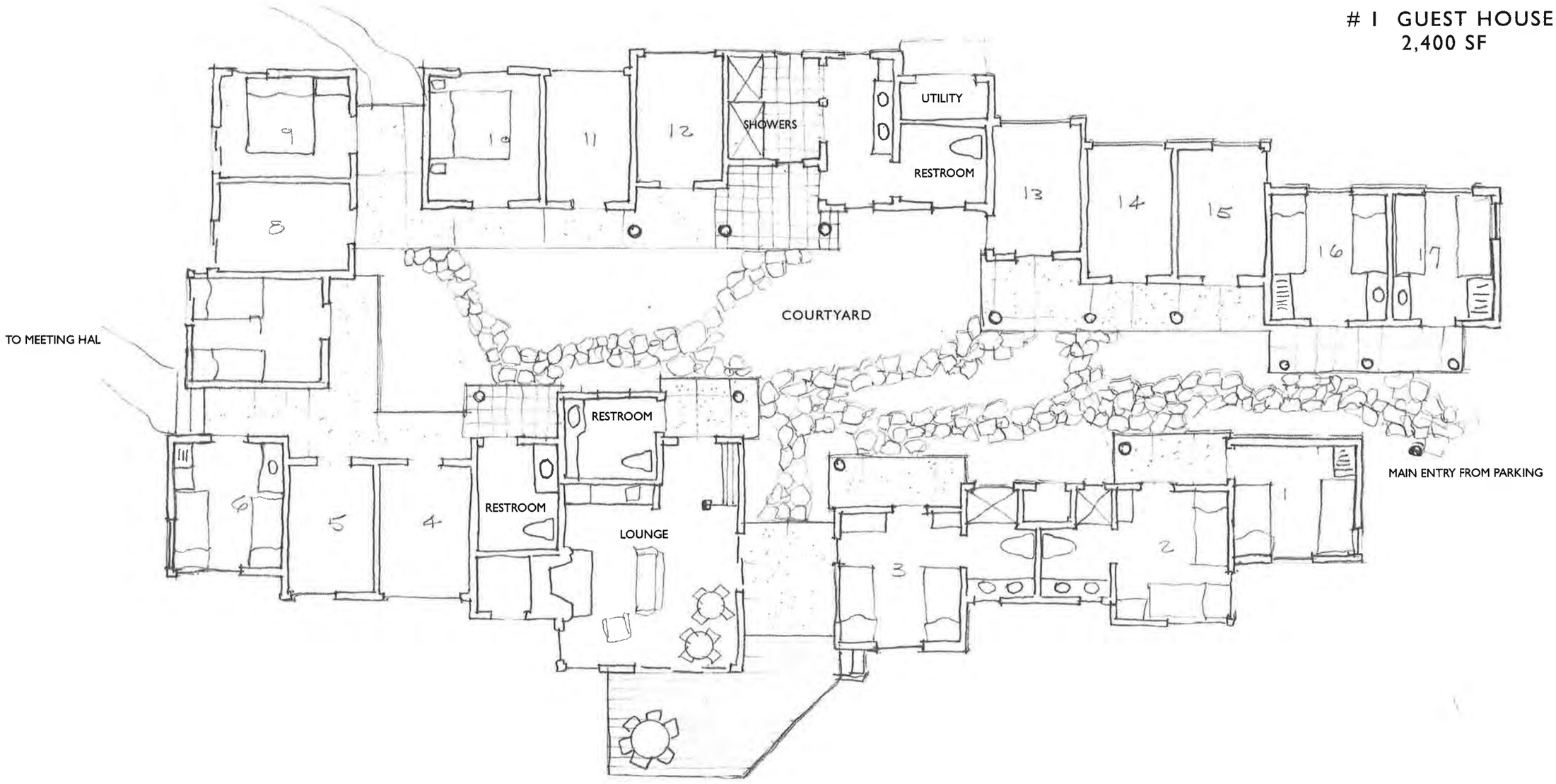
4 – SCREENED DINING AREA : 440 SF, MAX. OCCUPANCY 32 PERSONS

5 – SERVICE BARN : 864 SF

6 - TENT PLATFORMS: 5 - 8 100 SF PLATFORMS

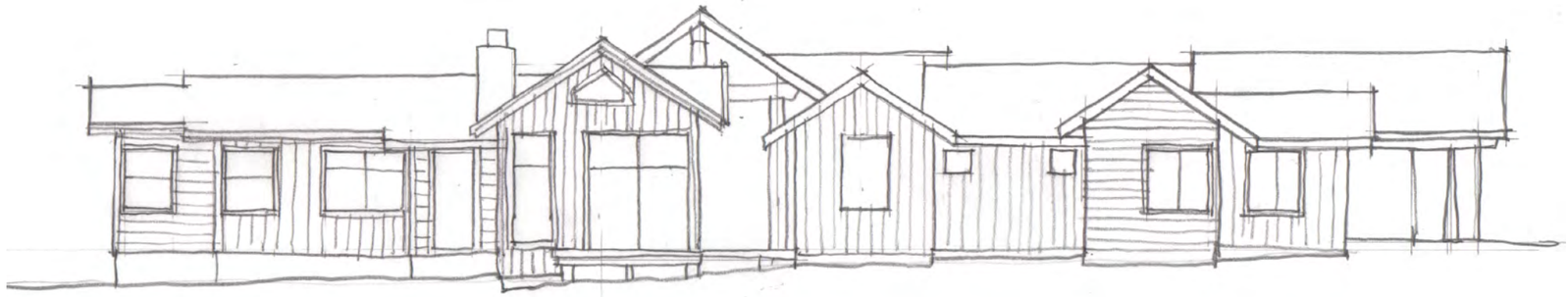
7 - RETREAT STAFF HOUSING (FUTURE): 720 SF

1 GUEST HOUSE
2,400 SF

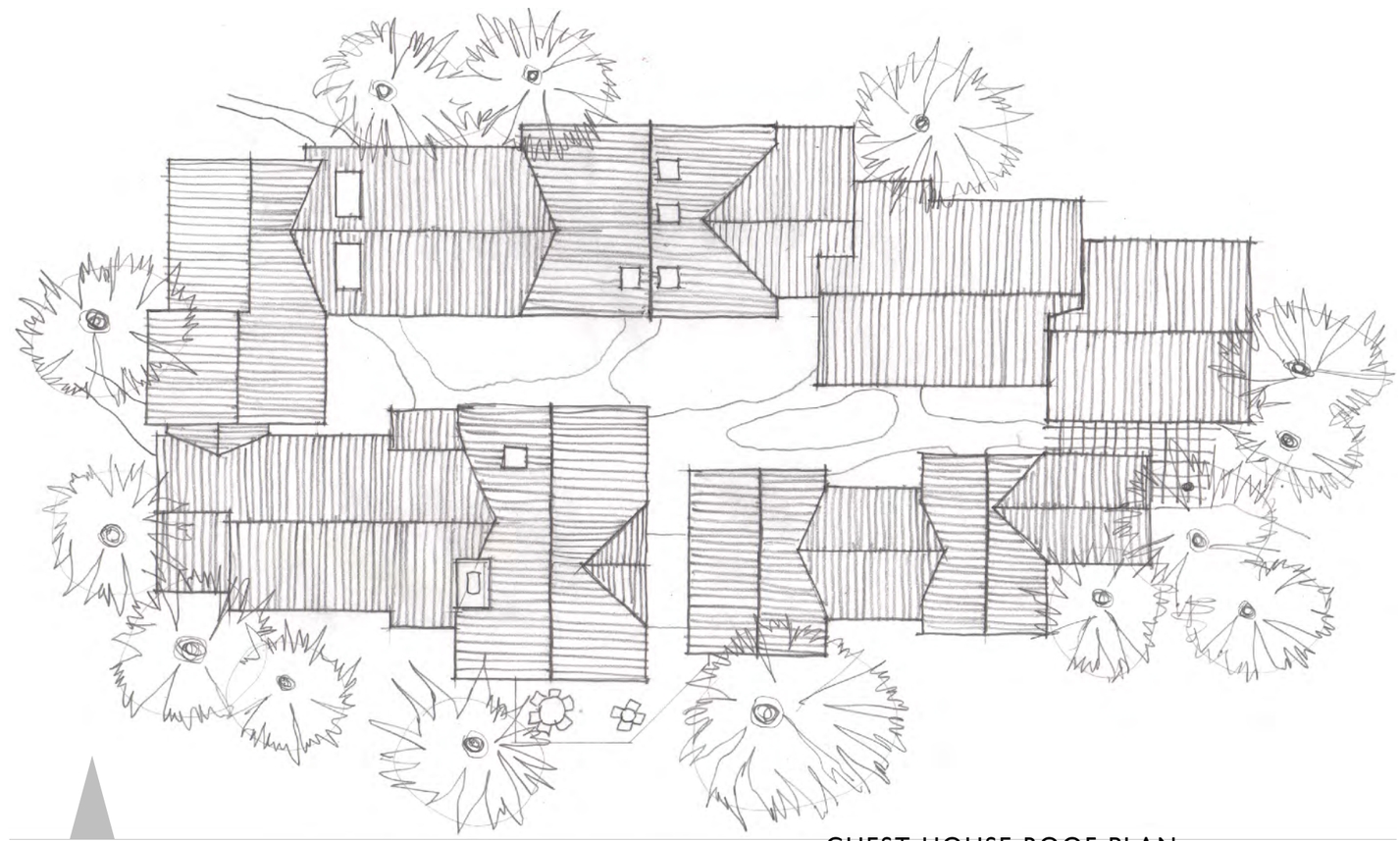


GUEST HOUSE FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/8" = 1' - 0"

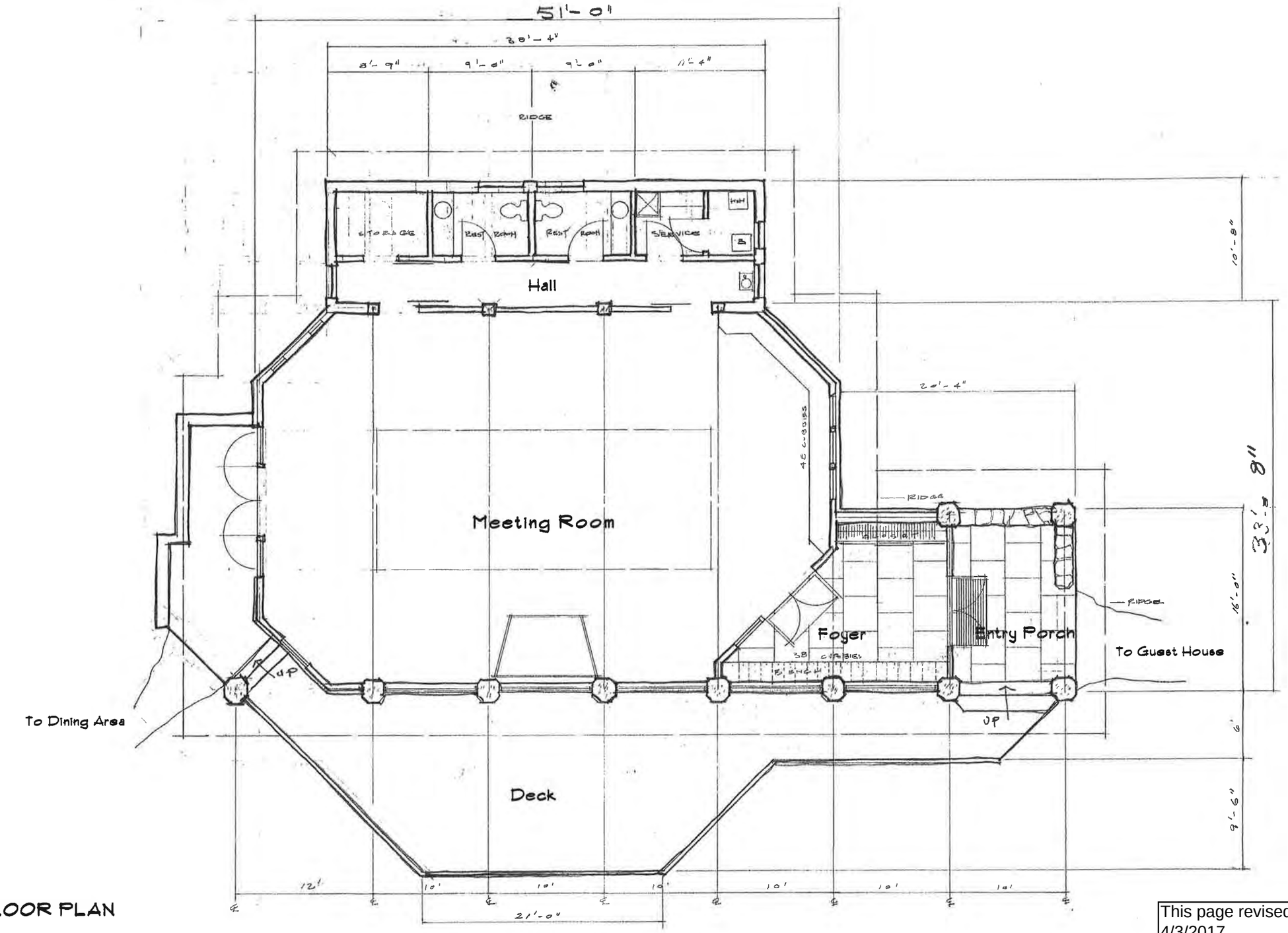
This page revised 4/3/2017



GUEST HOUSE SOUTH ELEVATION

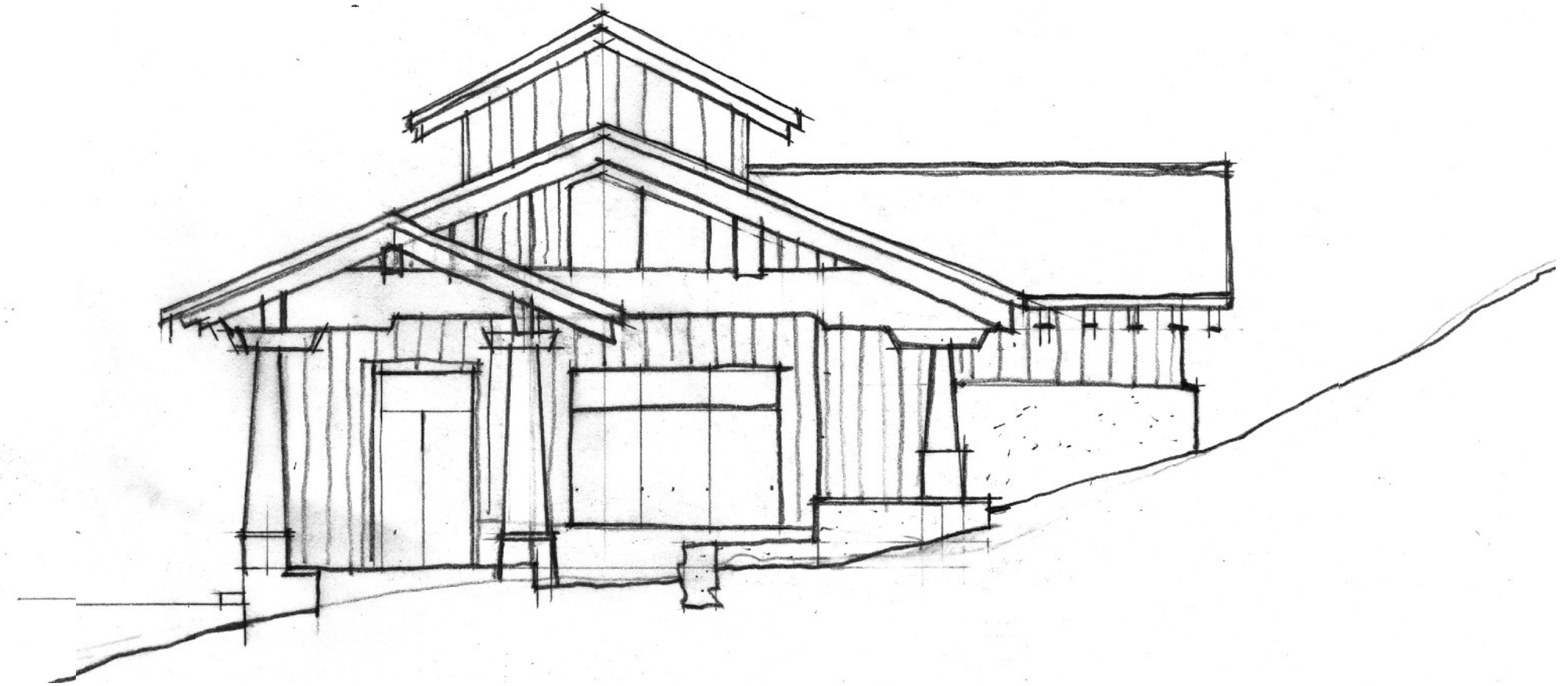


GUEST HOUSE ROOF PLAN

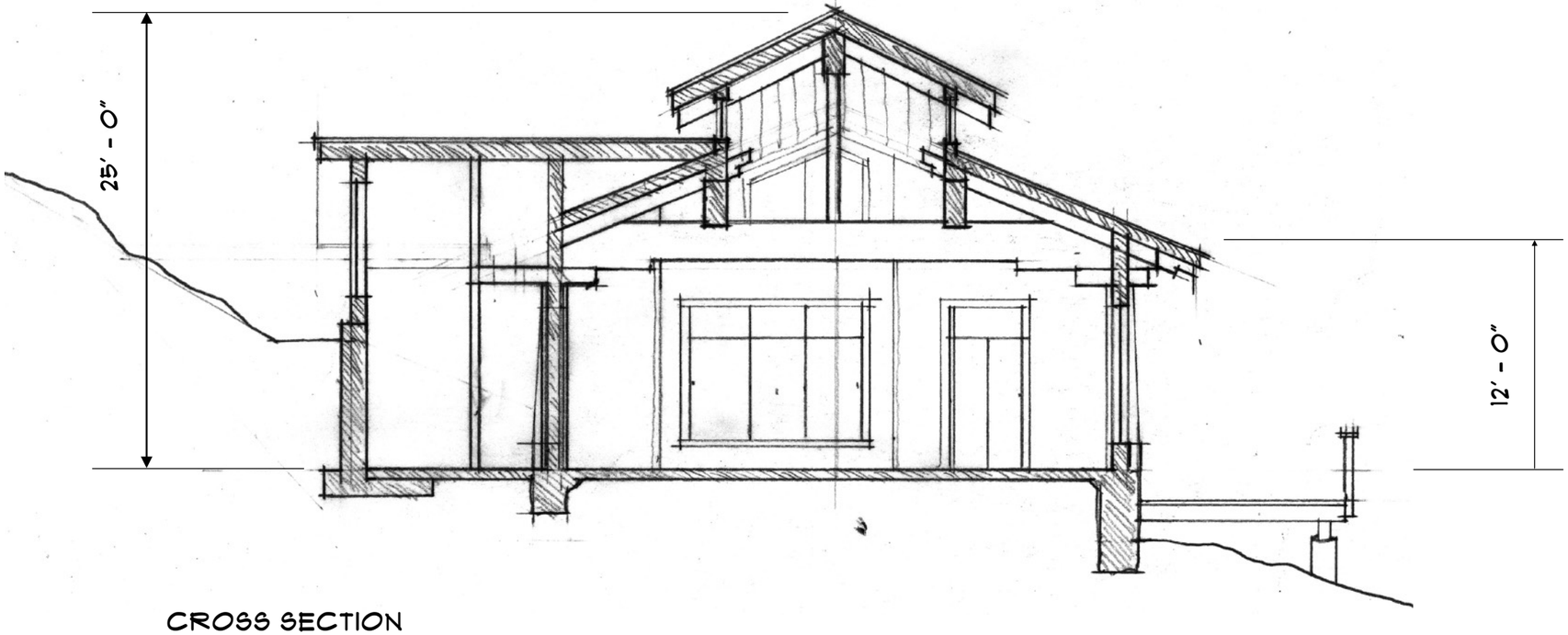


MEETING HOUSE FLOOR PLAN
NTS

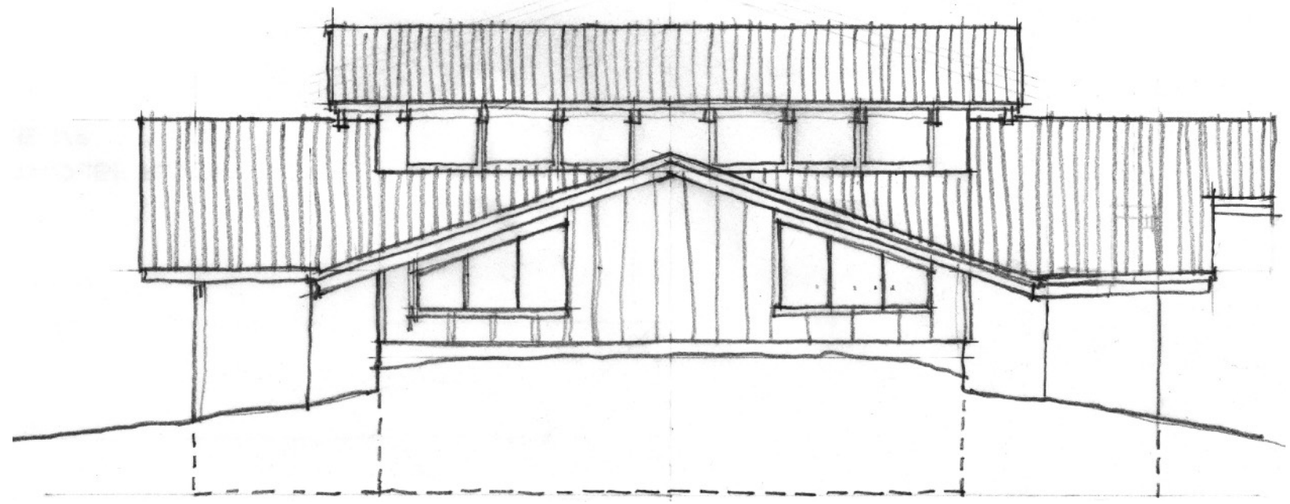
This page revised 4/3/2017



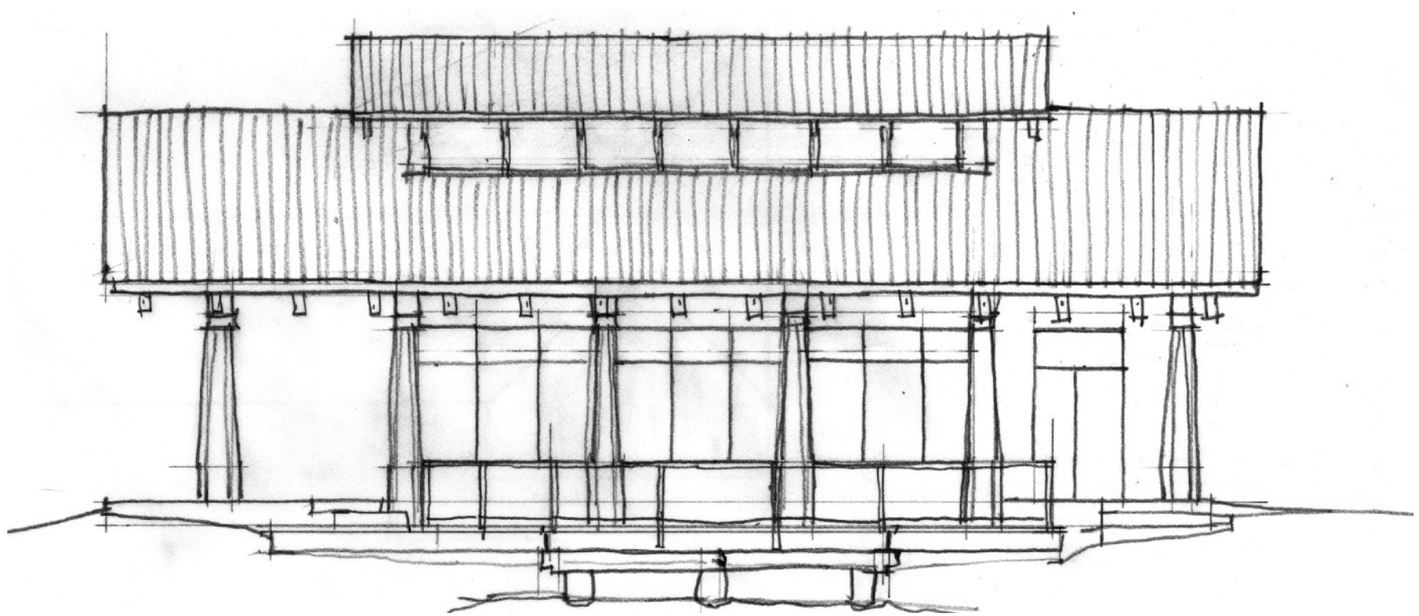
EAST ELEVATION
1/8″ = 1′ - 0″



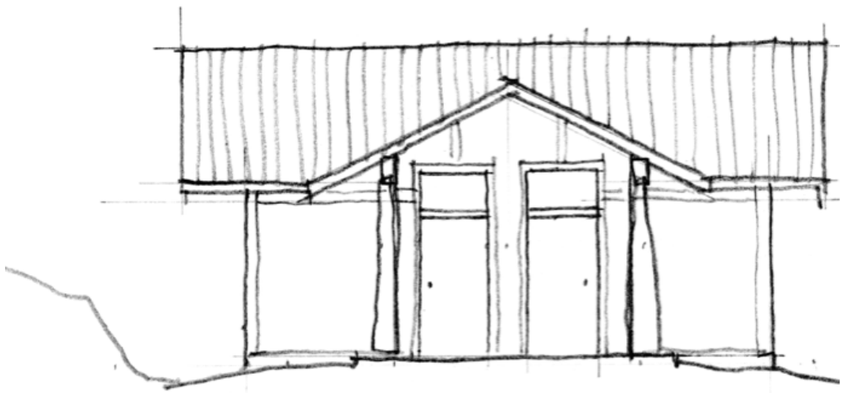
CROSS SECTION
1/8″ = 1′ - 0″



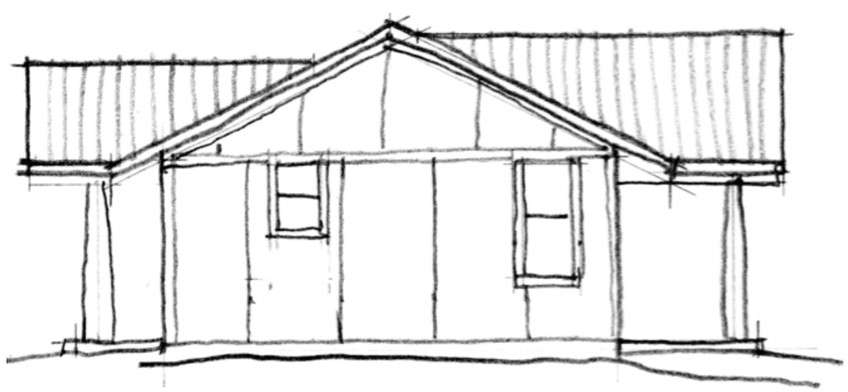
NORTH ELEVATION
1/8" = 1' - 0"



SOUTH ELEVATION
1/8" = 1' - 0"



EAST ELEVATION
NTS

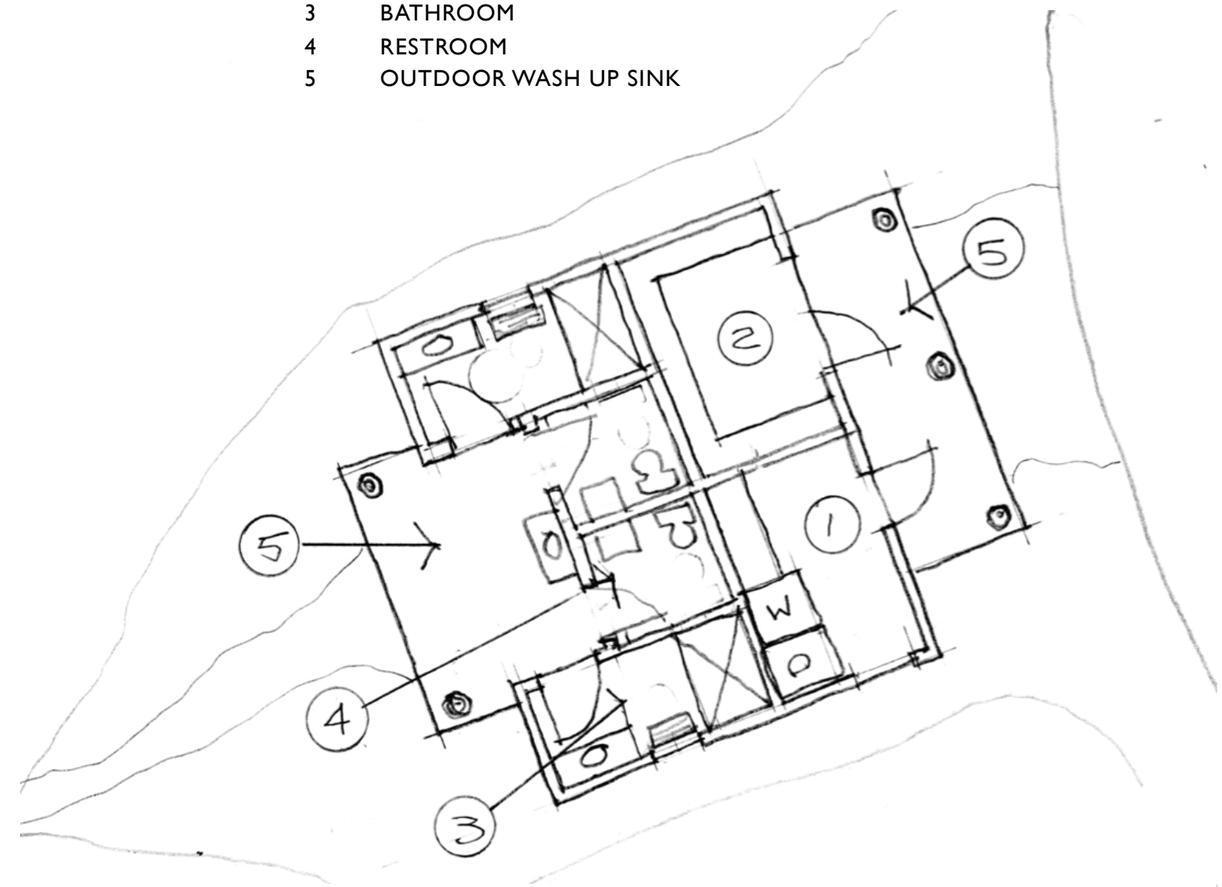


SOUTH ELEVATION
NTS

#3 – BATH HOUSE & LAUNDRY

KEY

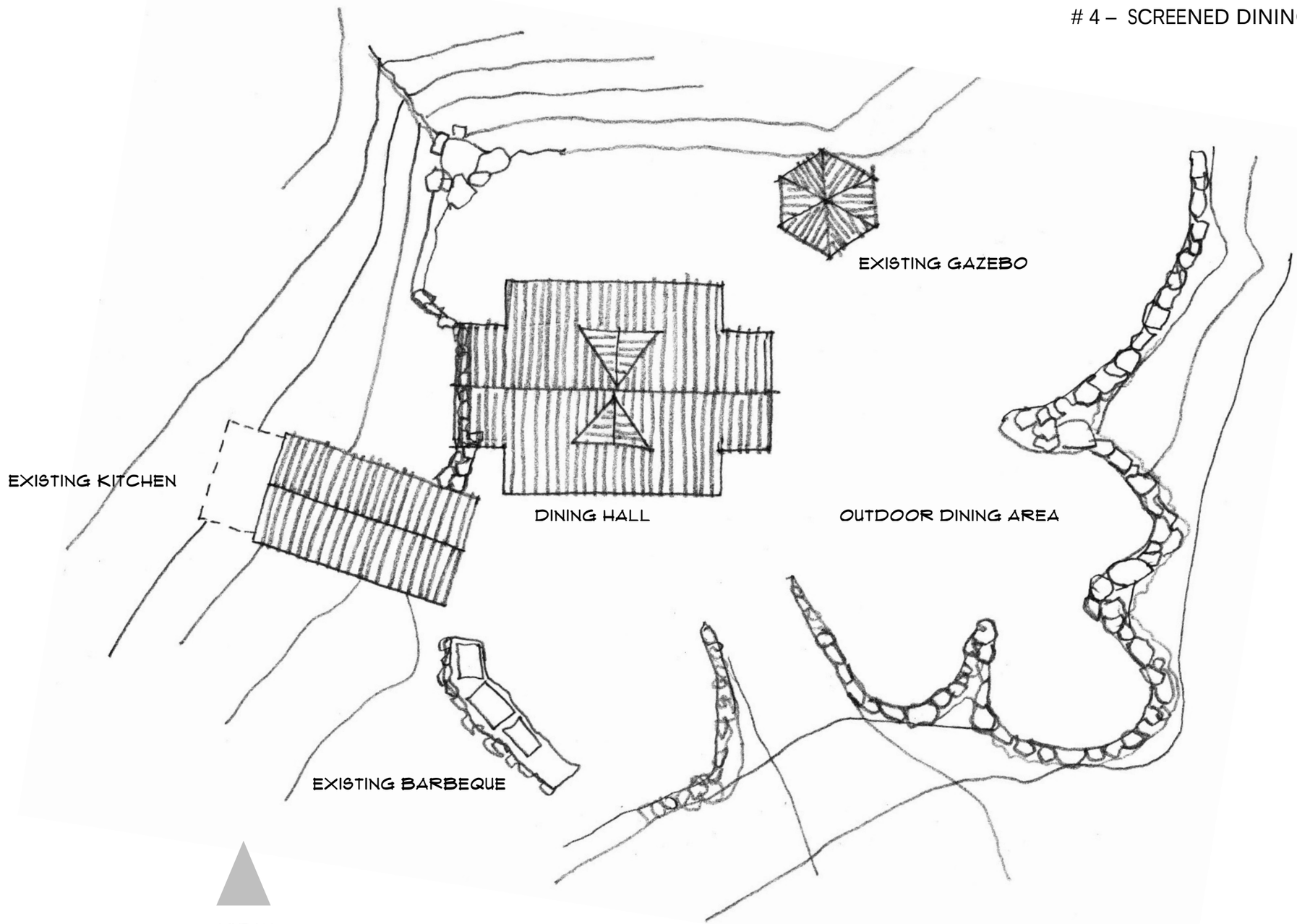
1	LAUNDRY ROOM
2	SERVICE ROOM
3	BATHROOM
4	RESTROOM
5	OUTDOOR WASH UP SINK



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
NTS

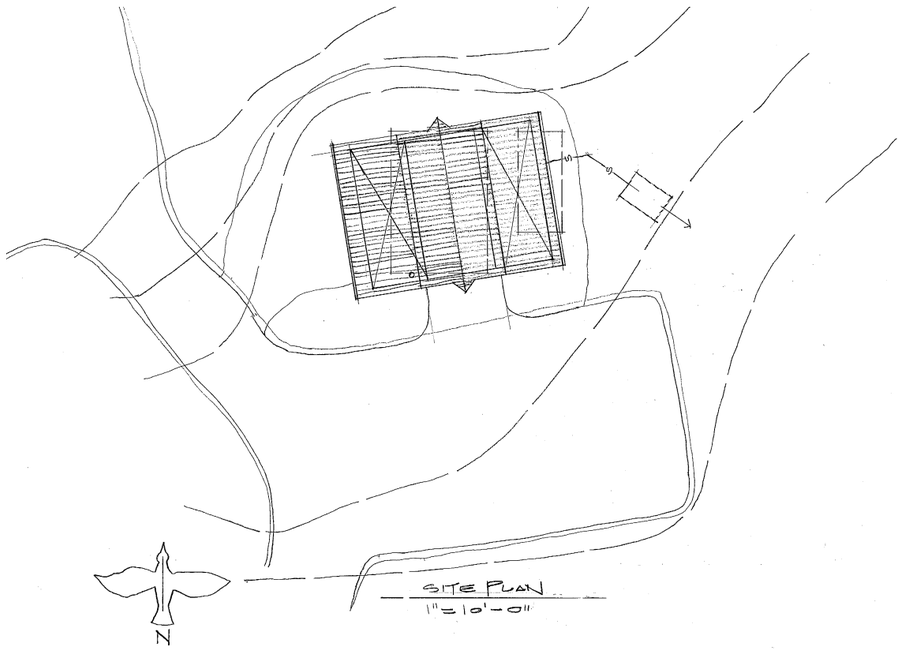
N

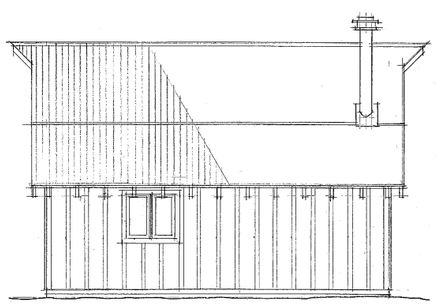
4 – SCREENED DINING ROOM



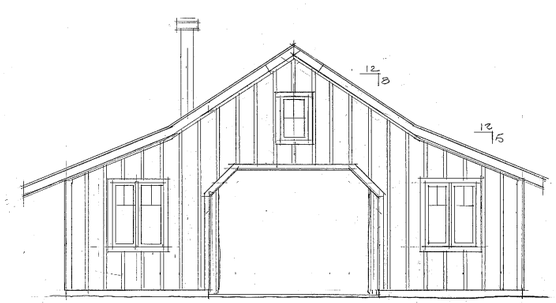
SCREENED DINING HALL SITE PLAN
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'

5 – SERVICE BARN

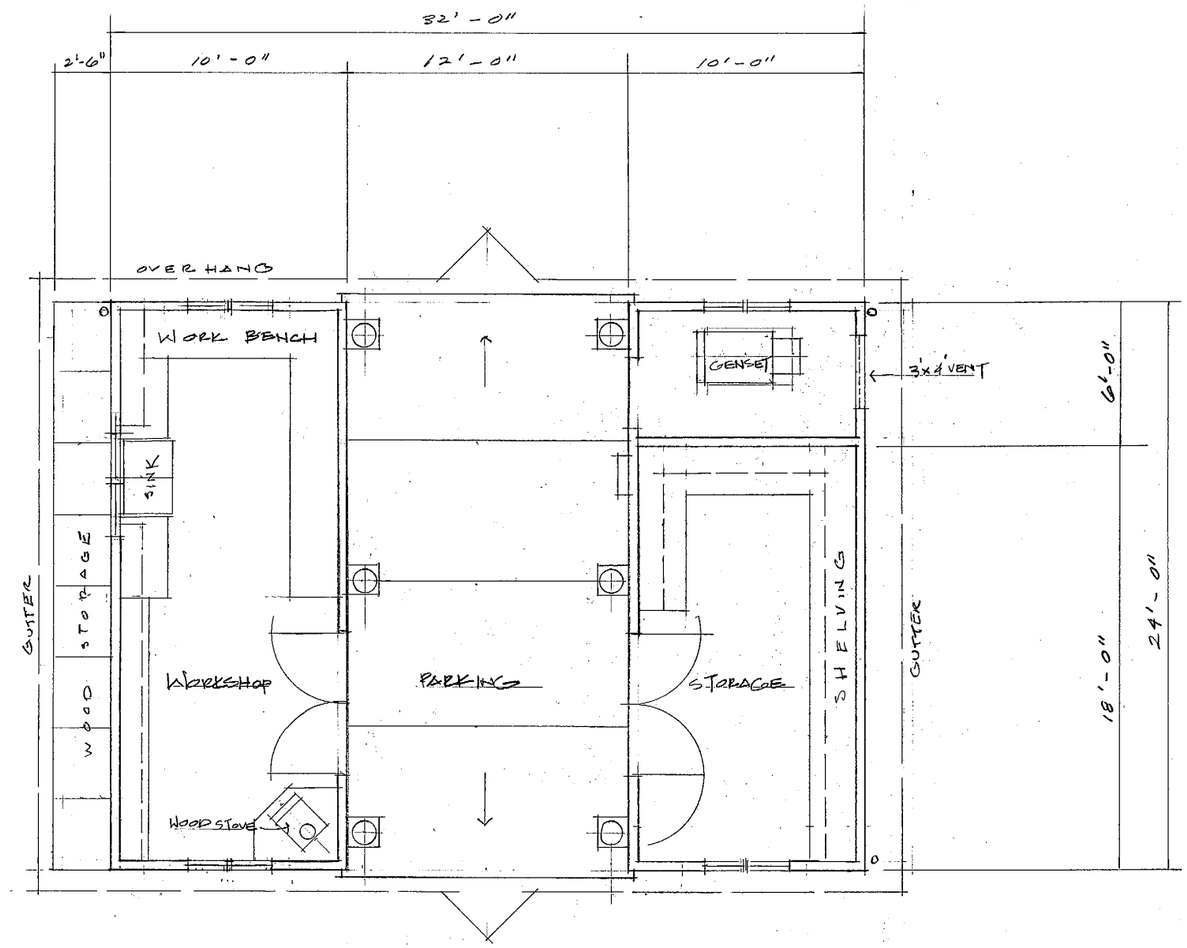




WEST ELEVATION
(EAST SIM.)

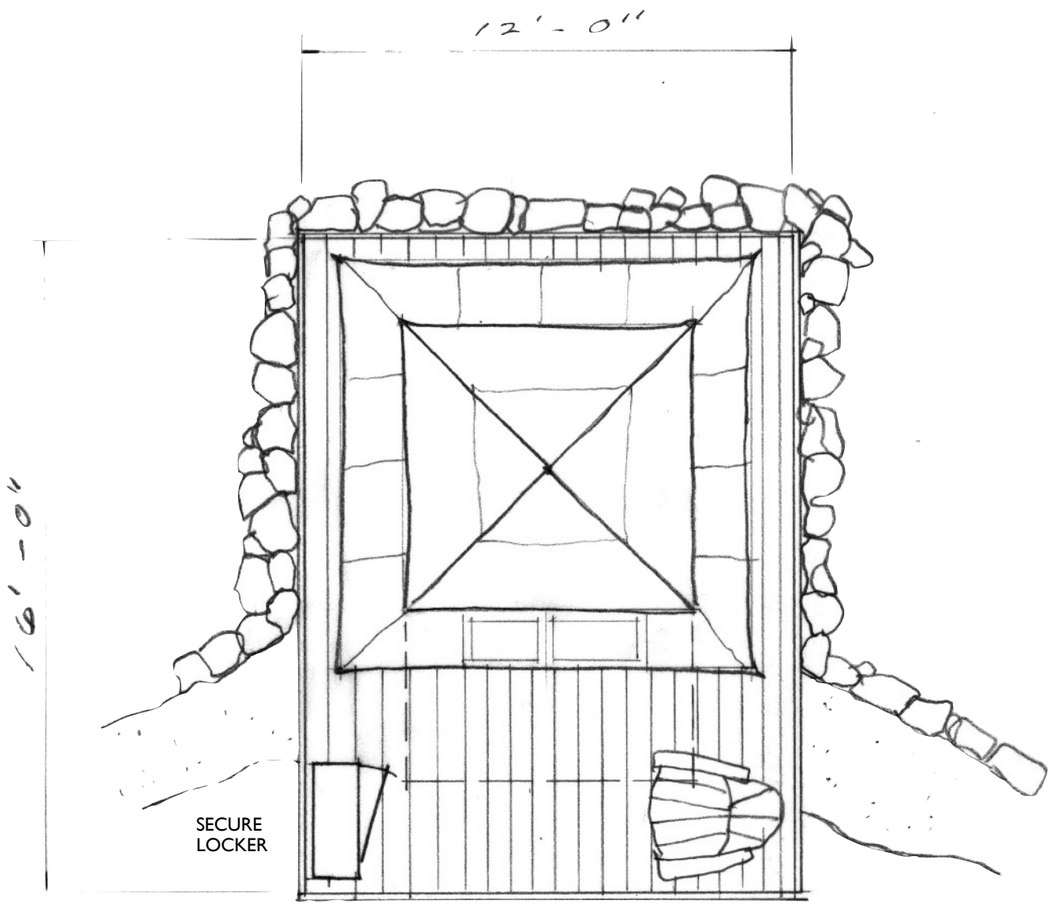


SOUTH ELEVATION
(NORTH SIM.)

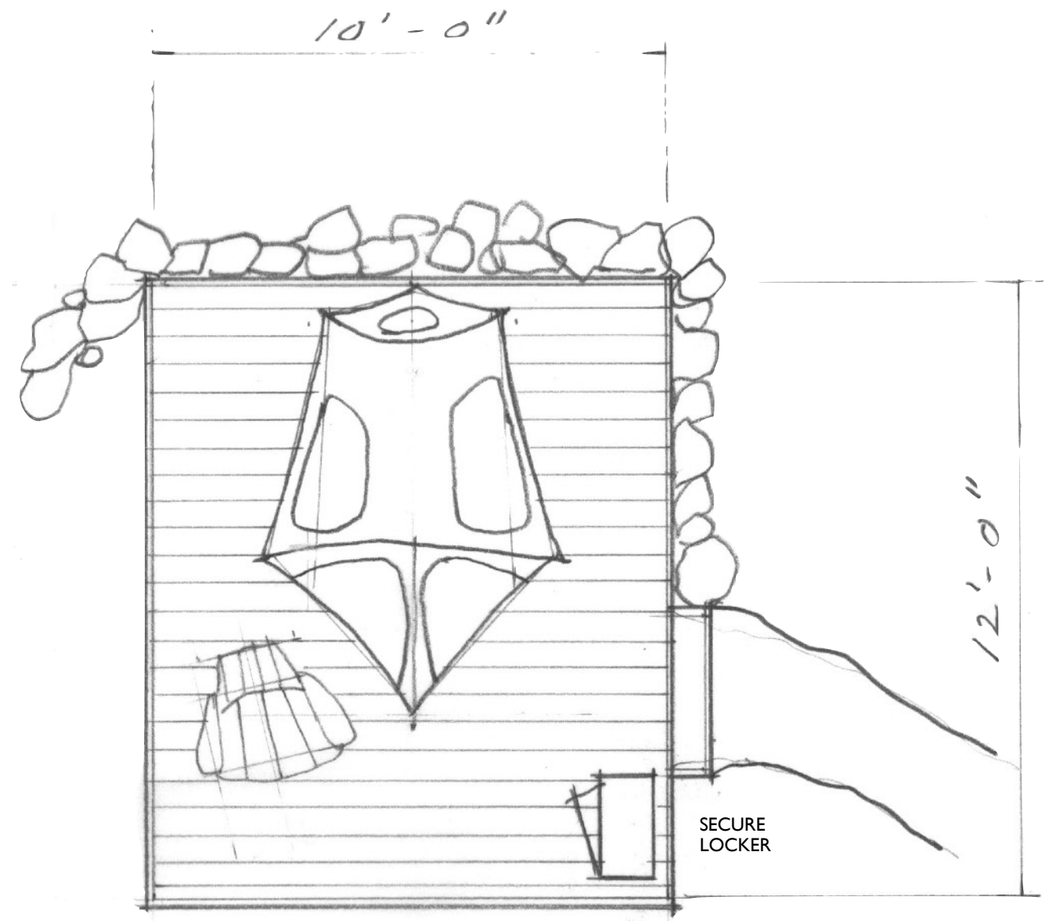


FLOOR PLAN
NTS

NORTH

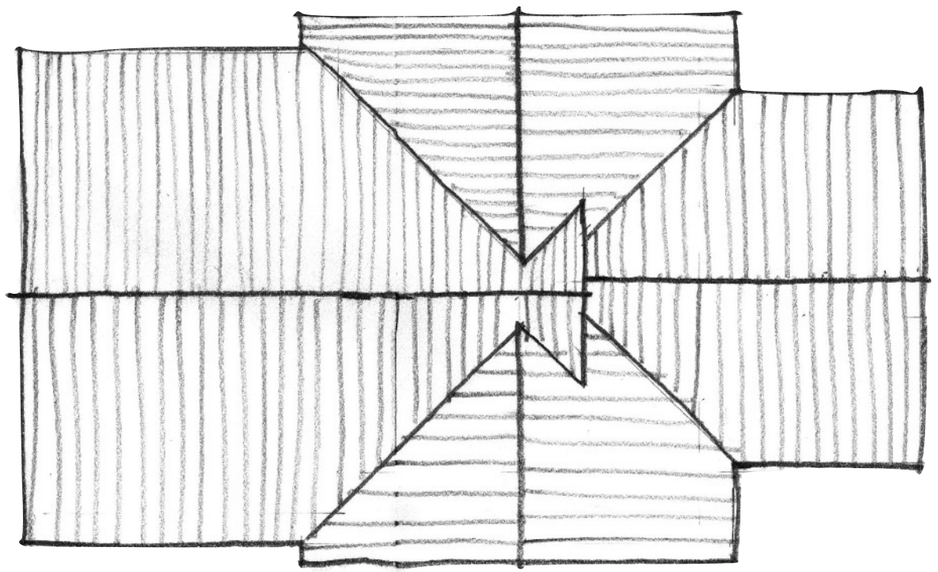


10' x 10' CANVAS TENT PLATFORM
SCALE: 1/4" = 1' - 0"

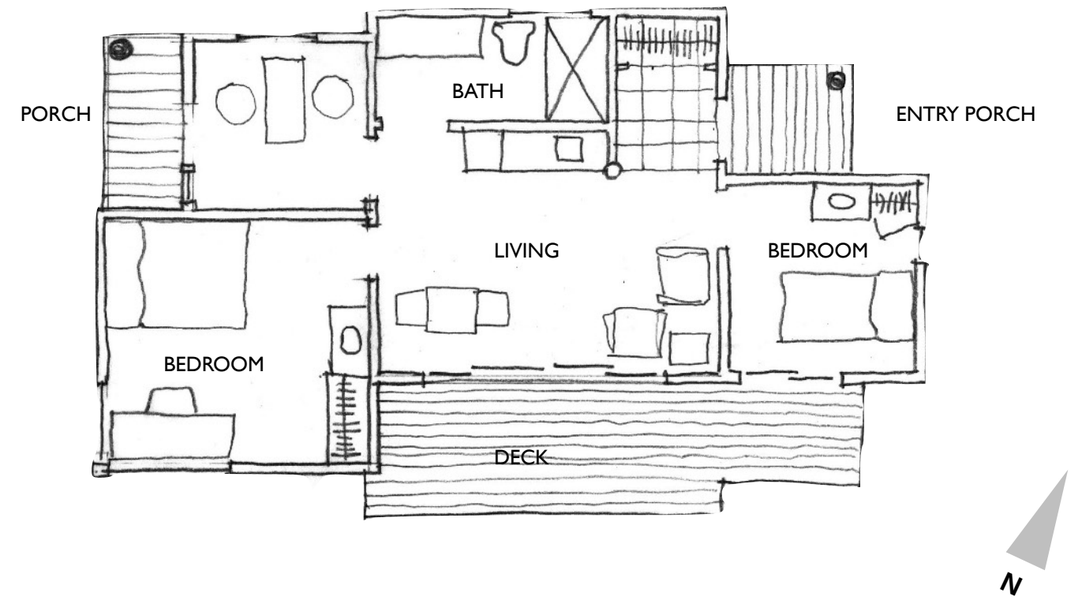


BACKPACK TENT PLATFORM
SCALE: 1/4" = 1' - 0"

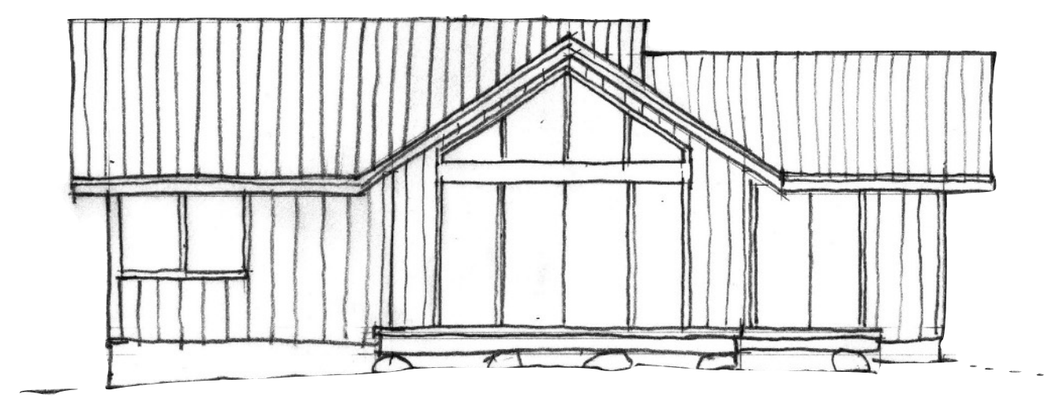
#6 – TENT PLATFORMS



ROOF PLAN



FLOOR PLAN

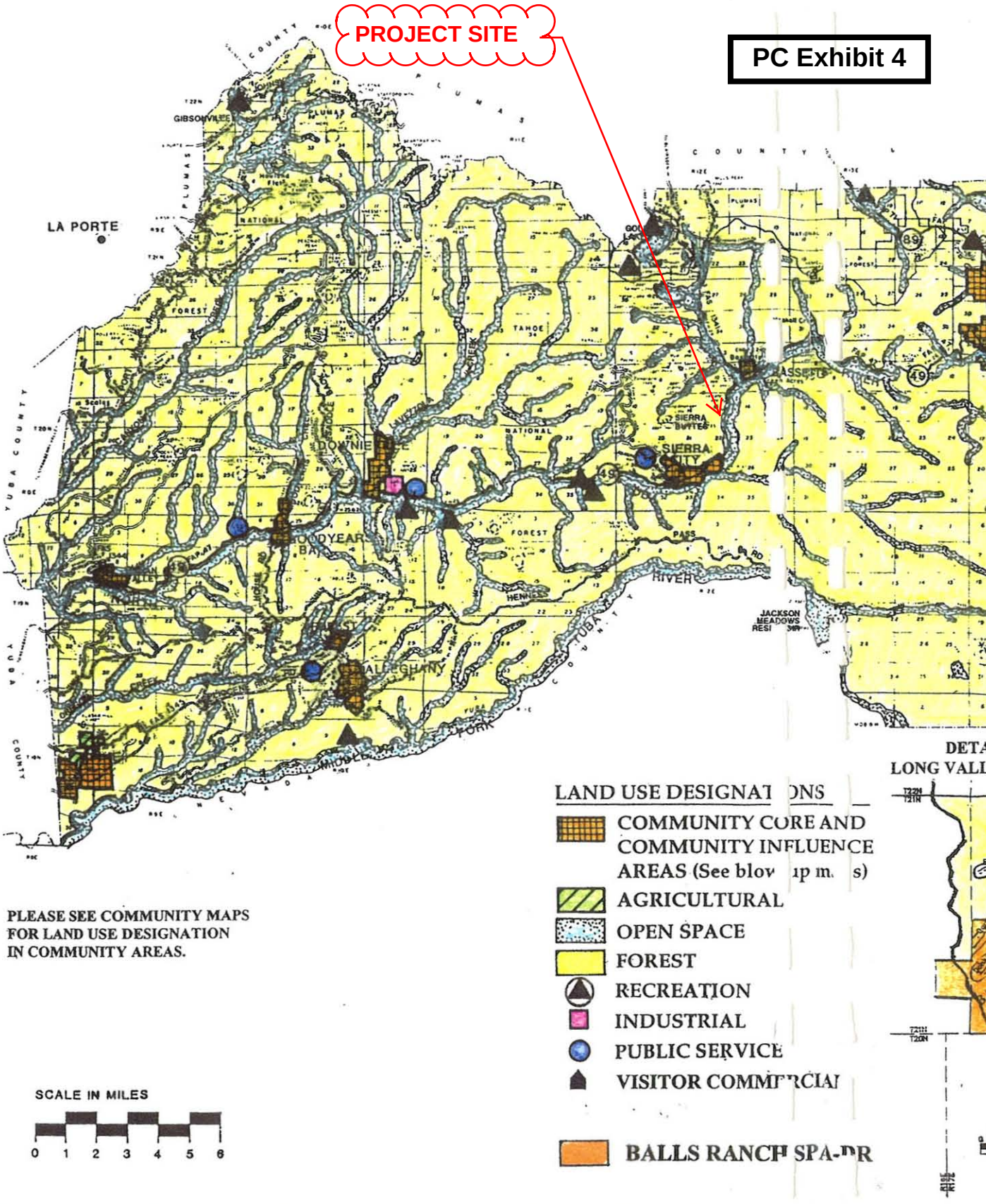


SOUTH ELEVATION

#7 – VISITING TEACHER & STAFF HOUSING

SCALE: 1/8" = 1' - 0"

PC Exhibit 4



NOTE: PLEASE SEE COMMUNITY MAPS FOR LAND USE DESIGNATION IN COMMUNITY AREAS.

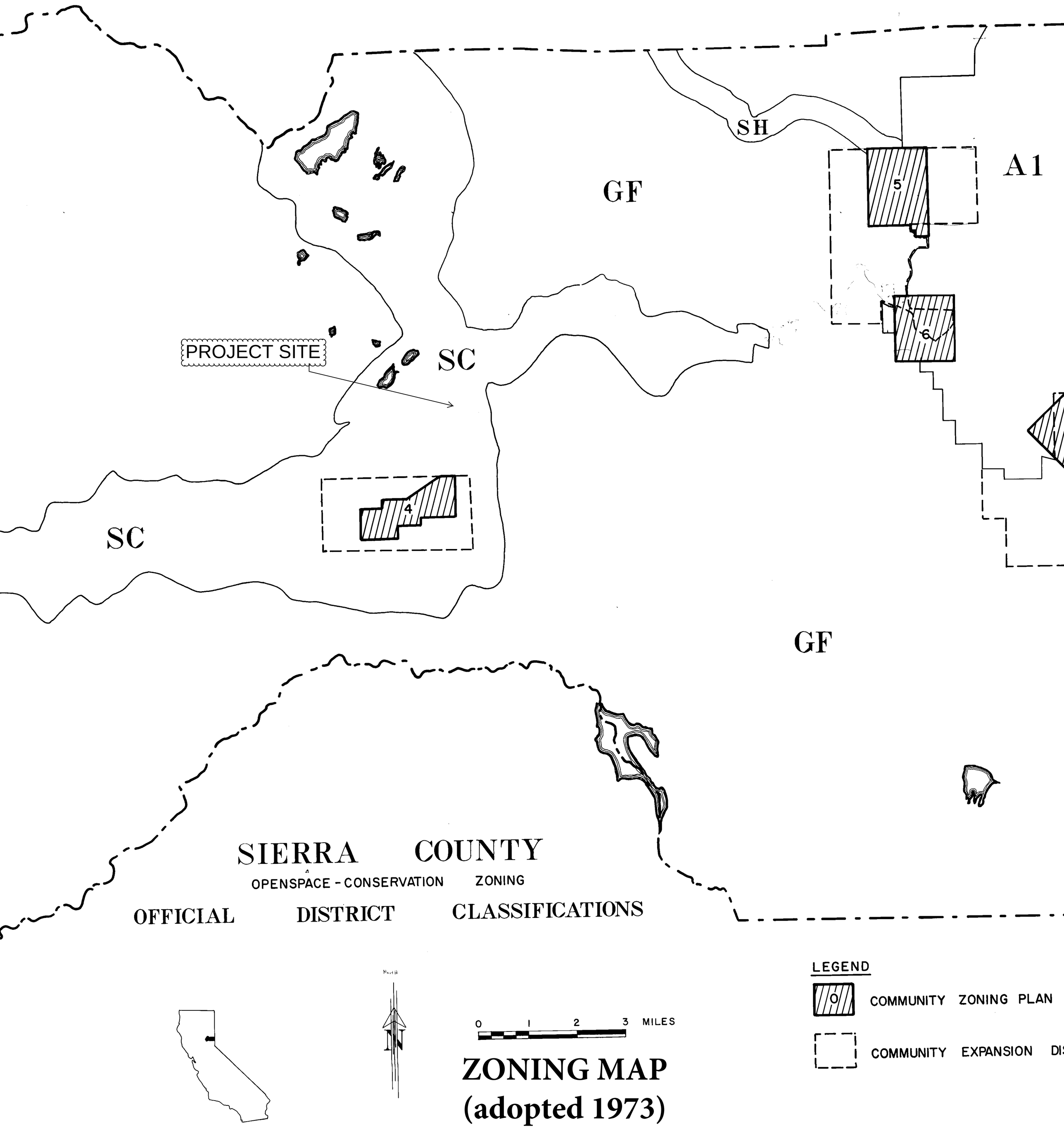
SIERRA COUNTY GENERAL P·L·A·N

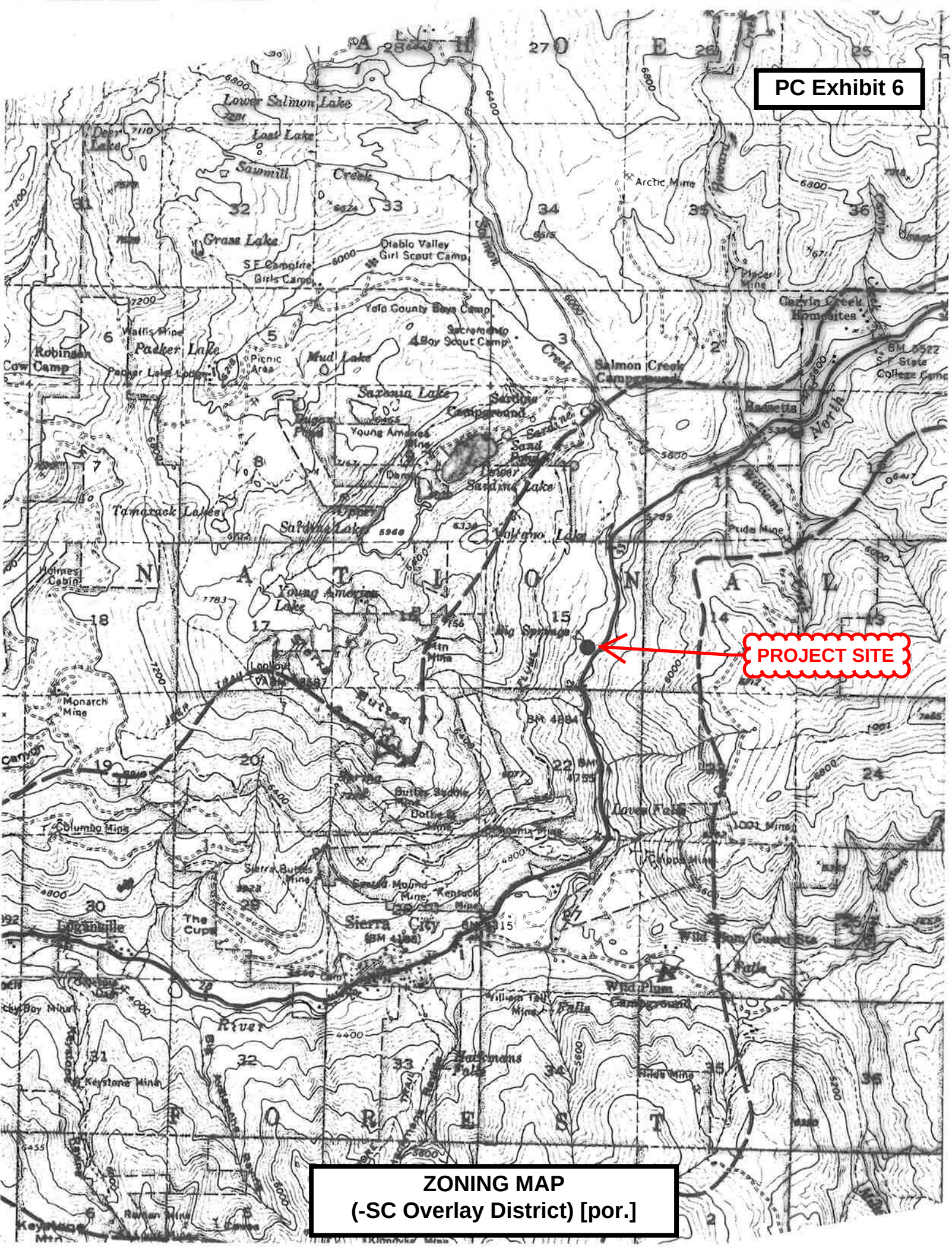
Amendments:

Res.# 97-203: Rec --> Forest (Long Valley Area)
Res.# 99-085: AG --> VC (Bordertown Area)
Res.# 03-208: Forest/STA-Mineral Extraction --> OS (Gardner's Point/Pioneer Pit)

Figur 1-2
COUNTYWIDE AND SE DESIGNA
SIERRA COUNTY
CAL ORNIA

PC Exhibit 5


SH
GF
A1
5
6
PROJECT SITE
SC
SC
4
GF
SIERRA COUNTY
OPENSPACE - CONSERVATION ZONING
OFFICIAL DISTRICT CLASSIFICATIONS
LEGEND
COMMUNITY ZONING PLAN
COMMUNITY EXPANSION DI
0 1 2 3 MILES
N
ZONING MAP
(adopted 1973)



ZONING MAP
(-SC Overlay District) [por.]

PC Exhibit 7
(65 pp.)

CEQA Initial Study

& Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

Revised and Re-circulated

Big Springs Meditation Retreat Center

Conditional Use Permit Amendment
& Site Plan Review

Sierra County Department of Planning and Building Inspection
(530) 289–3251 ● planning@sierracounty.ca.gov

April 9, 2018

INTRODUCTION

California Environmental Quality Act Compliance

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000, et seq.), and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.)., Sierra County as Lead Agency has prepared this Initial Study to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Big Springs Meditation Retreat Center.

Public Review Process

This is a re-circulation of an Initial Study/draft Mitigated Negative Declaration that was initially circulated for 30 days from September 21 through October 20, 2017. Based on comments received and minor amendments by the applicant to the project description, the Lead Agency determined to conduct an additional Biological Resources Assessment; add several mitigation measures under Section IV (Biological Resources); and re-circulate the Initial Study/draft Mitigated Negative Declaration. The Initial Study and the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration will be re-circulated for public review for a period of 30 days, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15073(a) and 15073.5. Sierra County will provide public notice at the beginning of the public review period.

This draft Initial Study is being routed to State agencies through the Office of Planning and Research and the State Clearinghouse under a Notice of Completion; to other federal, State, and local agencies by the Sierra County Planning Department under a Notice of Availability and Notice of Intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND); and to property owners in the vicinity and the general public by direct mailing and posting notices of the project in County government offices and post offices throughout the County, on the County website (http://www.sierracounty.ca.gov), and publication in The Mountain Messenger, a legal newspaper of general circulation.

After the document has been noticed and made publicly available for 30 days County staff will address all comments received, prepare a staff report and recommendation, and schedule the project and this Initial Study/MND for consideration by the Sierra County Planning Commission. Notice of the scheduled Planning Commission hearing will be posted and published at least ten (10) days prior to the public hearing. The Planning Commission will accept written and oral comments and make a final decision on the project during their regularly-scheduled monthly meeting (estimated to be on or about May 17, 2018).

Please provide written comments or direct questions to: Brandon Pangman, Sierra County Planning Department, P.O. Box 530, Downieville, CA 95936, 530-289-3251, bpangman@sierracounty.ca.gov.

Overview of Proposed Project

The Big Springs Meditation Retreat Center (proposed project) is a proposed expansion of the existing Big Springs Garden resort, which is located on an approximately 118-acre property located directly off Highway 49 on a privately maintained road, approximately 1.9 miles northeast of the community of Sierra City, in Sierra County, California.

Ownership of the property (including the entitlement to operate as an outdoor restaurant and event venue) has recently changed. The new owner's proposed project consists of an amendment to the existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and Site Plan Review to allow expansion of the current commercial day-use facilities (outdoor dining and special events) to also allow overnight accommodations and indoor meeting facilities, for up to a maximum of 41 overnight guests and staff taking part in week-long and weekend conferences, meetings, classes, and meditation retreats over the spring and summer seasons. (This proposed "overnight" use is in addition to the existing permitted day-use facilities under the current CUP).

Project Planning Setting

The proposed project is located just outside Sierra City, a small unincorporated community in rural Sierra County, California (pop. approximately 225). Land uses within the area are governed by the Sierra County General Plan, which applies a land use designation of Forest to the area of the proposed project, as well as an associated zoning of General Forest (GF) District. The proposed area also falls within the State Route (SR) 49 Scenic Corridor and has an overlay zoning of Scenic Highway Corridor (-SC) District. A Special Use Permit was approved in 2001 allowing a commercial day use facility for dining and special events (meetings, etc.). That entitlement is still valid, and is proposed to be amended to allow an expansion of facilities and overnight occupancy as described above. The project location within the Scenic Corridor Overlay (-SC) zone also requires discretionary site plan review.

The ten acre project site is sloped (approximately 10%) set in a mixed conifer forest, with existing developed areas consisting of: a single family residence, several accessory structures, extensive landscapes and water features, trails and outdoor dining areas, and gravel parking areas. Several small streams run through the property; but all proposed development will be set back 50'-150' from these surface waters, as indicated in the project site plans (see Fig. 2 on page 10 of this Initial Study). Undeveloped mixed conifer-forested lands borders all sides of the parcel and are similarly assigned Forest use designation. The resort property is bordered by the Tahoe National Forest and Sierra County Land Trust to the west and north and large private parcels to the east and south.

The proposed CUP amendment is consistent with the General Plan and zoning only with discretionary review and approval of the proposed expanded commercial use of the property, as well as a discretionary site plan review for commercial development within the scenic corridor zoning overlay. The rural location and low-impact nature of the development and proposed uses are not anticipated to result in any perceived incompatibility with surrounding land uses.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

This Initial Study analyzes the environmental impacts of the project consistent with the format and analysis prompts provided in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines.

Environmental Determination

The lead agency finds that the Initial Study identifies potentially significant effects, but that revisions to the project identified in Table A-1 as Mitigation Measures would avoid or minimize the effects such that they would be less than significant.

Table A-1
Mitigation Measures

Number	Mitigation Measure
AES-1.1	Construction on the project site shall comply with the following provisions: • Grading shall be limited to that necessary for construction of the new structures, infrastructure and for fire protection. • Tree removal on the project site shall be limited to that necessary for fire protection, building construction, and to remove dead or dying trees or those that pose a safety hazard. • All proposed Structures shall meet the visual aesthetic requirements as outlined in the Sierra County Code.
AES-1.2	All lighting shall be of low intensity and shielded and directed downward to maintain dark sky conditions and to avoid transient lighting of off-site areas.
BIO-4.1	To prevent impacts to raptors and nesting birds during the nesting season (between February 1–September 1) as a result of project construction, the permittee shall avoid removal of any potential nest habitat (i.e., suitable nest trees and shrub) during the nesting season. If this is not possible, a qualified biologist shall be consulted, at the permittee's expense, to conduct a nesting bird survey no more than 2 weeks prior to construction to determine if any native birds are nesting on or near the site (including a 150-foot buffer for raptors). If any active nests are observed during surveys, a suitable avoidance buffer from the nests will be determined and flagged by the qualified biologist based on species, location, and planned construction activity. These nests shall be avoided until the chicks have fledged and the nests are no longer active. A report of the qualified biologist's findings and recommendations shall be provided in writing to the Sierra County Planning Department prior to construction activities related to this entitlement that are to occur between the dates of February 1 – September 1.
BIO-4.2	Prior to removal of any trees in conjunction with this project, permittee shall consult a qualified biologist, at permittee's expense, to conduct a survey of all trees anticipated to be removed as a result of project construction to determine if such trees are being used by bats as daytime roost habitat. If special-status bats are determined to be roosting within a tree to be removed, bat impact avoidance measures can include either: removal of the tree at dusk after the bat(s) have left the tree for nocturnal foraging; or removal of the tree during the time of year (fall/winter) when the bat(s) has migrated from the site; or other measures deemed appropriate by the biologist. A report of the qualified biologist's findings and recommendations shall be provided in writing to the Sierra County Planning Department prior to tree removal.

BIO-4.3	Prior to construction or ground-disturbing activities in conjunction with this project in areas that were not previously disturbed, permittee shall consult a qualified biologist, at permittee's expense, to conduct a pre-construction survey for salamanders (specifically Southern Long-toed Salamander) within suitable upland refugia, such as large, rotting logs. If the species is observed, all suitable refugia for this species shall be flagged for avoidance. If complete avoidance is not feasible, consultation with CDFW shall occur to identify appropriate measures to be taken to further avoid and/or minimize impacts from construction disturbance. A report of the qualified biologist's findings and recommendations (and/or CDFW's recommendations) shall be provided in writing to the Sierra County Planning Department prior to new ground disturbing activities in these areas.
BIO-4.4	If any impacts to potential jurisdictional water features will occur in conjunction with this project, a formal delineation of wetlands and waters shall be performed by a qualified consultant, at permittee's expense, to delineate exact boundaries of jurisdictional features. Impacts to these features will require authorization from the appropriate resource agencies (e.g., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [404 Nationwide Permit], California Regional Water Quality Control Board [401 Water Quality Certification], and/or California Department of Fish and Wildlife [1602 Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement]). Compensatory mitigation required by the terms and conditions of agency approvals may provide for no net loss of jurisdictional habitats, or other methods or conditions deemed appropriate by those agencies. (Note: Examples of potential mitigation may include purchasing mitigation credits from an approved mitigation bank, payment of an in-lieu fee, or creation of replacement habitat on site. Permit processing can take 6 to 9 months for minor impacts less than 0.5 acres in size.)
CUL-5.1	If artifacts or unusual amounts of shell or bone or other items indicative of buried archaeological resources or human remains are encountered during earth-disturbance associated with the proposed project, the onsite contractor shall immediately notify the Sierra County Department of Planning and Building Inspection and all soil-disturbing work shall be halted until a qualified archaeologist completes a significance evaluation of the finds pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Any human remains unearthed shall be treated in accordance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and Public Resources Code Sections 5097.94, 5097.98 and 5097.99. The significance evaluation shall include specific measures for the appropriate management of the resources uncovered and shall be submitted to the Sierra County Department of Planning and Building Inspection. No further soil-disturbing work shall be conducted within 100 feet of any resource discovery until an appropriate management plan is developed by a qualified archaeologist for the protection of any significant resources identified. The significance evaluation shall be carried out in consultation with appropriate agencies, including the State Historic Preservation Office, as necessary.
GEO-6.1	California Building Code 1803.2 shall be enforced, requiring Geotechnical investigations be required before any building permits are issued. Sierra County Code 12.04.100(8) will not be implemented; allowing development without a soils report if bearing pressure is less than 2000psf.
HAZ-8.1	The tank and plumbing shall be constructed in accordance with Cal Fire design and installation requirements; shall be placed underground or otherwise designed to avoid freezing conditions; and shall contain apparatus approved by serving fire entities that complies with current fire agency standards and specifications. The location of the tank shall be approved by the serving fire entities and the Planning Department. On-going maintenance of the tank and plumbing shall be the responsibility of the property owner.
HAZ-8.2	The project shall implement the following requirements to minimize impacts related to fire

	hazards: • Adequate onsite emergency vehicle turnouts and/or turnarounds shall be maintained onsite. • Site improvements shall comply with Cal Fire defensible space standards and other specifications and standards for fire safety, including: width and grade, signage and address requirements, construction standards, and creation and maintenance of defensible space.
HAZ-8.3	The project shall implement the following requirements to minimize impacts related to fire hazards: • All new buildings shall have roofing constructed with Class A materials, and street and building address signs designed to Cal Fire standards. All new construction shall be required to comply with California Building Code Chapter 7A, ignition-resistant building code standards. • Cal Fire shall be consulted during the processing of building permit applications and may require additional fire suppression systems (sprinklers, etc.) and/or water storage requirements that meet the minimum Title 14 fire safe standards or those resulting in the same practical effect, as authorized under 14-CCR-1207.07.
NOI-12.1	The project shall implement the following requirements to minimize impacts related to noise: The project applicant/contractor shall restrict hours of construction activity to daytime hours of operation between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Construction hours on Saturdays shall be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on Sundays and observed holidays, construction may occur only between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
SS-17.1	The applicant shall show evidence of a domestic water supply permit from the California State Water Boards prior to the issuance of a building permit for the proposed guesthouse.

PROJECT AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project title:

Big Springs Meditation Retreat Center

Lead agency name and address:

Sierra County Planning Department
P.O. Box 530
Downieville, CA 95936

Contact person, phone number, and e-mail:

Brandon Pangman
bpangman@sierracounty.ca.gov
(530) 289-3251

Project location and General Site Description:

The approximately 118-acre project site (Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 008-110-022 is located at 32613 Highway 49, less than 2 miles northeast of the community of Sierra City, in Sierra County, California. The resort property is at the south end of Lakes Basin area, in section 15; township 20 north, range 12 east of the MDBM as depicted on the USGS 7.5' Sierra Butte's quadrangle.

Elevation on the site varies from approximately 5,120 to 6,000 feet. The project site is on a moderately sloped southern exposure made up of granite and volcanic soils that range from very rocky to sandy and shallow. The parcel is primarily native pine forest with a small-developed garden with the project area; common wildlife in the area include deer, skunk, coyote and raptors. The Big Spring's stream runs in a broad streambed adjacent to the proposed project site and flows into the North Yuba River approximately one mile from the project site. A portion of the Big Spring's runoff is diverted through the garden and into a manmade pond located on the property.

The proposed project site is currently developed with gravel roads and parking areas and 4,212 square feet of existing buildings. Existing development on the project site includes the following:

- Residence for the owner and staff;
- Commercial kitchen and outside uncovered dining area;
- Restrooms;
- Storage sheds.

The site also includes the following infrastructure and utilities:

- Various dirt and gravel access and service roads serving the project;
- Spring-fed water system tapped at an elevation of 5264' provides irrigation, fire suppression water and potable and domestic water supply. Static water pressure within the developed area is maintained between 60 and 80 pounds and includes a 6" fire hydrant near the residence and a wharf hydrant at the restaurant.
- Individual septic tank and leach field systems, with new septic systems and leach fields pending approval of environmental health in order to service the proposed developments.

Project sponsor's name and address:

Sharon Lane
P.O. Box 679
North San Juan, CA 95960

Existing General Plan Designation and Zoning District:

The Sierra County General Plan applies a land use designation to the project parcel of Forest (F) with a Special Treatment Area designation of Scenic Corridor (STA-SC). All of the plots adjacent to the project site have a land use designation F/STA-SC.

The proposed project site is zoned General Forest (GF) district with an overlay zone of Scenic Corridor (-SC) District. Land on all sides of the project site is all zoned General Forest -Scenic Corridor (GF-SC).

Surrounding Land Uses:

The project area is rural, and is located approximately two miles from the closest unincorporated community, Sierra City. All other adjacent properties are undeveloped.

There are only three (3) residences within a mile of the project site, the closest being over 600′ away on a densely forested hillside and not visible from the proposed project. The next-closest house sits on a 160-acre parcel to the south and across the highway; and this property is also owned by the applicant.

Background Documents and Plans:

The following is a list of primary reference documents consulted in preparing this Initial Study. These are available for review upon request from the Sierra County Department of Planning and Building Inspection:

Sierra County General Plan 2012. Revised

Sierra County General Plan 2012 - Background Document. Vol. 1-2

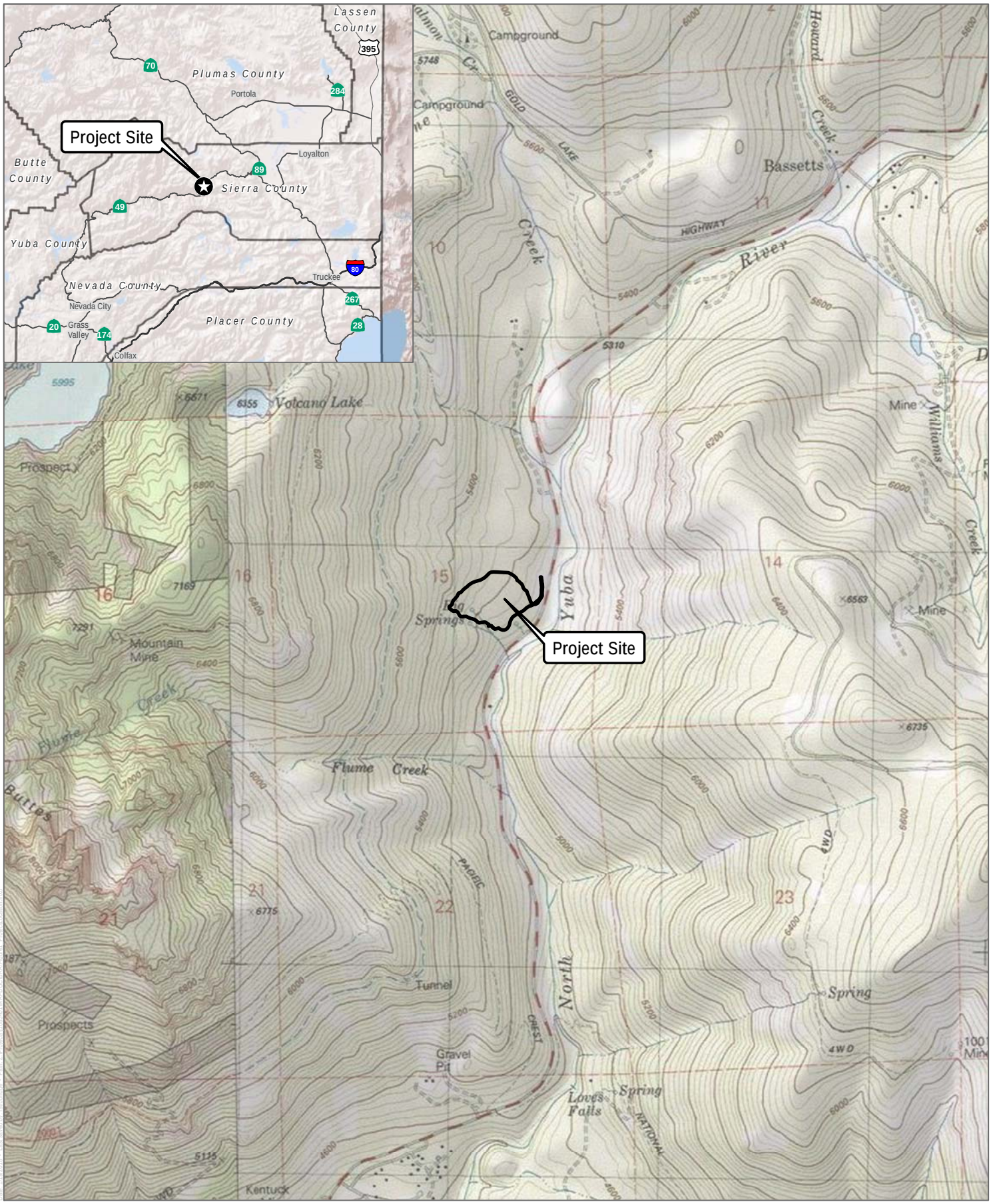
Sierra County Zoning Code (Part 15 of the Sierra County Code)

Biological Resources Assessment (Dudek, January 19, 2018)

Additional sources consulted in preparing the Initial Study are listed in the References section at the end of this document.

Document Figures and Plans:

The figure(s) included in this document depicting the site plan are for general reference purposes and do not include complete and full-size plans and preliminary building designs submitted with the application. The complete set of project plans is available for review upon request from the Sierra County Department of Planning and Building Inspection (see p. 7 for contact information).



SOURCE: USGS 7.5-Minute Series Haypress Valley Quadrangle
Township 20N; Range 12E; Section 15

DUDEK

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

FIGURE 1

Project Location

Biological Resources Assessment for the Big Springs Garden Meditation Resort Project

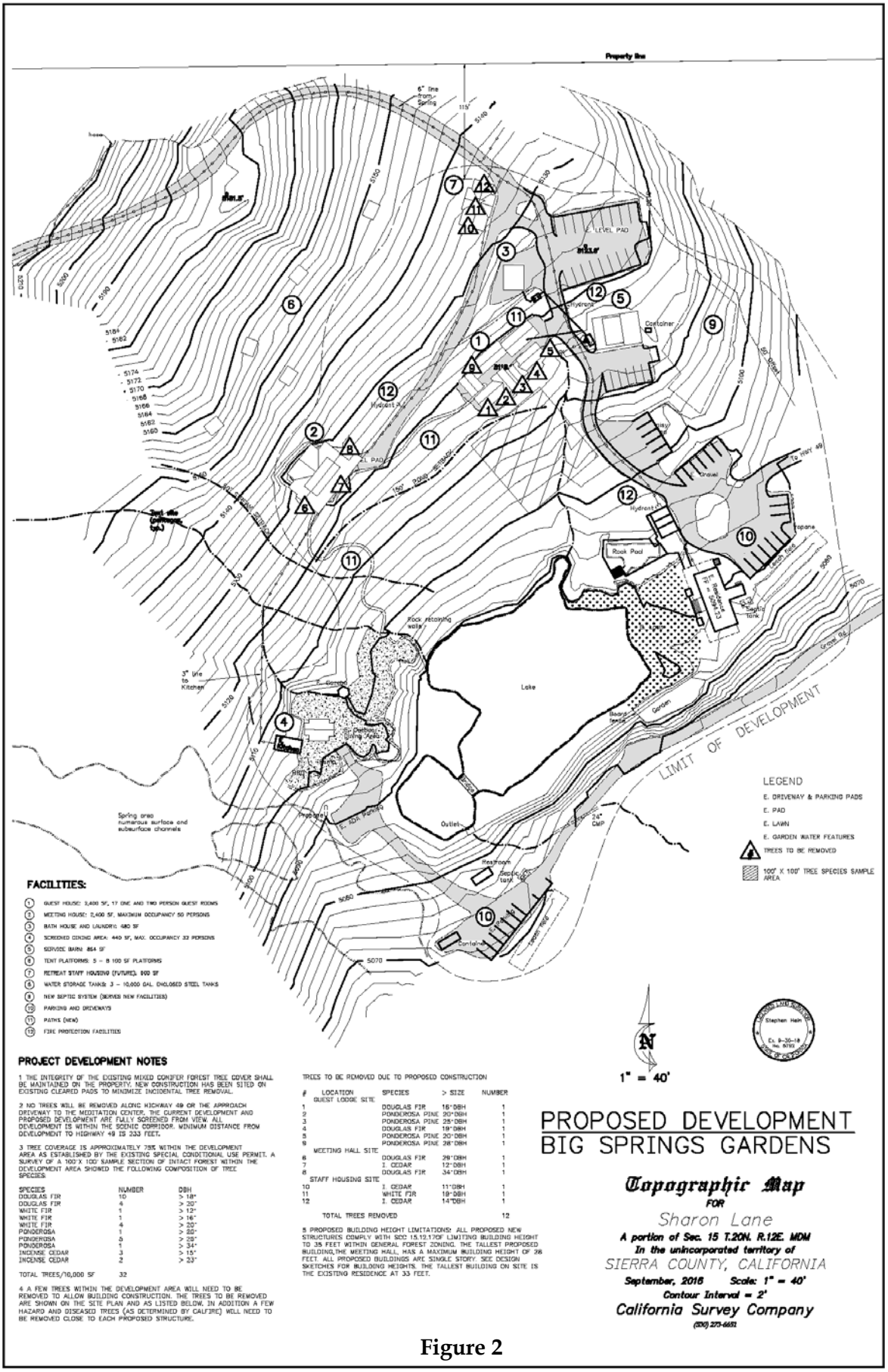

Property line
6" line from Spring
LEVEL PAD
Container
Hydrant
Rock Pool
Lake
Rock retaining wall
3" line to Kitchen
Spring area numerous surface and subsurface channels
Outlet
Restroom
Septic tank
24" CMP
Garden
LIMIT OF DEVELOPMENT
LEGEND
E. DRIVEWAY & PARKING PADS
E. PAD
E. LAWN
E. GARDEN WATER FEATURES
TREES TO BE REMOVED
100' X 100' TREE SPECIES SAMPLE AREA
FACILITIES:
1 GUEST HOUSE: 3,400 SF, 17 ONE AND TWO PERSON GUEST ROOMS
2 MEETING HOUSE: 2,400 SF, MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY 50 PERSONS
3 BATH HOUSE AND LAUNDRY: 480 SF
4 SCREENED DINING AREA: 440 SF, MAX. OCCUPANCY 32 PERSONS
5 SERVICE BARN: 864 SF
6 TENT PLATFORMS: 5 – 8 100 SF PLATFORMS
7 RETREAT STAFF HOUSING (FUTURE): 800 SF
8 WATER STORAGE TANKS: 3 – 10,000 GAL. ENCLOSED STEEL TANKS
9 NEW SEPTIC SYSTEM (SERVES NEW FACILITIES)
10 PARKING AND DRIVEWAYS
11 PATHS (NEW)
12 FIRE PROTECTION FACILITIES
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT NOTES
1 THE INTEGRITY OF THE EXISTING MIXED CONIFER FOREST TREE COVER SHALL BE MAINTAINED ON THE PROPERTY. NEW CONSTRUCTION HAS BEEN SITED ON EXISTING CLEARED PADS TO MINIMIZE INCIDENTAL TREE REMOVAL.
2 NO TREES WILL BE REMOVED ALONG HIGHWAY 49 OR THE APPROACH DRIVEWAY TO THE MEDITATION CENTER. THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ARE FULLY SCREENED FROM VIEW. ALL DEVELOPMENT IS WITHIN THE SCENIC CORRIDOR. MINIMUM DISTANCE FROM DEVELOPMENT TO HIGHWAY 49 IS 233 FEET.
3 TREE COVERAGE IS APPROXIMATELY 78% WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT AREA AS ESTABLISHED BY THE EXISTING SPECIAL CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT. A SURVEY OF A 100' X 100' SAMPLE SECTION OF INTACT FOREST WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT AREA SHOWED THE FOLLOWING COMPOSITION OF TREE SPECIES.
SPECIES NUMBER DBH
DOUGLAS FIR 10 > 18"
DOUGLAS FIR 4 > 20"
WHITE FIR 1 > 12"
WHITE FIR 1 > 16"
WHITE FIR 4 > 20"
PONDEROSA 1 > 20"
PONDEROSA 5 > 25"
PONDEROSA 1 > 34"
INCENSE CEDAR 3 > 15"
INCENSE CEDAR 2 > 23"
TOTAL TREES/10,000 SF 32
4 A FEW TREES WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT AREA WILL NEED TO BE REMOVED TO ALLOW BUILDING CONSTRUCTION. THE TREES TO BE REMOVED ARE SHOWN ON THE SITE PLAN AND AS LISTED BELOW. IN ADDITION A FEW HAZARD AND DISEASED TREES (AS DETERMINED BY CALFIRE) WILL NEED TO BE REMOVED CLOSE TO EACH PROPOSED STRUCTURE.
TREES TO BE REMOVED DUE TO PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION
LOCATION SPECIES > SIZE NUMBER
GUEST LODGE SITE
1 DOUGLAS FIR 16"DBH 1
2 PONDEROSA PINE 20"DBH 1
3 PONDEROSA PINE 25"DBH 1
4 DOUGLAS FIR 19"DBH 1
5 PONDEROSA PINE 20"DBH 1
9 PONDEROSA PINE 28"DBH 1
MEETING HALL SITE
6 DOUGLAS FIR 29"DBH 1
7 I. CEDAR 12"DBH 1
8 DOUGLAS FIR 34"DBH 1
STAFF HOUSING SITE
10 I. CEDAR 11"DBH 1
11 WHITE FIR 19"DBH 1
12 I. CEDAR 14"DBH 1
TOTAL TREES REMOVED 12
5 PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHT LIMITATIONS: ALL PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURES COMPLY WITH SCC 15.12.170F LIMITING BUILDING HEIGHT TO 35 FEET WITHIN GENERAL FOREST ZONING. THE TALLEST PROPOSED BUILDING,THE MEETING HALL, HAS A MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT OF 28 FEET. ALL PROPOSED BUILDINGS ARE SINGLE STORY. SEE DESIGN SKETCHES FOR BUILDING HEIGHTS. THE TALLEST BUILDING ON SITE IS THE EXISTING RESIDENCE AT 33 FEET.
1" = 40'
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
BIG SPRINGS GARDENS
Topographic Map
FOR
Sharon Lane
A portion of Sec. 15 T.20N. R.12E. MDM
In the unincorporated territory of
SIERRA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
September, 2016 Scale: 1" = 40'
Contour Interval = 2'
California Survey Company
(530) 273-6651

Figure 2

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Entitlements from the County requested to implement the proposed project include an amendment to the Conditional Use Permit and a Site Plan Review. The Conditional Use Permit is requested to be amended in order to allow up to fifty guests to stay overnight on the property. After securing the amendment, the applicant intends to develop additional structures and services to facilitate the overnight guests. The Site Plan Review is a required entitlement needed to do any grading or building in the scenic corridor overlay zone.

As shown in Figure 2 - Site Plan (on previous page), the proposed project includes construction of additional buildings, a campground with tent platforms and walking trails, plus additional infrastructure. As described in greater detail below, the proposed project would add approximately 8904 square feet of building space to the existing resort facilities. With existing structures accounting for 4,212 square feet of building space, the additional features summarized in the table on page 14, below, would increase the overall resort building area (including the owner's residence, and deleting 660 sq.ft. of existing storage structures to be replaced) to: 12,456 square feet.

While the proposed period of use (April through late October, depending on snowfall) will continue to be *up to* 170 days per year, *actual* "use days," according to the applicant, would be approximately 40 – 50 days during this season. Overnight occupancy is anticipated by the applicant to be typically 24 people (including guests and staff) during retreats, and day-use-only special events will be limited to a maximum of 120 guests (however, the current CUP has no actual limitation on day-use occupancy). The applicant has stated that she anticipates that overall use will actually be *less* than when the previous owner operated the Big Springs resort as a day-use-only outdoor restaurant and special events destination. The proposed "Use Schedule" provided by the applicant is as follows:

USE SCHEDULE (estimated actual)

EVENT TYPE	NUMBER/SEASON	PARTICIPANTS	STAFFING
SINGLE DAY EVENT	10 - 20	MAX: 120 DAY USE ONLY	VARIES BY EVENT TYPE
WEEKEND EVENT	5	24 OVERNIGHT	INCLUDES STAFF
5 DAY RETREAT	3	24 OVERNIGHT	INCLUDES STAFF
7 DAY RETREAT	2	24 OVERNIGHT	INCLUDES STAFF
9 DAY RETREAT	2	24 OVERNIGHT	INCLUDES STAFF
TOTAL OVERNIGHT USER-DAYS	57		

(A note on the "Use Schedule" above as it pertains to the on-site water system: The current water system consists of a legal [registered] diversion of an unnamed spring/stream on the property,

under a riparian claim. The private water system is locally regulated by the Sierra County Environmental Health Department; but it is understood by the applicant that the proposed development is controlled by the State of California Safe Drinking Water Act as well. These regulations require that additional water conditioning and monitoring are necessary under a Public Water System permit should water use exceed a certain number of user days. [Exceeding 25 individuals for 60 days of the year for designation as a public water system; and 25+ people for more than 6 months of the year for designation as a 'transient non-community water system.'] It is the stated intent of the applicant to limit user days to stay under these numbers and maintain the designation as a small County-supervised water system [or 'unregulated State system']. This would allow the applicant to continue to monitor water quality at the facility under the supervision of the County Environmental Health Department as it has done continuously since the granting of the original Use Permit. If in the future the applicant decides to increase the number of overnight user-days beyond the maximum 25 individuals/60 days of the year pattern established in the Use Schedule, appropriate steps will be taken to conform to the California Safe Drinking Water Act and all State and County water quality requirements for a Public Water System (PWS). Build-out to accommodate an increase in user days from the schedule above and outlined in the Use Permit Amendment application would only occur with the subsequent and full approval of the County Health Department and the State Water Quality Board with full conformance with its PWS regulations.)

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Existing landscaping and man-made water features within the existing and proposed development area will remain. New structures and facilities proposed in this amendment application are all sited on previously disturbed and developed level pads, except for the tent platforms and small staff cabin described below. Setbacks from the existing spring, main spring water course, pond, drainage areas, and water features within the development area, including the new septic system, have been sited to maintain the County-required 150 foot setback distance to water resources (ref. Sierra County Code Section 15.12.060).

The proposed development (including all existing facilities) is anticipated to result in a maximum area of disturbance of approximately ten (10) acres in the south-eastern portion of the 118-acre property. Due to the dense mixed-conifer forest and fairly steep topography separating the project site and the public right-of-way on Highway 49, no part of the development is or will be visible from the highway.

The proposed project includes a total of 8,904 square feet of new structures and other improvements described below. See Fig. 2 site plan on p. 10 with numbered features corresponding to each of the following:

1 – GUEST HOUSE: 2,800 SF

The proposed new guest quarters would be located on an existing level graded bench built to be used for overflow parking during events. The proposed guesthouse building consists of 17 small single and double occupancy rooms wrapped around a central court. Guest accommodations would provide rooms for up to 25 guests with two ADA accessible suites. Restrooms and bathing facilities are located off the central court. There is a small lounge/commons room with a fireplace, deck, restroom and mini bar. The lounge will be

available to tent campers as well as folks staying in the guesthouse. The building design is styled after rustic western cabins. Materials include ponderosa pine poles and beams, board and batten siding, local stone masonry, and metal roofs. (Note: preliminary architectural renderings are available for review in the offices of the Sierra County Planning Department.)

2 – MEETING HALL: 2,400 SF

The proposed meeting hall would serve as the main retreat center for meditation, lectures, seminars, music recitals, yoga and dance classes. The meeting room is designed to seat 50 to 60 participants or 25 - 32 sitting meditation. The meeting house includes restrooms and space for display and chair storage. It is sited on an existing excavated pad. The proposed meeting hall would be set into the slope at the rear. The front would face the Gardens pond. The design is based on western mountain lodges using a heavy timber framing system based on local materials for siding and interior. There is a clerestory set on timber trusses to bring light into the space. Accessible paths lead from the guest house and outdoor eating area to the meeting house.

3 – BATH HOUSE AND LAUNDRY: 600 SF

The restroom and laundry building would be sited just above the guest house and near 6 - 8 tent platforms for up to 12 tent campers. The building provides bathing facilities, two additional ADA restrooms, and outdoor sink for campers. The laundry room is for use by both staff and guests. Next to the laundry is a storage room for linens and cleaning supplies. The proposed restrooms and laundry would connect to a new septic system that serves the Meeting House, Guest House, Service Barn and laundry/restroom building. This system is separate from the existing septic systems serving the residence and the restaurant. Exterior style is similar to the style established by the guesthouse.

4 – SCREENED DINING AREA: 440 SF

The screened dining area is designed to provide some protection and relief from weather and insects. It would seat up to 32 guests. Tables will be flexibly arranged to seat 2 to 4 per table, or at occasions to seat up to 12 at a single table. The screened dining area is adjacent to the main kitchen and buffet serving area within the existing outdoor eating area.

5 – SERVICE BARN: 864 SF

The new service barn replaces two existing sheds (660 SF) on the same site. The proposed new building is divided into three areas: a workshop for grounds maintenance, a garage area, and secure storage for the off season. There is an accessible restroom for staff, firewood storage and a large sub-panel to serve as the distribution point for the Meeting Hall, Guest House and Bath House/Laundry.

6 - TENT PLATFORMS: 6 - 8 PLATFORMS : 1,080 SF

A number of wood-decked tent platforms would be located within the forested area above the Meeting Hall and Guest House. These platforms are for participants wanting to stay in more primitive accommodations while participating in retreat sessions. Each platform will be nestled

into the hillside and provide room for either a small backpacking tent or 10′ x 12′ canvas tents. The platform will have space for one or two outdoor chairs and include secure storage lockers for personal items. All bathing and restroom facilities will be provided in the bath house. No food, cooking, or fires will be allowed outside the new guest house or the existing established restaurant area and kitchen.

7 - STAFF HOUSING (FUTURE): 720 SF

A small cabin may be built to house teachers and teaching staff during week long retreats. It would consist of two bedrooms, a breakfast area, interview room, and bathroom. The staff housing would be located above the laundry/bath house on a gentle slope.

Infrastructure:

8 - WATER STORAGE TANKS: 3 - 10,000 GALLON TANKS

New potable water storage would be located near the existing spring. These tanks will be covered, NSF listed, steel tanks set on concrete foundations. The tanks will be connected in to the existing 6″ main water line that currently serves the development They will serve for both domestic water and fire protection. The tanks are located at an elevation of 5,264 feet. The pipe system is capable of delivering from 60 to 80 PSI within the development area and a minimum of 1,050 GPM at the central 6″ fire hydrant.

9 - SEPTIC SYSTEM

A new septic system including tanks, leach field, and designated repair area has been designed and located to serve the Meeting Hall, Guest House, Staff Housing and Bath/Laundry buildings. It has been designed and sized for 50 persons for a maximum of 170 days during the year. This system is separate from the existing residence septic system and the restaurant septic system. New septic tanks would be located near each facility. Tight-line leachate pipes will connect to the leach field piping.

10 - PARKING AND DRIVEWAYS

The existing system of driveways and access roads will be maintained. Some current overflow parking areas would become building sites and other parking areas would be reconfigured to handle long term parking and ADA van parking. The total number of required parking spaces has not changed. It is anticipated that the reconfigured parking areas can handle up to 60 vehicles without major site development work (and without blocking necessary emergency vehicle turnouts). It is proposed that all driveways and parking areas remain permeable graded and gravel surfaces in keeping with the Forest zoning designation and environment. Existing drainage ways will be maintained. It is anticipated that the new building roof and impermeable surface runoff can be handled on site with drainage swales and infiltration galleries. Bike racks will be installed and handicap accessible parking will be constructed near new retreat facilities.

11 - PATHS

Main access paths to the Meeting Hall, Guest House, Bath House, Restrooms, and dining area will be upgraded to accessibility standards where feasible, based on grade and slope. Access roads for Fire and service equipment will be provided to the Guesthouse, Bath House, and Meeting Hall.

12 - FIRE PROTECTION FACILITIES

Currently there are 2 Fire Hydrants connected to the water system: one standard hydrant on the main 6″ diameter main water line and a wharf hydrants on 4″ diameter distribution lines at the outdoor restaurant. The applicant proposes to provide new 2-1/2″ wharf hydrants on 4″ diameter water lines at the Guest House and Meeting Hall. All hydrants will be served by the 30,000 gallons of water storage with a minimum static pressure of 60 psi at the hydrant. These wharf hydrants should provide a minimum flow rate of 250 GPM at 60 PSI. Measured fire flow rate at the 6″ Mueller fire hydrant is 1050 GPM at 80 PSI, as tested by the Sierra City Volunteer Fire Department on 10/17/2013.

Below is a summary chart of all proposed new facilities:

NAME	SQUARE FOOTAGE	OCCUPANCY	NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS
GUEST HOUSE	2,800	R - 1	25
MEETING HALL	2,400	A - 3	50
BATH HOUSE/LAUNDRY	600	B	6
SCREENED DINING	440	B	32
SERVICE BARN (replaces 660 SF)	864	B & S-2	5
TENT PLATFORMS	1080	U	10
STAFF HOUSING	720	R - 1	2
TOTALS	8,904		

Consistent with existing development onsite, all proposed lighting would be down-shielded and subdued to maintain dark sky conditions. Lighting may be used on roadways, walkways and at intersections. All structures would maintain a minimum 150-foot setback from the high water line of the drainage that runs through the resort from the west. This setback would also maintain a minimum 300-foot corridor for wildlife movement and to avoid encroaching on the drainage and riparian vegetation.

Tree and Vegetation Removal: The project is estimated to remove twelve trees associated with the proposed development. Tree coverage is approximately 75% within the development area and a recent sample shows approximately 32 trees per 10,000 square feet.

Project Assumptions:
The analysis of environmental effects in this Initial Study assumes that the project would comply with all applicable state, federal, and local codes and regulations including, but not limited to: the Sierra County General Plan; Sierra County Development Code; the California Building Code; the State Health and Safety Code; the Uniform Fire Code; and the State Public Resources Code.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the disturbance of up to 10 acres. Individual project components that would disturb greater than 1 acre would require coverage under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit. The applicant would be required to prepare and implement a Storm Water Pollution and Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in compliance with the requirements of the State Construction General Permit that will specify the use of appropriate best management practices (BMPs) for erosion control and spill prevention during construction, as well as permanent post-construction stormwater management measures.

Additionally, the proposed project includes several objectives that apply to construction and operation of the resort. These include taking advantage of the existing natural scenery; using green building materials and constructing energy-efficient buildings; maximizing walking trails; minimizing soil disturbance and grading; and protecting environmentally sensitive sites.

Public agencies whose approval is required (e.g., permits, entitlements, financing approval, or participation agreement):

- Sierra County – conditional use permit amendment, site plan review, grading permits, building permits, well construction permit (if applicable), and sewage disposal permits.
- State Water Board – Division of Drinking Water – domestic water supply permit (transient non-community water system).
- State Water Resources Control Board – Statewide General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water Associated with Construction Activity for projects with soil disturbance in excess of 1 acre (Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan or SWPPP).
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – permits could be required for portable generators and other equipment used during construction; and implementation of dust control plan BMP's under District Rule 226 for site disturbance in excess of one acre.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

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

☐	Aesthetics	☐	Agriculture and Forestry Resources	☐	Air Quality
☐	Biological Resources	☐	Cultural Resources	☐	Geology/Soils
☐	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐	Hazards& Hazardous Materials	☐	Hydrology/Water Quality
☐	Land Use/Planning	☐	Mineral Resources	☐	Noise
☐	Population / Housing	☐	Public Services	☐	Recreation
☐	Transportation/Traffic	☐	Utilities / Service Systems	☐	Mandatory Findings of Significance
				☒	None with Mitigation

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

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

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

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

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed fn 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: s/ Brandon W. Pangman Date: April 9, 2018

Printed Name: Brandon W. Pangman For: Sierra County

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

I. AESTHETICS – 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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

The 118-acre proposed project site is located at an elevation of approximately 5,100 feet in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range along Highway 49, (see *Figures 1* and *2)*. SR 49 is designated as a State Scenic Highway from the Yuba County Line to the Yuba Pass Summit. The project site is approximately 6.7 miles southwest of the Yuba pass, falling within the State Scenic Highway designation. The project site also falls within a County-designated Scenic Corridor overlay zone (ref., Sierra County Code Section 15.12.280), which implements the Sierra County General Plan's designation of this corridor as a Special Treatment Area—Scenic Corridor.

The main economics of the region are tourism and logging. The project site is located in the Tahoe National Forest. The aesthetic character of the region near the project site is the bottom of a steep canyon that is heavily forested on both sides of the State Highway and scenic corridor. A large cliff with a rocky face runs along the west side of Highway 49 and the Yuba River runs along the east/south side of the Highway.

The Current residence and other development features on the project site are not visible from the Highway; only the driveway and a small sign can be seen, although the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone runs essentially from ridgetop to ridgetop.

Impacts

a. **Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated.**

Figure 16-1 of the Sierra County General Plan designates the project site within the Scenic Corridor Special Treatment Area. SR 49 is approximately 500 feet from the nearest proposed development on the project site. The Sierra County Zoning Code requires a Site Plan Review for all building and non-exempt grading in the Scenic Corridor overlay zone.

The proposed project will include an additional seven buildings to the site with an added 8,904 SF and will remove approximately twelve trees in the area. New grading is

planned for the proposed Staff Housing unit.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures 1.1 would reduce any potentially significant impacts to scenic vistas within this visually sensitive area to a Less Than Significant level.

b. **Less Than Significant Impact**. The project proposes to remove twelve trees in a 118 acre parcel with tree coverage of approximately 32 trees per 10,00 SF.

c. **Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated**. The proposed project would construct buildings within the mixed conifer forest in an elevated plateau above SR 49.

The proposed buildings would be completely screened from view along SR 49 by topography and trees and would be visually consistent with the existing scenic vista experienced by travelling north or southbound on SR 49. The proposed disturbance area is less than 10% of the total project property; the majority of the development would occur along/near the existing development within the project site. The proposed project would minimize the number of trees removed in order to minimize the resort project's impact on its rural and natural aesthetic. Implementation of MM 1.1. would ensure that grading and tree removal on site is limited to what is necessary for construction and fire safety and would preserve the existing visual character associated with the natural setting of the site.

d. **Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated.** The proposed project would include new lighting on outdoor paths and along building perimeters. While the addition of new buildings would increase nighttime lighting on the site, implementation of mitigation measure **MM 1.2** would require that all new lighting associated with the project be shielded and directed toward the buildings and pathways within the resort and be directed downward to preserve the existing dark sky condition and rural character of the area. The proposed new buildings would not use reflective surfaces other than windows and would not otherwise create new sources of glare. Implementation of **MM 1.2** would ensure that the project would result in less-than-significant impacts associated with adverse effects to views in the area resulting from new lighting or glare.

Mitigation Measures

MM 1.1 (Aesthetics)

Construction on the project site shall comply with the following provisions:

- Grading shall be limited to that necessary for construction of the new structures, infrastructure and for fire protection.
- Tree removal on the project site shall be limited to that necessary for fire protection, building construction, and to remove dead or dying trees or those that pose a safety hazard.
- All proposed Structures shall meet the visual aesthetic requirements as outlined in the Sierra County Code.

MM 1.2 (Aesthetics)

All lighting shall be of low intensity and shielded and directed downward to maintain dark sky conditions and to avoid transient lighting of off-site areas.

II. AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES –	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The proposed project site is within a General Forest (GF) zone district. As described under 15.12.170 of the Sierra County Zoning Ordinance, the GF zone district was created to preserve the natural environmental and to ensure the long-term maintenance of natural resources. 15.12.170(c) provides a list of acceptable conditional uses which includes, but is not limited to: public parks and recreation uses, reservoir for water storage, camping and picnic areas, guest ranches, summer home tracts, mobile home parks, travel trailer parks, recreational trailer parks, airports, and other uses similar to those enumerated and consistent with the purpose and intent of the open space and conservation element of the General Plan and compatible with the purpose and intent of the GF zone.

Impacts

a. **No Impact**. The project site does not contain any of the Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) designations

b. **No Impact**. The project site is not nor does it have any portion that falls within an agricultural zoning or Williamson Act Contract.

c.-e. **Less Than Significant Impact.** The project site is currently zoned GF, which allows for forestry related uses and management of forest resources. The proposed project does not develop outside of the 10 acre area that is already being utilized. The proposed project will only have a maximum of 13,116 SF of facility Square footage, falling under the 1% referenced in General Plan Page 1-74 (13,116 SF proposed divided by 5,140,080 SF total equals .2%building coverage). The site will retain the ability for Timer harvesting and management and results in a less than significant impact associated with forest or timber land.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

III. AIR QUALITY – *Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.* 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) 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 (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) has reviewed the Early Consultation/Project Review for the Big Springs Retreat Center at 32613 Hwy. 49 (APN 008-110-022). Because of the relatively small scale of the project, it is anticipated that impacts to air resources will likely be less than significant.

The site is not mapped as having ultramafic rock, so the Airborne Toxic Control Measures for Naturally Occurring Asbestos would not apply unless ultramafic rock is discovered on the site,

such as during construction (in which case the NSAQMD must be notified no later than the following business day). A Dust Control Plan would be required during construction, pursuant to NSAQMD Rule 226: Dust Control.

Impacts

a.-e. **Less than Significant Impact**. Because of the relatively small scale of the project, it is anticipated that impacts to air resources will likely be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES – 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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Project Setting & Background Study Findings

The County of Sierra (Lead Agency or "County") hired a private consulting firm, Dudek, which performed a biological resources assessment of the proposed Big Springs Meditation Resort Project. (A copy of the complete report, dated January 19, 2018 is on file with the Sierra County Planning Department and available upon request. This section of the Initial Study is largely extracted from that report.)

1 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The study area is on private land in unincorporated Sierra County, California, approximately 1.9 miles northeast of the town of Sierra City. The study area is located in Section 15, Township 20 North, Range 12 East of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) "Haypress Valley, California" 7.5-minute quadrangle (see report, Figure 1). The approximate center of the site corresponds to 39.5985 north latitude and -120.6113 west longitude.

1.1 Topography

The study area currently supports a private residence, gravel drives and parking pads, a landscaped man-made pond and garden areas, and undeveloped dirt trails. The remainder of the site is largely undisturbed forest situated on a south-facing slope. The site varies in elevation from approximately 5,120 feet above mean sea level (MSL) to about 6,000 feet above MSL, and generally drains south toward the North Yuba River.

1.2 Hydrology

Hydrology at the study area is influenced by Big Spring, a natural spring that occurs upslope from the private residence and the man-made pond. Water for the pond and the gardens is diverted from Big Spring. Water exiting from the man-made pond is controlled by wooden flash boards at the southern end of the pond at which point the water drains downhill to a roadside swale and eventually to the North Yuba River south of the study area. Water from the spring also feeds several intermittent to perennial drainages that drain downhill from the spring source to the North Yuba River. These drainages cross through the study area from north to south.

1.3 Soils

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA 2017), three soil types are mapped within the study area: Riverwash; Lorack-Smokey-Cryumbrepts, wet complex, 2% to 30% slopes; and Tinker-Rock outcrop, metamorphic-Cryumbrepts, wet complex, 30% to 50% slopes (USDA 2017; Figure 2). Lorack-Smokey-Cryumbrepts complex soils are generally well drained soils derived from igneous, metamorphic, sedimentary, and metasedimentary rocks. Cryumbrepts inclusions are generally wet, poorly drained soils derived from alluvium. Tinker soils are well-drained soils containing exposed rock outcrops. Riverwash soils are considered hydric (USDA 2016).

2 METHODOLOGY

Data regarding biological and potentially jurisdictional resources present within the study area were obtained through a review of pertinent literature and resource databases and field reconnaissance; both are described in detail below.

Although several soil types contain rock outcrop components, the study area does not contain many rock outcrops. Most of the study area is gently sloping with topsoil layers influenced by duff from on-site pine and fir trees.

2.1 Special-Status Species Potential for Occurrence

For the purposes of this review, special-status biological resources are wildlife, plant, or habitat type that meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Species listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA)
- Species considered as candidates for list as threatened or endangered under ESA or CESA
- Species identified by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as California Species of Special Concern
- Animals fully protected in California under the California Fish and Game Code
- Plants with a California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) of 1 (plants considered by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) to be rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere) or CRPR 2 (plants considered rare, threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere)
- Natural communities with a State or Global Ranking of 3 or less, meaning they are threatened or endangered or of limited distribution in California

Special-status biological resources present or potentially present on site were identified through a literature search using the following sources: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) IPaC Trust Resource Report (USFWS 2017), CDFW's special animals list (CDFW 2017a), California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) (CDFW 2017b), and the CNPS online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants (CNPS 2017). Historical aerial photography was used to identify areas of the site that could contain potentially jurisdictional waters of the United States or waters of the state.

A CNDDB and CNPS records search was conducted for the Haypress Valley, California, USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle and the surrounding eight quadrangles. Results of the CNDDB search within 5 miles of the study area were then overlain on aerial imagery to assess proximity of documented occurrences to the study area (see report, Figure 3). Only CRPR 1 and 2 plant species were included in the CNPS search.

Following review of these resources, Dudek determined the potential for each of the identified special-status species to occur within the site based on an assessment (as a result of the field visit discussed below) of on-site vegetation communities and available land cover types, soils, and elevation preferences, as well as the known geographic range of each species (see report, Attachment 1). For example, species were not expected to occur if requisite soil types were absent or when the site was clearly outside of the known elevation or geographic range of the species.

2.2 Field Reconnaissance

Dudek biologist Laura Burris conducted a biological reconnaissance survey of the study area on December 14, 2017. The survey involved walking the entire study area along meandering transects with particular focus on areas that may provide suitable habitat for special-status plant and animal species. Other objectives of the survey included characterizing and mapping vegetation communities and other land cover types encountered, and identifying and mapping potentially jurisdictional wetlands or waters of the United States. Representative site photographs are presented in the report, Attachment 2.

2.3 Vegetation Community and Land Cover Mapping

An aerial photograph with an overlay of the property boundary, and surrounding buffer was utilized to map the vegetation communities. Natural vegetation community nomenclature follows the *Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition* (Sawyer et. al. 2009) and the California Wildlife Habitat Relationship System (CDFW 2016, originally published by Mayer and Laudenslayer in 1988).

2.4 Flora

Plant species encountered during the field survey that were able to be identified were recorded directly into a field notebook. Because the survey was conducted in November, outside the growing season for most plant species, the majority of herbaceous plants were desiccated or otherwise damaged by rain and snow. Deciduous shrubs had lost all leaves and only some were identifiable to species. Common and scientific names for plant species follow nomenclature described in *The Jepson Manual: Vascular Plants of California* (Baldwin et al. 2012). A list of plant species observed on the site is presented in Attachment 3.

2.5 Fauna

Wildlife species detected during the field survey by sight, calls, tracks, scat, or other sign were recorded directly into a field notebook. The site was scanned with and without binoculars to aid in the identification of wildlife. In addition to species actually detected during the surveys, expected wildlife use of the site was determined by known habitat preferences of local species and knowledge of their relative distributions in the area.

2.6 Wetlands and Waters

Dudek performed a reconnaissance-level wetland assessment within the study area, reviewed current and historical aerial photography, reviewed available topographic mapping, and then identified potentially jurisdictional or protected wetland and water features based on aerial

signatures and field observations. Potentially jurisdictional features are based on criteria provided by the following agencies and regulations:

- Waters of the United States, including wetlands, under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) pursuant to Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA)

- Wetlands under the jurisdiction of the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA and the Porter-Cologne Act

- Wetlands under the jurisdiction of CDFW, pursuant to Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code

- Streams and wetlands protected by the Sierra County Code Section 15.12.060 and General Plan Policies 8-31 and 13-1 that mandates setbacks for streams and wetlands as part of development

3 RESULTS

The quantification of biological resources described below pertains to habitats and species present within the proposed development area only. No areas beyond the study area are included in this analysis since these areas were not evaluated as part of the assessment. Representative photographs of the study area are depicted in the report, Attachment 2.

3.1 Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Types

The majority of the study area consists of mixed conifer habitat dominated by white fir (*Abies concolor*). Developed and ornamental land cover types are also present within the study area. These vegetation communities and land cover types are area described in detail below.

***Abies concolor* forest alliance (white fir forest)**. White fir was dominant in the tree canopy with some ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) interspersed. The canopy can be intermittent to continuous, shrubs can be infrequent or common, and the herbaceous layer can be sparse or abundant. This vegetation community typically occurs on raised stream benches, terraces, slopes and ridges. Parent materials and soils are highly variable (Sawyer et. al. 2009).

Dominant species observed within this community in the study area included white fir, red fir (*Abies magnifica*), Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, and sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*). Common shrubs observed during the survey included bitter cherry (*Prunus emarginata*) and pinemat manzanita (*Arctostaphylos nevadensis*).

Developed. As previously noted, the study area contains a developed lodge and associated gravel driveways, barn, outdoor kitchen and eating area, and ornamental landscaping. The areas on the property in which the proposed buildings would occur are currently used as additional event parking and are graded. Ornamental landscaping surrounds the man-made pond and lodge and intergrades with the natural forest. A dirt trail system meanders throughout the study area

connecting the different developed areas and the natural vegetation on the hillside north of the lodge.

3.2 Aquatic Features and Potentially Jurisdictional Wetlands and Waters

Pursuant to the federal CWA, ACOE- and RWQCB-jurisdictional areas include those supporting all three wetlands criteria described in the ACOE manual: hydric soils, hydrology, and hydrophytic vegetation. Areas regulated by the RWQCB are generally coincident with the ACOE, but may also include isolated features that have evidence of surface water inundation pursuant to the state Porter-Cologne Act. These areas generally support at least one of the three ACOE wetlands indicators but are considered isolated through the lack of surface water hydrology/connectivity downstream. The extent of CDFW-regulated areas typically include areas supporting a predominance of hydrophytic vegetation (i.e., 50% cover or greater) where associated with a stream channel.

Sierra County Code Section 15.12.060 mandates the following setbacks from streams and wetlands:

- Lake, Reservoir, and Pond Setback Required: In all unincorporated portions of Sierra County, buildings and structures (other than those exceptions listed below in Section 15.12.060[e](2)) shall be setback a minimum of 150 feet from the high water line of any lake or pond, or from the design high water elevation of any reservoir.

- Wetland and Swale Setback Required: In areas of unincorporated Sierra County outside of Community Areas, buildings and structures shall be setback 50 feet from any wetland or swale.

- Stream Setback Required: In areas of unincorporated Sierra County outside of Community Areas, buildings and structures shall be:

  - Setback from the high water line of a perennial stream by a minimum of 150 feet.

  - Setback from the high water line of an intermittent stream by a minimum of 50 feet.

  - Setback from the high water line of an agricultural conveyance system by a minimum of 50 feet.

Aquatic features within the site include Big Spring, an intermittent drainage, several ephemeral drainages, and a constructed pond. The pond was full at the time of the survey and water was actively spilling through the spillway at the southern edge of the pond.

A formal wetland delineation conducted pursuant to ACOE protocols has not been completed for the site. However, based on the site assessment, Big Springs, the perennial stream fed by Big Springs, one intermittent drainage fed by a diversion from Big Springs, several ephemeral drainages, and the man-made pond are all potentially jurisdictional features (see report, Figure 4). These features are discussed further below.

Big Spring. Big Spring is located north and upslope of the study area. The feature originates from the hillside in a steady flow that feeds its primary perennial drainage channel. Water from the

spring has been manually diverted into the study area and feeds the man-made pond, landscaping, and other uses at the project site. This feature is fed by groundwater, and water from the spring eventually connects to the North Yuba River south and west of the study area via the perennial drainage.

Perennial drainage. One perennial drainage is located at the southwestern edge of the study area and conveys water from Big Spring. This channel has a defined bed and bank at the portion where it is closest to the spring and then fans into several smaller channels as it runs downslope. The water eventually drains to a waterfall along Highway 49, where it travels under the roadway to North Yuba River.

Intermittent drainage. Several drainages in the study area appear to carry water intermittently, such as during rain storms and to convey snow melt. These channels convey water to the pond thence to a roadside drainage southeast of the study area that eventually drains to the North Yuba River.

Ephemeral drainage. Several ephemeral drainages are located within the study area and appear to result from snowmelt and rainwater runoff. These drainages are mostly topographic features found in the landscaped portions of the study area.

Pond. The pond on site is a constructed water feature that holds water on a year-round basis. It is filled by a man-made diversion of water from Big Spring, north and upslope of the study area. The pond is approximately 14 feet in depth at its deepest point, contains landscaping and some natural vegetation along the margins, and water levels are controlled by a wooden flash-board outlet structure at the southern end of the feature.

3.3 Plants and Wildlife

Twenty-three species of vascular plants were recorded during the site survey (see report, ttachment 3), most of which are native to California. Non-native, introduced species that were observed were generally associated with the landscaped environs around the man-made pond and structures. The site evaluation was conducted after the growing season and herbaceous vegetation was extremely mature and desiccated or frozen. More plants would be identifiable during the growing season.

One wildlife species or its sign was observed during the field survey: common raven (*Corvus corax*). The site is rural and is surrounded by mostly undisturbed land; small mammals, birds, and reptiles likely use the area frequently for foraging and cover and would generally be more readily observed during the spring and summer months.

3.4 Special-Status Plants

Results of the CNDDB and CNPS searches revealed 30 special-status plant species that are known to occur in the region of the site and have some potential to occur in the vicinity of the study area (see Figure 1 on p. 9). Of these, 20 species were removed from consideration due to lack of suitable habitat, or marginal quality or small quantity of habitat, or the site was out of the species known range. These species are not discussed further in this report.

The 10 remaining species have some potential to occur in the study area. These species include calloped moonwort (*Botrychium crenulatum*), Mingan moonwort (*Botrychium minganense*), western goblin (*Botrychium montanum*), Davy's sedge (*Carex davyi*), northern coralroot (*Corallorhiza trifida*), seep kobresia (*Kobresia myosuroides*), broad-nerved hump moss (*Meesia uliginosa*), tall alpine-aster (*Oreostemma elatum*), closed-throated beardtongue (*Penstemon personatus*), and alder buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*). These species are discussed in detail below.

Scalloped moonwort (*Botrychium crenulatum*). Scalloped moonwort is a perennial rhizomatous herb in the Ophioglossaceae family that is a CRPR 2B.2 plant, meaning it is fairly endangered in California. This species is typically associated with bogs and fens, lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, freshwater marshes and swamps, and upper montane coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 4,160 to 10,761 feet above MSL and typically blooms from June through September.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 11 miles east of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 96; CDFW 2017b). The seep and drainages within the study area provide potentially suitable habitat for this species.

Mingan moonwort (*Botrychium minganense*). Mingan moonwort is a perennial rhizomatous herb in the Ophioglossaceae family that has a CRPR of 2B.2, meaning it is fairly endangered in California. This species is typically associated with mesic habitat in bogs and fens, lower montane coniferous forest, edges of meadows and seeps, and upper montane coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 4,774 to 7,152 feet above MSL and typically blooms from July through September.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 9 miles southeast of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 75; CDFW 2017b). The seep and drainages provide potentially suitable habitat for this species.

Western goblin (*Botrychium montanum*). Western goblin is a perennial rhizomatous herb in the Ophioglossaceae family that has a CRPR of 2B.1, meaning it is seriously endangered in California. This species is typically associated with mesic habitat in lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, and upper montane coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 4,806 to 7,152 feet above MSL and typically blooms from July through September. The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 10.7 miles southeast of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 52; CDFW 2017b). The seep and drainages provide potentially suitable habitat for this species.

Davy's sedge (*Carex davyi*). Davy's sedge is a perennial rhizomatous herb in the Cyperaceae family that has a CRPR of 1B.3, meaning it is rare or endangered in California and elsewhere, but not very endangered in California. This species is associated with subalpine coniferous forest and upper montane coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 4,920 to 10,500 feet above MSL and typically blooms from May through August.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 9 miles south of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 18; CDFW 2017b). The margins of the pond provide potentially suitable habitat for this species.

Northern coralroot (*Corallorhiza trifida*). Northern coralroot is a perennial rhizomatous herb in the Orchidaceae family that has a CRPR of 2B.1, meaning it is seriously endangered in California (CNPS 2017). This species is associated with mesic habitat in lower montane coniferous forest and on the edges of meadows and seeps. It is found at elevations ranging from 4,490 to 5,725 feet above MSL and typically blooms in June and July.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 5.6 miles south of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 3; CDFW 2017b). The seep and drainages provide potentially suitable habitat for this species.

Seep kobresia (*Kobresia myosuroides*). Seep kobresia is a perennial rhizomatous herb in the Cyperaceae family that has a CRPR of 2B.2, meaning it is fairly endangered in California. This species is associated with mesic habitat in alpine boulder and rock fields, meadows and seeps with carbonate water and substrates, and subalpine coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 4,885 to 10,645 feet above MSL and typically blooms in August and sometimes in June.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 12 miles northeast of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 9; CDFW 2017b). The coniferous forest in the study rea provides potentially suitable habitat for this species.

Broad-nerved hump moss (*Meesia uliginosa*). Broad-nerved hump moss is a moss in the Meesiaceae family that has a CRPR of 2B.2, meaning it is fairly endangered in California. This species is typically associated with damp soils in bogs and fens, meadows and seeps, subalpine coniferous forest, and upper montane coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 3,965 to 9,200 feet above MSL and blooms in July and October.

The nearest documented occurrence of this species is located approximately 5.5 miles northwest of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 41; CDFW 2017b). The spring and drainages on site provide potentially suitable habitat for this species.

Tall alpine-aster (*Oreostemma elatum*). Tall alpine-aster is a perennial herb in the Asteraceae family with a CRPR of 1B.2, meaning it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. This species is typically associated with mesic habitat in bogs and fens, meadows and seeps, and upper montane coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 3,295 to 6,890 feet above MSL and blooms June through August.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 5.6 miles east of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 15; CDFW 2017b). The spring and drainages on site provide potentially suitable habitat for this species.

Closed-throated beardtongue (*Penstemon personatus*). Closed-throat beardtongue is a perennial herb in the Plantaginaceae family that has a CRPR of 1B.2, meaning it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. This species is typically associated with metavolcanic soils in chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest, and upper montane coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 3,494 to 6,955 feet above MSL and typically blooms from June through October.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 7.2 miles southwest of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 23; CDFW 2017b). The coniferous forest provides potentially suitable habitat for this species; however, it appears to prefer openings in forest canopy, which is not present on site.

Alder buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*). Alder buckthorn is a perennial deciduous shrub in the Rhamnaceae family that has a CRPR of 2B.2, meaning it is fairly endangered in California. This species is typically associated with lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, riparian scrub, and upper montane coniferous forest (CNPS 2017). It is found at elevations ranging from 4,495 to 6,988 feet above MSL and typically blooms from May through July.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species is located approximately 11 miles northwest of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 23; CDFW 2017b). The seep and drainages on site provide potentially suitable habitat for this species.

3.5 Special-Status Wildlife

Results of the CNDDB and USFWS searches revealed 28 species considered special status by either the CDFW or the USFWS (Attachment 1). Of these, 17 were removed from consideration due to lack of suitable habitat within or adjacent to the study area, or the study area was outside of the known species range. Species removed from consideration are not discussed further in this document.

Special-status species with some potential to occur in the study area include southern long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum sigillatum*), Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (*Rana sierrae*), northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), fisher (*Pekania pennanti*, west coast distinct population segment (DPS)), Sierra Nevada red fox (*Vulpes vulpes necator*), Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*), fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*), long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*), and Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*). The following provides an in-depth discussion of these species and their potential to occur within the study area.

Southern long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum sigillatum*). Southern long-toed salamander is a state Species of Special Concern. This species occurs in a diverse range of habitats, including coniferous and alpine forests and marshlands. They use springs, ponds, small lakes, slow-moving streams, and marshlands for breeding and larval development (Anderson 1967, 1968). Migration of adults to breeding ponds occurs during the spring snowmelt. Southern long-toed salamander populations in the Sierra Nevada generally have one- or two-season larval periods depending on the freeze and thaw of breeding habitat. In general, mating and egg deposition occurs from late May to late June and larval development occurs in the summer. Larvae will spend the winter beneath ice and metamorphose in August or September of their second year if they do not complete transformation during their first year (Anderson 1967). Adults will use large, rotting logs for cover when not in aquatic habitat.

The nearest documented occurrence for this species was observed in 2015 approximately 4.6 miles north of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 310; CDFW 2017b). Although somewhat unlikely to occur on site due to existing anthropogenic influences, there is some potential that this species may use the pond for breeding habitat. The man-made pond on site provides marginally suitable habitat for this species.

Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (*Rana sierrae*). The Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog is a state listed Threatened, federally listed Endangered, and Forest Service Sensitive species. The Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog occurs in the Sierra Nevada from Plumas County to Fresno County. This species was once known as the mountain yellow-legged frog, with a range including the Sierra Nevada and mountains in Southern California, but is now recognized as a separate species. It is a medium-sized frog that is generally a mix of brown and yellow on the back but can also have grey, red, or greenish-brown spots or patches. The underside of their back legs and belly are yellow or light orange. Once the most abundant frog in the Sierra Nevada, 94% of historical populations of yellow-legged frog are now extirpated (CDFG 2011), primarily due to pesticides, disease, and predation by nonnative trout stocked in high elevation lakes that historically did not contain fish (Davidson and Knapp 2007).

Habitat for this species includes streams, lakes, ponds, marshes, and wet meadow habitats in montane riparian, lodgepole pine, subalpine conifer, and wet meadow habitats at high elevations, typically ranging from about 4,500 to 12,000 feet above MSL, but can occur as low as about 3,500 feet above MSL in the northern portions of their range. This species is usually found close to water, typically within a couple of meters. During the winter, adults appear to hibernate beneath ice-covered streams, lakes, and ponds (that have sufficient water depth below the ice), emerging shortly after snowmelt. Reproduction occurs when lakes, ponds, and streams are free of ice, generally from June to August. Eggs are deposited in shallow water and attached to gravel or submerged rocks. Larvae usually overwinter at all localities and may not reach metamorphosis for up to 3 or 4 years (Zeiner et al. 1988; 81 FR 59046–59119).

There are numerous occurrences of this species within 5 miles of the study area, including a historical sighting from the 1930s approximately 0.5 miles west of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 81; CDFW 2017b). The nearest recent documented occurrence was documented in 2010 approximately 1.3 miles north of the study area near Sardine Lake (CNDDB occurrence number 694; CDFW 2017b). Critical habitat for Sierra yellow-legged frog was proposed in 2013, and the final rule was released in August 2016. Critical habitat for this species is located approximately 0.6 miles northwest of the study area (critical habitat unit in 81 FR 59046–59119). The man-made pond on site provides marginally suitable habitat for this species.

Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*). Northern goshawk (a California Species of Special Concern) requires mature and old growth conifer forests though some occupy aspen or willow stands in areas that are more open. They nest in either coniferous, deciduous, or mixed-pine forests, depending on availability. Nest trees are usually one of the largest trees in the nest area; most territories contain several alternative nest trees (Squires and Reynolds 1997). Each pair of nesting goshawks requires roughly 6,000 acres of forest to feed and rear its young.

The nearest documented occurrence for northern goshawk was observed in 1982 approximately 5.6 miles east of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 273; CDFW 2017b). The coniferous forest in the study area provides potentially suitable habitat for this species; however, large trees suitable for nesting do not occur within the study area. Thus, while this species may hunt within the study area, it is unlikely they will nest there.

California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*). High-quality nesting and roosting habitat consists of multilayered forest stands dominated by large diameter trees (greater than 24 inches in

diameter), with forest canopy cover greater than 70%, and numerous large snags and large downed logs. Spotted owls primarily prey on flying squirrels and woodrats. Within the range of the California spotted owl, flying squirrels are often associated with moist large conifer stands, and woodrats are often associated with forests that contain an oak and shrub component (Verner et al. 1992).

There are numerous documented activity centers within 10 miles of the study area (CDFW 2017). The coniferous forest on site provides potentially suitable habitat for this species; however, the understory of the forest within the proposed area of disturbance does not contain a multilayered canopy. Thus, this species is not expected to use the study area for nesting. The study area could be used for foraging by this species.

Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*). The west coast DPS of fisher is proposed for state listing as Threatened and proposed for federal listing as Threatened; it is currently a state Species of Special Concern and a Forest Service Sensitive species. Fishers are largely nocturnal, carnivorous residents of the Sierra Nevada coniferous forest and riparian habitats with high percent canopy closure (Schempf and White 1974). This species uses a variety of cavities in trees, snags, or logs, as well as shelters provided by brush piles or rocky areas.

The nearest documented occurrence of this species was observed in 1976 approximately 0.8 miles northwest of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 447; CDFW 2017b). The coniferous forest on site provides potentially suitable habitat for this species. Additionally, piles of logs and woody debris on site may provide suitable den habitat for fisher.

Sierra Nevada red fox (*Vulpes vulpes necator*). The Sierra Nevada red fox is a candidate for federal listing and is state-listed as Threatened. Red foxes generally weigh 2 to 4 kilograms (4.5 to 9 pounds), have a narrow pointed muzzle, long and thin legs, and a thick bushy tail with a white tip. Despite their name, red foxes can have black, tawny yellow, or pale gray fur, although the reddish-orange pelt is generally the most common. This species used to range throughout the Sierra Nevada and parts of the Cascades but is now largely restricted to a few areas in California and Oregon (USFWS 2015). They typically live in the open conifer woodlands and mountain meadows near treeline.

The nearest documented occurrence of this species was documented in 1983 approximately 5.5 miles north of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 115; CDFW 2017b). Although there may be suitable habitat for this species within the project area, it is unlikely that this species occurs in this area due to the low numbers remaining in the historic range and the lack of recent sightings in the project vicinity (USFWS 2015).

Bat species. Several special-status species of bats have potential to roost or forage in the study area, including Townsend's big-eared bat, silver-haired bat, long-eared myotis, fringed myotis, long-legged myotis, and Yuma myotis. Bat species may use human structures, such as buildings and bridges, or trees and snags for roosting (Weller and Zabel 2001). A maternal roosting colony of Townsend's big-eared bat was documented in 2006 in the town of Sierra City, approximately 1.7 miles southwest of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 155; CDFW 2017b). Silverhaired bat has been documented approximately 1.7 miles southeast of the study area (CNDDB occurrence number 78; CDFW 2017b). Long-eared myotis and Yuma myotis have both been documented

approximately 7.7 miles west of the study area (CNDDB occurrence numbers 27 and 74, respectively; CDFW 2017b).

There is high potential for bat species to forage over the pond on site. Tree-roosting bats such as silver-haired bat and myotis species may use mature trees or snags with exfoliating bark within the study area for maternal and day roosts.

3.6 Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Linkages

Wildlife corridors are linear features that connect large patches of natural open space and provide avenues for the movement (migration, foraging events, juvenile dispersal, etc.) of animals and can include linear habitat features such as riparian areas and streams as well as man-made structures such as highway underpasses, dirt roads, and culverts. Habitat linkages generally consist of smaller natural habitat patches that serve to join larger blocks of habitat and help reduce the adverse effects of habitat fragmentation; they may be continuous habitat or discrete habitat islands that function as stepping stones for wildlife dispersal.

Portions of the site, in particular areas along the stream channels and drainages, provide appropriate habitat characteristics, such as cover and water, to serve as local movement corridors by resident wildlife. However, no portion of the study area provides a critical linkage between fragmented habitats because it is relatively undisturbed and surrounded by U.S. Forest Service land.

Impacts

a **Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.**

The proposed project would require removal of approximately 12 conifer trees in the study area. Removal of these trees would not constitute a significant impact because the trees are not themselves protected or considered of special status by resource agencies and because substantial conifer forest habitat would remain on the site. Removal of individual trees could result in impacts to nesting birds, as discussed below. No sensitive vegetation communities, as defined by CDFW, are present in the study area.

Special Status Plants. No special-status plants were observed during the field survey; however, the site survey was conducted outside the time when special-status plant species are evident and identifiable. Potentially suitable habitat for 10 special-status plant species occurs within the study area. However, with implementation of wetland and stream setbacks established by the County (and respected in the project design), impacts on special-status plants are not anticipated.

Special Status Wildlife. No special-status animals were detected during the site survey. However, the survey was conducted during a time of year that is outside the breeding and nesting season of special-status species potentially occurring on the site. Five wildlife groups or species in particular were identified and addressed as part of the biological resources assessment of the project site: *nesting birds and raptors; bat species; Southern Long-Toed Slamander; Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged From; and Fisher.*

Nesting birds and raptors. Nesting and migratory birds are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Sections 3503 and 3503.5 of the California Fish and Game Code, which specifically protect raptors. The site has suitable nesting habitat for several common raptor species found in California, such as Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), and common passerine species, such as mountain chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*). Northern goshawk (California Species of Special Concern) and California spotted owl (California Species of Special Concern) both have known occurrences within the vicinity of the proposed project; however, both are secretive species and tend to avoid areas with increased levels of human disturbance.

Although several raptor and passerine species have the potential to nest, forage, and hunt on and adjacent to the site, the relatively large amount of undisturbed habitat surrounding the project area makes it unlikely that project activities would discourage avian species from continuing to use the area for nesting, foraging, or hunting.

To prevent impacts to raptors and nesting birds during the nesting season (typically February 1– September 1) as a result of project construction, the consulting biologist recommended avoiding removal of any potential nest habitat (i.e., suitable nest trees and shrub) during the nesting season. If this is not possible, a qualified biologist should conduct a nesting bird survey no more than 2 weeks prior to construction to determine if any native birds are nesting on or near the site (including a 150-foot buffer for raptors). This will be made a mitigation measure and condition of approval. If any active nests are observed during surveys, a suitable avoidance buffer from the nests will be determined and flagged by the qualified biologist based on species, location, and planned construction activity. These nests would be avoided until the chicks have fledged and the nests are no longer active.

Bat species. In addition to the potential for sensitive nesting bird species, snags and trees with exfoliating bark provide potentially suitable roost habitat for sensitive tree-roosting bat species. The consulting biologist also recommended that a qualified biologist conduct a survey of all trees anticipated to be removed as a result of project construction to determine if such trees are being used by bats as daytime roost habitat. This, too, will be made a mitigation measure and condition of approval. If special-status bats are determined to be roosting within a tree to be removed, bat impact avoidance measures can include removal of the tree at dusk after the bat(s) have left the tree for nocturnal foraging or removal of the tree during the time of year (fall/winter) when the bat(s) has migrated from the site. Since construction will be conducted during daylight hours, no impacts to bat foraging habitat are anticipated.

Southern Long-Toed Salamander. Although unlikely, this species could use the man-made pond for breeding and the surrounding upland areas for foraging and cover. To avoid potential impacts to southern long-toed salamander, the consulting biologist recommended that pre-construction surveys for salamanders within suitable upland refugia, such as large, rotting logs, be performed by a qualified biologist. This will be made a mitigation measure and condition of approval. If the species is observed, all suitable refugia for this species should be flagged for avoidance. If complete avoidance

is not feasible, consultation with CDFW will occur to identify appropriate measures to be taken to further avoid and/or minimize impacts from construction disturbance.

Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog. Although unlikely, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog could be present in the man-made pond. Because the project would not result in impacts to the pond (and all proposed development would maintain a minimum 150 ft. setback), no impacts to this species are anticipated to occur, and no additional mitigation is necessary.

Fisher. Log piles provide potentially suitable den habitat for this species on site; however, none of these features occur within the proposed area of development and, therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

In summary, with implementation of Mitigation Measures **BIO-4.1, BIO-4.2,** and **BIO-4.3** below, the proposed project will not have a potentially 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.

b, c **Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.**

The project site contains a number of water features and potential wetlands that are protected by federal, state, and local laws and regulations; but through project design features and implementation of the County's water resource setbacks ordinance, it is not anticipated that the proposed project would result in a potentially significant impact to these resources.

The study area includes a man-made pond, several drainages, and Big Spring, a naturally occurring spring that feeds a perennial drainage tributary to the North Yuba River. The pond contained water at the time of the site survey and appears to hold water year-round. Water from the pond drains into an intermittent drainage that eventually drains into the North Yuba River. All wetland and water features in the study area are potentially under the joint regulatory jurisdiction of the ACOE, RWQCB, and CDFW. Proposed development design avoids all potentially jurisdictional features in accordance with wetland and stream setbacks put forth by Sierra County. Thus, impacts to these features are not anticipated as part of the proposed project.

While it is not proposed or intended as part of this proposed project, *if* any impacts to potential jurisdictional features would occur, a formal delineation of wetlands and waters would need to be performed to delineate exact boundaries of jurisdictional features. Impacts to these features will require authorization from the resource agencies listed above in the form of wetland permits (e.g., 404 Nationwide Permit, 401 Water Quality Certification, and 1602 Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement). Compensatory mitigation required by the terms and conditions of agency approvals would provide for no net loss of jurisdictional habitats.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure **BIO-4.4** below, the proposed project will not have a potentially substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; or on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.

d **Less Than Signficant Impact.**

As mentioned above, portions of the site, in particular areas along the stream channels and drainages, provide appropriate habitat characteristics, such as cover and water, to serve as local movement corridors by resident wildlife. However, no portion of the study area provides a critical linkage between fragmented habitats because it is relatively undisturbed and surrounded by U.S. Forest Service land.

The proposed project will not interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

e, f **No Impact.**

The proposed project, as designed, adheres to all local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, including the County's stringent water resources setbacks and open space provisions, as well as County General Plan policies on the protection of plants and wildlife and areas of special biological concern. Neither does the proposed project in any way conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan; and therefore with respect to these issues the project as proposed will have no impact.

Mitigation Measures

BIO-4.1 (Special Status Raptor Species)

To prevent impacts to raptors and nesting birds during the nesting season (between February 1–September 1) as a result of project construction, the permittee shall avoid removal of any potential nest habitat (i.e., suitable nest trees and shrub) during the nesting season. If this is not possible, a qualified biologist shall be consulted, at the permittee's expense, to conduct a nesting bird survey no more than 2 weeks prior to construction to determine if any native birds are nesting on or near the site (including a 150-foot buffer for raptors). If any active nests are observed during surveys, a suitable avoidance buffer from the nests will be determined and flagged by the qualified biologist based on species, location, and planned construction activity. These nests shall be avoided until the chicks have fledged and the nests are no longer active. A report of the qualified biologist's findings and recommendations shall be provided in writing to the Sierra County Planning Department prior to construction activities related to this entitlement that are to occur between the dates of February 1 – September 1.

BIO-4.2 (Special Status Bat Species)

Prior to removal of any trees in conjunction with this project, permittee shall consult a qualified biologist, at permittee's expense, to conduct a survey of all trees anticipated to be removed as a result of project construction to determine if such trees are being used by bats as daytime roost habitat. If special-status bats are determined to be roosting within a tree to be removed, bat impact avoidance measures can include either: removal of the tree at dusk after the bat(s) have left the tree for nocturnal foraging; or removal of the tree during the time of year (fall/winter) when the bat(s) has migrated from the site; or other measures deemed appropriate by the biologist. A report of the qualified biologist's findings and recommendations shall be provided in writing to the Sierra County Planning Department prior to tree removal.

BIO-4.3 (Special Status Salamander Species)

Prior to construction or ground-disturbing activities in conjunction with this project in areas that were not previously disturbed, permittee shall consult a qualified biologist, at permittee's expense, to conduct a pre-construction survey for salamanders (specifically Southern Long-toed Salamander) within suitable upland refugia, such as large, rotting logs. If the species is observed, all suitable refugia for this species shall be flagged for avoidance. If complete avoidance is not feasible, consultation with CDFW shall occur to identify appropriate measures to be taken to further avoid and/or minimize impacts from construction disturbance. A report of the qualified biologist's findings and recommendations (and/or CDFW's recommendations) shall be provided in writing to the Sierra County Planning Department prior to new ground disturbing activities in these areas.

BIO-4.4 (Jurisdictional Waters & Wetlands)

If any impacts to potential jurisdictional water features will occur in conjunction with this project, a formal delineation of wetlands and waters shall be performed by a qualified consultant, at permittee's expense, to delineate exact boundaries of jurisdictional features. Impacts to these features will require authorization from the appropriate resource agencies (e.g., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [404 Nationwide Permit], California Regional Water Quality Control Board [401 Water Quality Certification], and/or California Department of Fish and Wildlife [1602 Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement]). Compensatory mitigation required by the terms and conditions of agency approvals may provide for no net loss of jurisdictional habitats, or other methods or conditions deemed appropriate by those agencies. (Note: Examples of potential mitigation may include purchasing mitigation credits from an approved mitigation bank, payment of an in-lieu fee, or creation of replacement habitat on site. Permit processing can take 6 to 9 months for minor impacts less than 0.5 acres in size.)

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES – 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 as defined in §15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

The Northeast Center of the California Historical Resources Information System states that no sites containing prehistoric resources have been recorded in the project area. However, based upon the the local topography, and regional history, the project is located in an area considered to be highly sensitive for prehistoric, protohistoric, and historic cultural resources. Nisenan populations used the local region for seasonal and/or permanent settlement, as well as for the gathering of plants, roots, seeds, domestic materials, and hunting seasonal game. Historically, Euro-Americans utilized the region for ranching, mining, timber, and transportation opportunities. Additionally, springs held great importance for native populations, both as a water source and for religious purposes.

No paleontological resources or site or designated or recognized unique geological features are known from the project site.

Impacts

a. **Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.** No known historical resources are known to occur on the project site. However, if any historical resources are found on the project site, applicant will refer to MM 5.1.

b. **Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.** No known archaeological resources are known to occur on the project site. However, if any archaeological resources are found on the project site, applicant will refer to MM 5.1.

c. **Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.** No known paleontological resources are known to occur on the project site. However, if any paleontological resources are found on the project site, applicant will refer to MM 5.1.

d. **Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated.** No known human remains are known to occur on the project site. However, if any human remains are found on the project site, applicant will refer to MM 5.1.

Mitigation Measures

MM 5.1 (Cultural Resources)

Construction on the project site shall implement the following requirements to avoid impacts to archaeological resources or human remains:

- If artifacts or unusual amounts of shell or bone or other items indicative of buried archaeological resources or human remains are encountered during earth-disturbance associated with the proposed project, the onsite contractor shall immediately notify the Sierra County Department of Planning and Building Inspection and all soil-disturbing work shall be halted until a qualified archaeologist completes a significance evaluation of the finds pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Any human remains unearthed shall be treated in accordance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and Public Resources Code Sections 5097.94, 5097.98 and 5097.99. The significance evaluation shall include specific measures for the appropriate management of the resources uncovered and shall be submitted to the Sierra County Department of Planning and Building Inspection. No further soil-disturbing work shall be conducted within 100 feet of any resource discovery until an appropriate management plan is developed by a qualified archaeologist for the protection of any significant resources identified. The significance evaluation shall be carried out in consultation with appropriate agencies, including the State Historic Preservation Office, as necessary.

VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS – Would the project:	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the	☐	☒	☐	☐

VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS – Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?				
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☒	☐	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Soils supporting the Sierran mixed conifer habitat are varied, derived primarily from Mesozoic granitic, Paleozoic sedimentary and volcanic rocks, and Cenozoic volcanic rocks. Serpentine soils, found primarily in the northern mixed conifer zone, support a number of endemic plants. Soils are deep to shallow. Fissures and cracks in granitic parent material often support forest growth, even where soil development is shallow.

General Plan Map 14-3 identifies the project site as an area with Soils Deposits susceptible to liquefaction or collapse and does not identify any fault lines running through the project site.

Impacts

a **Less than Significant Impact.** No Alquist-Priolo mapped earthquake fault zones occur within the project area and no known faults are identified by the General Plan within the project site. The proposed project is unlikely to result in substantial risk or adverse effects as a result of a seismic event. Project construction and grading and site preparation would be constructed in accordance with provisions of the California Building Code, CalFire guidelines and Sierra County Code, which include standards to ensure that structures are constructed to withstand anticipated seismic events and that building construction specifications are appropriate to site soil and geologic conditions.

b. **Less than Significant**. The proposed project would not result in grading beyond a disturbed area for a 720 SF guesthouse; all other structures are proposed to be constructed on an already existing disturbed parking area. This would result to less than significant disturbance to soils or erosion.

c. **Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated.**

The project site is identified by the General Plan as an area where Soils Deposits are susceptible to liquefaction or collapse. Mitigation Measure 6.1 would be implemented as outlined in table 14-3, ensuring the development would not produce a potential risk and result in less than significant risk of soil instability.

d. **Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated.**

Based on the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey, the proposed project is located primarily on soils classified as Lorack-Smokey-Cryumbrepts and Tinker-Rock outcrop, metamorphic-Cryumbrepts with slopes ranging from 2 to 50 percent slopes. These soils are classed as Hydrologic Soil Group B. Chapter 18 of the California Building Code classifies expansive soils that could create substantial risk to life or property. Mitigation Measure 6.1 would be implemented ensuring the development would not produce a potential risk and result in less than significant risk of soil expansiveness.

e. **Less than Significant Impact**

An On-site Soil Evaluation for the project site performed by Chalpin Environmental reported that two mantle test sites came back as adequate soil with average percolation to support the proposed septic system. Soils appear adequate to support the proposed septic and therefore, show less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure 6.1 (Geology and Soils) The following measure shall be implemented to reduce soil instability:

California Building Code 1803.2 shall be enforced, requiring Geotechnical investigations be required before any building permits are issued. Sierra County Code 12.04.100(8) will not be implemented; allowing development without a soils report if bearing pressure is less than 2000psf.

VII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS – 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Climate change, which involves significant changes in global climate patterns, has been associated with an increase in the average temperature of the atmosphere near the Earth's surface, or global warming. This warming has been attributed to an accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere. These GHGs trap heat in the atmosphere, which in turn heats the surface of the Earth. GHGs include carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), tetrafluoromethane, hexafluoroethane, sulfur hexafluoride, HFC-23 (fluoroform), HFC-134a (1, 1, 1, 2–tetrafluoroethane), and HFC-152a (difluoroethane). While CO2 is the most prevalent GHG, other GHGs have a higher "global warming potential" than CO2. To account for these differences, most GHG analyses convert all GHG emissions to CO2 equivalents (CO2e). The conversion process reflects the relative global warming potential of each individual GHG.

While the greenhouse effect is a naturally occurring process that aids in maintaining the Earth's climate, human activities, such as burning fossil fuels and clearing forests, generate additional GHG emissions which contribute to the greenhouse effect and result in increased average global temperatures. Further, GHGs may have long atmospheric lifetimes (for example, CO2 may remain in the atmosphere for decades or even centuries) ensuring that atmospheric concentrations of GHGs will remain elevated for decades. Increasing GHG concentrations in the atmosphere are primarily a result of emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, gas flaring, cement production, and land use changes. In California, the transportation sector is the largest emitter of GHGs, followed by electricity generation (California Energy Commission, 2006). The California Air Resource Board's (CARB) Emissions Inventory Report found the total statewide GHG emissions in 2009 were equivalent to 457 million tons of CO2 (CARB 2012). Compared with the emissions in 1990, this is a 5.5 percent increase.

Data indicate that global surface temperatures have increased 0.8°C (1.4°F) in the past century, and 0.6°C (1.1°F) in the past three decades. Temperatures are expected to continue to increase as a result of increasing concentrations of GHGs. The increased temperatures are anticipated to lead to modifications in the timing, amount, and form (rain vs. snow) of precipitation; changes in the timing and amount of runoff; deterioration of water quality; and elevated sea levels. In turn, these changes could be associated with increased flooding and other weather-related events, increased salinity levels in coastal groundwater basins, changes in water supply availability, changes in agricultural activities, changes in the range and diversity of wildlife and vegetation, and changes in conditions related to wildfires.

In 2006, the State of California enacted Assembly Bill (AB) 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act. AB 32 requires reducing statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. Meeting the AB 32 reduction targets will require an approximately 30 percent reduction compared with a "business as usual" scenario. The state's plan for meeting these reduction targets is outlined in the CARB Climate Change Scoping Plan (CARB 2008).

CARB's Scoping Plan fact sheet states "This plan calls for an ambitious but achievable reduction in California's carbon footprint – toward a clean energy future. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 1990

levels means cutting approximately 30% from business-as-usual emissions levels projected for 2020, or about 15% from today's levels."

The strategies in the AB 32 Scoping Plan most applicable to the proposed project are goals to increase the energy efficiency of buildings and appliances and to reduce emissions associated with transportation – both by encouraging use of alternative forms of transportation and by increasing vehicle fuel efficiency.

Impacts

a. & b. **Less Than Significant Impact**. Sierra County does not have established GHG emissions significance thresholds and does not employ a specific strategy for mitigation of GHG emissions. The project area is located within the jurisdiction of the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District(NSAQMD). NSAQMD has not established any significance thresholds and has no published guidance for evaluating the significance of GHG emissions. In the absence of local or regional GHG thresholds and GHG reduction plans, the California Air Pollution Control Officer's Association (CAPCOA) White Paper on CEQA and Climate Change s state: "If there are no established thresholds of significance, the significance of each project will have to be determined during the course of review. The responsible agency (e.g., the air district) will review each project referred by the lead agency."

The Sierra County Planning Department contacted the NSAQMD July 7, 2017 requesting agency comments for the proposed project. Samuel F. Longmire, MSES Air Pollution Control Specialist III for the NSAQMD responded on Aug 7, 2017 stating: *"The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) has reviewed the Early Consultation/Project Review for the Big Springs Retreat Center at 32613 Hwy. 49 (APN 008-110-022). Because of the relatively small scale of the project, it is anticipated that impacts to air resources will likely be less than significant."*

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

VIII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS – 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

No schools exist within 0.25 mile of the project site. The project site is not included on any list of hazardous materials sites (DTSC, 2017). There are no public use airports within 2 miles of the project site. There are no private airstrips in the vicinity of the project site.

The site falls within a State Responsibility Area (SRA) and Cal Fire places portions of the site into Moderate and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (Cal Fire, 2007). Wildland fire protection within SRAs is provided through a mutual aid agreement between Cal Fire and the U.S. Forest

Service (USFS). In addition, fire protection services are provided by the Sierra County Fire Protection District, which includes the Sierra City Fire District.

No formal emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan applies to the project area. Emergency access to the project site is provided by SR 49.

Impacts

a., b. **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would expand existing facilities, including lodges, cabins, pools, restaurant, and camping facilities, and would not result in routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials other than typical materials used for operations and maintenance of a resort facility, such as small quantities of cleaning agents, fuel, and paints. Construction activities would involve the use of common construction materials, such as paints and adhesives, small quantity petroleum products, and asphalt, which could contain hazardous substances. By complying with storage and use guidelines included on the packaging of such materials, the proposed project would not create significant hazards to the public. The project would not require storage or use of any large volumes of flammable and/or hazardous materials during construction. Storage and use of propane gas for use in resort operations would be in accordance with applicable standards and regulations. Impacts from transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be less than significant.

c. **No Impact.** There is no school with a quarter-mile of the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact associated with hazardous substances in close proximity to a school.

d. **No Impact.** The proposed project is not within an area that is included on the list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code 65962.5. Thus, the project would have no impact.

e **No Impact.** There is no airport or airport land use plan within two miles of the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact associated with safety hazards for people residing or working in the project area.

f. **No Impact.** No private airstrip is located in the vicinity of the proposed project. No impacts associated with proximity to a private airport would result from implementation of the proposed project.

g. **No Impact.** No formal emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan applies to the project area. The proposed project would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Internal roadways would provide adequate access to the project site for emergency response and improvements would be constructed consistent with CalFire PRC 4290 and 4291 requirements to provide appropriate access for emergency response to the resort. Through access for emergency vehicles and residential traffic would be maintained at all times throughout project construction. No impact would result from impairment of an adopted emergency plan.

h. **Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated.** The project site is located in a heavily wooded area adjacent to the Tahoe National Forest and is within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Because the site is within an SRA, California Public Resources Code Section 4290 requires site access and future construction on the proposed

site to comply with the SRA Fire Safe Regulations. These regulations address requirements for site access (road width and grade, turnarounds), signage and building numbering, emergency water, and fuel modification (defensible space). The proposed project would include three new 10,000 gallon water tanks at a high point in relation to the structures. The stored water would be used for domestic uses and to fulfill fire flow requirements. **MM 8.1** would ensure that the tank and associated fire infrastructure and water distribution system complies with Cal Fire design and installation requirements. **MM 8.2** and **MM 8.3** would ensure compliance with fire safe requirements for project design and construction, onsite circulation, and defensible space and require consultation with Cal Fire prior to issuance of building permits to identify the need for additional fire suppression systems and / or water storage. With implementation of **MM 8.1, MM 8.2,** and **MM 8.3**, impacts concerning fire hazards would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures:

MM 8.1 (Hazards)

The tank and plumbing shall be constructed in accordance with Cal Fire design and installation requirements; shall be placed underground or otherwise designed to avoid freezing conditions; and shall contain apparatus approved by serving fire entities that complies with current fire agency standards and specifications. The location of the tank shall be approved by the serving fire entities and the Planning Department. On-going maintenance of the tank and plumbing shall be the responsibility of the property owner.

MM 8.2 (Hazards)

The project shall implement the following requirements to minimize impacts related to fire hazards:

- Adequate onsite emergency vehicle turnouts and/or turnarounds shall be maintained onsite.
- Site improvements shall comply with Cal Fire defensible space standards and other specifications and standards for fire safety, including: width and grade, signage and address requirements, construction standards, and creation and maintenance of defensible space.

MM 8.3 (Hazards)

The project shall implement the following requirements to minimize impacts related to fire hazards:

- All new buildings shall have roofing constructed with Class A materials, and street and building address signs designed to Cal Fire standards. All new construction shall be required to comply with California Building Code Chapter 7A, ignition-resistant building code standards.

- Cal Fire shall be consulted during the processing of building permit applications and may require additional fire suppression systems (sprinklers, etc.) and/or water storage requirements that meet the minimum Title 14 fire safe standards or those resulting in the same practical effect, as authorized under 14-CCR-1207.07.

IX. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY – 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	☐	☐	☐	☒
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	☒
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	☐	☐	☐	☒
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

An extensive system of water lines, ranging in diameter from 6″ to 2″, has been installed within the developed area. This system is based on a tap at Big Springs at an elevation of 5,264′. Static water

pressure within the developed area is maintained between 60 and 80 pounds depending on elevation difference below the spring.

No formal groundwater evaluation was conducted to evaluate groundwater availability within the project area. However, there are no known issues regarding lack of water availability in the project area and the Sierra County Environmental Health Department has indicated that there are no specific concerns in regard to the availability of groundwater in the area.

The County requires all projects requiring engineered grading to prepare a drainage study to analyze proposed drainage improvements and pre- and post-project site stormwater runoff. Pursuant to County Code Section 12.08.560, proposed drainage facilities must ensure that offsite drainage to adjacent properties is no greater in quantity and concentration than that which existed prior to the project. Any project involving more than 1 acre of disturbance requires coverage under a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for construction activities which requires preparation and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) prepared by a certified designer and monitoring of stormwater throughout construction by a certified practitioner. All projects are required to implement best management practices (BMPs) for erosion control and stormwater quality maintenance during project construction in accordance with the High Sierra Resource Conservation District's "*Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines for Developing Areas of the Sierra Foothills and Mountains*," as required by Sierra County grading permit conditions of approval. BMPs are required to be specified by an erosion control plan that is incorporated into the approved grading plan to ensure that they are implemented during construction.

Flood Insurance Rate Map 06091C0380C shows that the project site is not within a designated special flood hazard area (FEMA, 2012).

Impacts

a., c. **Less Than Significant Impact.** The project follows all Stream Setbacks outlined in the Sierra County Zoning Code. Sierra County Environmental Health has approved the septic system and potable water system. The Project will include engineered BMP's and drainage systems that are conducive to Sierra Counties Erosion and Sediment Control Guide lines and will be covered under the States NPDES general permit, including preparation and implementations of a SWPPB to effectively manage any potential drainage, sedimentation and water utility concerns.. Therefore, this project will have less than significant impact.

b. **No Impact.** The project does not propose to use wells. Current and proposed water supply (for potable/domestic use as well as irrigation and fires suppression is treated surface water. California Department of Water Resources *Alluvial Groundwater Basins and Subbasins within the North Lahontan Hydrologic Region* map shows that the project site is not within or in proximity of any Groundwater Basins or Subbasins. Therefore, the project will have not impact.

d., e., & f. **Less Than Significant Impact.** As discussed above, the proposed project would result in the addition of approximately 8,904 square feet of new buildings, with a majority of construction on previously graded areas. The Pursuant to County Code Section 12.08.560, drainage facilities must ensure that offsite drainage to adjacent properties is no greater in

quantity and concentration than that which existed prior to the project. The applicant would be required to construct drainage facilities in accordance with County specifications to meet this standard. Compliance with County Code would ensure that the project results in no on or offsite flooding and does not exceed the capacity of accepting drainage systems. Impacts associated with alteration of on or offsite drainage patterns, increased runoff, or general degradation of water quality would be less than significant.

g., h., & i. **No Impact.** The project site is not located within a 100-year flood hazard area as identified on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (#06091C0380C) (FEMA, 2012). The project would not place any structures within a 100-year flood hazard area, nor would it expose people or structures to risks associated with flooding. Therefore, the project will have no impact.

j. **No Impact.** The project site is physically removed from any large body of water and is not subject to inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow. The project would have no impact associated with these hazardous conditions.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

X. LAND USE AND PLANNING –- Would the project:	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The project site is just outside the unincorporated rural community of Sierra City. Land use designations and regulations for permitted land use activities on the project site are set forth in the Sierra County General Plan and implemented by the County's Zoning Ordinance. The Sierra County General Plan applies a land use designation of Forest to the proposed Project area. It is located within designated Special Treatment Area ("Scenic Corridor"). The proposed project site is within a General Forest (GF) zone district; and it is located within the Scenic Corridor (SC) overlay zone. No conservation plans are applicable to the project site.

Impacts

a. **No Impact.** The project includes no components that would result in a physical division of an established community and would not generate an impact related to such division. The proposed project site is located 2 miles outside of the unincorporated community of

Sierra City. It is located in a generally undeveloped area. The project would have no impact related to the physically dividing the community.

b. **Less than Significant Impact.** The project conforms with the Sierra County General plan and the matching Zoning General Forest/Scenic Corridor. The project as designed would have less than significant impact related to not conflicting with the Sierra County General Plan or zoning.

c. **No Impact.** The project site does not fall within the jurisdiction of any habitat conservation plan.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

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

Setting

The project site does not provide access to any known mineral resources nor is it a part of a locally important mineral resource recovery site identified by any plan applicable to the project site (Sierra County, 1996). No active mining operations occur within the project site.

Impacts

a. & b. **No Impact.** The project would result in the use of existing buildings and facilities and the addition of small new buildings and structures within an area with no known mineral resources and no active mineral resource extraction operations. Implementation of the proposed project would have no impact on access to or availability of any known mineral resources.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

XII. NOISE— Would the project result in:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Sierra County has no adopted noise ordinance, but the Noise Element of the General Plan does provide a basis for comprehensive local noise policies and includes noise level standards for development projects. The Noise Element of the *Sierra County General Plan* indicates that the maximum allowable continuous noise exposure for residential and transient lodging (hotel) land uses within the County is 65 decibels and the maximum conditionally allowable noise exposure for residential land uses within the County is 70 decibels and 75 decibels for transient lodging. Noise level measurements taken throughout the County and provided by the General Plan indicate that average noise levels throughout the County are below maximum allowable levels. There are no sources of continuous elevated noise generation in the proximity of the project site and the County has determined that no formal noise study is necessary to evaluate existing noise levels at the project site.

Impacts

a., b. & d. **Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated.** The proposed project would expand existing onsite uses.

Heavy equipment employed in construction of the proposed project would generate ground-borne vibration and noise that could temporarily exceed the General Plan noise level thresholds onsite and would result in temporary increases in noise levels experienced in the project area. However, noise generation in excess of General Plan threshold levels resulting from construction activities associated with the proposed

project would be temporary and sporadic in nature, and would be experienced only by residents and guests on the resort property, since no other noise sensitive land uses occur in close proximity to the project site. Mitigation measure **MM 12.1** requires that construction activities be conducted during daytime hours, when construction activities would result in the least disturbance to those in the area. With these time restrictions on hours of construction operations, impacts resulting from temporary construction noise and vibration would be less than significant.

The proposed project would not significantly increase noise levels in the area. Noise sources from the proposed project would include motor vehicle operation, patrons camping, recreating and using onsite amenities, which are anticipated to be similar to existing noise sources and noise level generation. Resort activities associated with the Masterplan are typically low-level noise generators and low noise levels are typically encouraged within the resort area. Thus, the project would have a less than significant impact.

c. **Less Than Significant Impact**. The project would be expected to comply with the Sierra County General Plan; accordingly, any increase in noise would not be expected to exceed noise standards identified in the General Plan and would be consistent with the existing noise environment in the project area. Impacts resulting from a permanent increase in ambient noise levels would be less than significant.

e & f. **No Impact**. No private or public airport exists within a two mile radius of the project site.

Mitigation Measures

MM 12.1 (Noise)

The project shall implement the following requirements to minimize impacts related to noise:

The project applicant/contractor shall restrict hours of construction activity to daytime hours of operation between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Construction hours on Saturdays shall be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on Sundays and observed holidays, construction may occur only between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

XIII. POPULATION AND HOUSING – Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The proposed project site is 2miles outside of Sierra City, an unincorporated community that sits on SR 49. As of the 2010 census, the population of Sierra City was 221. The project site is from SR 49. The existing resort has an onsite spring for water supply and onsite septic systems are used for wastewater treatment and disposal. There is an existing owner's residence on site. No additional permanent (non-transient) housing is proposed; and no residence will be demolished or converted to non-residential uses.

Impacts

a. **No Impact**. The proposed project would expand recreational facilities at the Big Springs. The proposed project would not create an additional non-transient population, nor would it house any person aside from temporary seasonal employees and guests. The project would not indirectly encourage further increases in population, since it would be served by existing roads and would not extend infrastructure that would be expected to result in additional development not envisioned by the General Plan. Accordingly, the project would have no impact related to inducing substantial population growth in the area.

b. & c. **No Impact.** The project proposes transient housing for up to 41 overnight guests and staff, including a proposed 720 square foot staff house for two employees. No additional on or offsite employee housing need is anticipated. Therefore, the project would not displace housing or people that would necessitate the construction of replacement housing.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

XIV. PUBLIC SERVICES –	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
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 any of the public services:				
Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Schools	☐	☐	☐	☒
Parks	☐	☐	☒	☐
Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The project area is located within an unincorporated area of Sierra County and is served by the following providers:

Fire Protection. As discussed in **Section VIII Hazards and Hazardous Materials**, above, the project site is within a designated State Responsibility Area with a mutual aid agreement between Cal Fire and the USFS to provide wildland fire protection to the project site. In addition, fire protection services are provided by the Sierra City Fire Protection District.

Police Protection. Law enforcement in the project area is provided by the Sierra County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office is located in Downieville, approximately 15.5 miles southbound on State Route 49.

Schools. The project area is within the Sierra Plumas Joint Unified School District. The nearest K-12 school within the District is located in Downieville, approximately 15.5 miles away.

Parks. The proposed project includes recreational options including camping and retreat style relaxation. Additionally, the Tahoe National Forest and Plumas National Forest provide regional recreational and multi-use opportunities in the project area.

Other Public Facilities. Cal Trans and Sierra County provide maintenance of public infrastructure including streets, traffic signs, snow removal, and stormwater drainage facilities.

Impacts

a. **No Impact**.

Fire Protection. The proposed project would remain in the jurisdiction of the existing fire protection agencies and its proposed growth would not require new or expanded fire protection facilities. Therefore, no impact would result from the need to construct new fire protection facilities to serve the proposed project.

Police Protection. The project site is currently serviced by the Sierra County Sheriff's Office, which maintains its main office in Downieville, approximately 15.5 miles from the project site. The Sheriff's office has provided no comments related to the project's potential impact on the provision of law enforcement services, and with no new permanent residents proposed to go along with the project and no increase in peak daytime population; and an increase in overnight transient guest use, include staff, of 41 people. There is no anticipated need to expand physical facilities related to police services. Therefore, there will be no physical impact.

Schools. The project site is within the Sierra Plumas Joint Unified School District. The proposed project includes the addition of no staff dependents; therefore the project will have no impact.

Parks. The proposed project expands onsite existing recreational facilities and recreational uses in the County are generally dispersed in National Forest areas. The proposed expansion of the resort is not expected to increase the demand for recreational facilities such that construction of new facilities would be required; and the potential increase in demand on National Forest use by only 41transient guests will be less than significant.

Other Public Facilities. The proposed project would not create a need for other new public facilities, nor will it have an impact on existing facilities or services that would require constructing new facilities. The driveway into the resort from State Route 49 is private and will be privately maintained.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

XV. RECREATION – Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might, have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The project site is currently used as a restaurant and special events venue and abuts National Forest lands. The surrounding Tahoe National Forest provides recreational and multi-use opportunities including hiking, camping, bicycling, and snow-moiling and is generally managed by the USFS.

Impacts

a., b. **No Impact**. The proposed project would expand onsite recreational / resort amenities and would provide overnight camping and resort services as well as day uses that would be available to nearby populations. As discussed in **Section XIII Population and Housing**, the project would generate no increase in permanent populations in terms of staff and staff dependents. Therefore, the lack of any significant increase in demand for parks and recreation would result in no significant impact of existing neighborhood and regional parks or the physical deterioration of existing recreational facilities, including recreation-supporting facilities on National Forest lands. No new public recreational facilities would be required because of the proposed project.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

XVI. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC – Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Regional access to Big Springs Meditation Center will be via State Route 49. The Big Spring Meditation Center has a private driveway connecting directly to SR 49 through an encroachment permit with Caltrans.

The proposed amendment to the Conditional Use Permit anticipates that it will reduce daily use of the property from approximately 100 day-use persons to no more than 50; and up to a maximum of 41 overnight guests and staff. The proposed site plan for the project shows all but one of the structures being placed on already disturbed overflow parking areas; which will reduce the amount

of available on site parks; but less parking will be needed with the reduced number of daily visitors. The revised parking layout identifies parking for up to 60 vehicles, which is sufficient for the intended maximum occupancy load.

Impacts

a.& b. **No Impact.** The proposed Big Springs Conditional Use Permit amendment reduces traffic in and out of the resort, therefore resulting in no impact.

c. **No Impact**. The proposed project would not interfere with the operation of any airport. Therefore, this project would have no impact on air traffic patterns.

d. **No Impact.** The proposed project does not propose any new roadways or driveways, and will be required to meet minimum CalFire PRC 4290 standards; and therefore would result in no impact.

e. **No Impact.** The proposed project does not propose any new roadways or driveways, and will comply with State mandated Cal Fire 4290 roadway design standards, and therefore will result in no impact.

f. **No Impact**. The proposed project would not conflict with adopted policies, plans or programs supporting alternative transportation or otherwise decrease the performance of such facilities; and therefore would result in no impact.

XVII. SERVICE SYSTEMS – Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Require or result in the construction of new stormwater drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Wastewater. Wastewater generated by the existing Big Springs Meditation Center is treated and disposed of using traditional onsite septic tanks and leachfield wastewater treatment and disposal systems. No local or regional sewer system exists in the vicinity of the project site. Existing onsite wastewater disposal is under local jurisdiction and is not subject to waste discharge requirements administered by the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Domestic Water supply. Currently, the domestic water supply for the existing facility is supplied from an existing onsite fresh water spring. The spring is identified as the Big Spring. The current development is served by a 6 inch main water line with static pressure ranging between 60 and 80 pounds. The Sierra County Department of Environmental Health regularly inspects the commercial kitchen and tests the domestic water system for potability.

Fire Flow Water Supply. Water supply for the existing facility for firefighting purposes also supplied from the Big Springs onsite spring source. There is currently a 6-inch fire hydrant located near the residence and wharf hydrant at the outdoor restaurant.

Solid waste. The County has closed its only solid waste landfill at Loyalton and is executing contracts with Plumas county and Intermountain Disposal Company of Portola, California to deposit and/or transport all waste generated in Sierra County directly to Lockwood, Nevada (private landfill operated by Waste Management in Washoe County Nevada) or to the existing waste transfer station at Portola for transport to Lockwood, Nevada.

Impacts

a. **No Impact.** The onsite wastewater treatment systems would be under the jurisdiction of Sierra County Environmental Health, which would ensure that onsite treatment and disposal systems are designed and operated to meet all applicable treatment requirements. No impact would result from non-compliance with treatment standards.

b. **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project includes constructing new water infrastructure as well as onsite septic tanks and leachfields to treat and dispose of wastewater generated by the overnight guests; the size and location of these new sensitive facilities w designed to minimize impacts to the environment. No identified species or their habitats have been identified in these areas, and no loss would result due to the proposed development. The construction of new water and wastewater facilities associated with this proposed project would result in a less than significant impact on the environment.

c. **Less than Significant Impact.** The Pursuant to County Code Section 12.08.560, drainage facilities must ensure that offsite drainage to adjacent properties is no greater in quantity and concentration than that which existed prior to the project. The applicant would be required to construct drainage facilities in accordance with County specifications to meet this standard. Compliance with County Code would ensure that the project results in no on or offsite flooding and does not exceed the capacity of accepting drainage systems. Impacts associated with alteration of on or offsite drainage patterns, increased runoff, or general degradation of water quality would be less than significant.

d. **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** The applicant proposes to provide new 2-1/2″ wharf hydrants on 4″ diameter water lines at the Guest House and Meeting Hall. All hydrants will be served by the 30,000 gallons of water storage with a minimum static pressure of 60 psi at the hydrant. These hydrants should provide a minimum flow rate at 60 PSI of 250 GPM.

   The proposed development has been identified by the California Division of Drinking Water as a transient non-community water system. **Mitigation Measure 17.1** would require the applicant to show evidence of a domestic water supply permit from the California State Water Boards before the building permit for the guest lodging would be approved. Adequate water supply exists on site, and the treatment required to meet State drinking water permit thresholds will not create significant new ground disturbances, or significantly impact sensitive species or their habitat. The additional demands on water supply would result in Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.

e. **No Impact**. No local or regional wastewater collection and treatment system or provider exists in the project area. Wastewater disposal would be by onsite wastewater treatment systems using septic tanks and leachfields, which are included in the proposed project. No impact would result from any determination by a wastewater treatment provider.

f. & g. **No Impact**. All waste generated by Sierra County will be handled and there is no ceiling nor maximum waste quantities that will constrain this project. The project proponent will be required to comply with the County's solid waste disposal regulations pertaining to proper container, frequency of pick up, assessments, and so forth but these issues are only operational in nature and have no bearing on the overall impact of waste generated from the project on the County's solid waste disposal system. There is no impact that will occur to which can be identified from implementation of this proposed project.

Mitigation Measures

MM 17.1 (Potable Water Service Systems)

The applicant shall show evidence of a domestic water supply permit from the California State Water Boards prior to the issuance of a building permit for the proposed guest house.

XVIII. 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 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, 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☐	☒

a. **Less than Significant Impact**. The analysis provided throughout this Initial Study demonstrates that the project would not make a considerable contribution to 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, 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.

b. **Less than Significant Impact.** The analysis provided throughout this Initial Study demonstrates that the project would not make a considerable contribution to cumulative impacts. The original day-use resort project was determined to be exempt under CEQA in 2001; and the proposed expansion to allow overnight accommodations for up to 41 guests and staff (but reducing the overall daytime population and intensity of use) has been considered cumulatively and determined to be less than significant. There are minimal direct and will be no reasonably foreseeable indirect or future, impacts on the environment.

c. **No Impact**. The analysis provided throughout this Initial Study demonstrates that the project would not result in environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings.

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