FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes the construction and operation of a permanent boat inspection and decontamination area in Meyers, California to provide a more efficient way of inspecting vehicles, minimize traffic on neighboring streets, and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species into Lake Tahoe.

NCE has prepared the *Initial Study/Initial Environmental Checklist/Environmental Assessment (2024-0135483-NEPA-001)*, incorporated herein by reference, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Department of the Interior NEPA (DOI) NEPA Regulations (43 CFR 46), the DOI Handbook of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures (516 DM 1), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy (550 Service Manual, or FW), and other applicable Federal and State laws and regulations. The Service has reviewed the environmental assessment (EA) and has deemed the EA sufficient with NEPA, the DOI NEPA Regulations, and the DOI Handbook of NEPA Implementing Procedures. *Complete this sentence if applicable* – The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), El Dorado County, and US Fish and Wildlife Service served as lead cooperating agencies in the preparation of the EA. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is a trustee agency, and the California Department of Transportation is the responsible agency. In addition, TRPA, the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy), and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) are considered responsible agencies under CEQA. Responsible and trustee agencies should participate in the lead agencies' environmental process, review the lead agency's environmental document, and use the document when making decisions on Project elements.

Introduction

Watercraft inspection stations (WIS) play a crucial role in preventing the spread of AIS into the Tahoe Region. The County, in cooperation with TRPA, the Conservancy, and

USFWS, proposes to relocate the existing WIS in Meyers, currently located at 2175 Keetak Street in South Lake Tahoe, California to a more suitable, permanent location on Pomo Street, west of SR 89 and near the junction of SR 89 and US 50 – this effort is referred to as the Project. The Project would consist of construction of a watercraft inspection and decontamination area, vehicle entrance and exit with truck/boat trailer queuing lanes, decontamination unit and other mechanical and stormwater treatment facilities, associated mechanical and storage buildings, an office building, public restroom, public service bicycle station, workforce housing and associated parking, on-site parking for employees, open space/public access area, connection to nearby bike trails, and an AIS interpretive area. Presently, the inspection station is only capable of accommodating the queuing of one tow vehicle and watercraft while 2 are being inspected. This forces inspections and queuing to occur on the streets immediately surrounding the inspection station, creating safety concerns for the public and staff. The new location would provide a more efficient and safe way of inspecting vehicles with on-site queuing capacity for 12 vehicles hauling boats, while minimizing impacts of vehicular traffic on neighborhood streets.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Project is to provide a watercraft inspection station with adequate on-site facilities to serve the watercraft inspection needs within the southern portion of the Tahoe Basin, along United States Highway (US) 50, consistent with regional priorities to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS as identified in the Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan and the Environmental Improvement Program. The need for the Project is to reduce safety concerns and improve operational efficiencies of watercraft inspection, due to the current lack of adequate queuing and facilities at the existing watercraft inspection station. Establishing a permanent inspection station at this location would provide consistent and effective protection against AIS, which is one of the most critical tools for preserving Lake Tahoe's water clarity and ecological health. The recent discovery of golden mussels in California in

close proximity to the Lake Tahoe Region emphasizes the need for sustainable prevention efforts to prevent AIS from establishing in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Additionally, this Project would provide up to 6 residential units on-site for employees of the inspection station. This element of the Project aligns with regional objectives to provide access to housing so that people who work in the Lake Tahoe Basin have more opportunities to live in the basin, as well as reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from employees living and working within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The Project objectives include:

- Provide a permanent location for watercraft inspection services near the US 50 corridor
- Improve operational efficiency by eliminating the need to rely on a leased private property
- Provide on-site vehicle queuing, to provide safe working space for watercraft inspectors on-site
- Provide on-site workforce housing
- Improve visitor vehicular traffic flow and reduce queuing along local streets within the SR 89 corridor
- Improve customer experience
- Enhance local bike and pedestrian trail connections
- Minimize operational impacts on adjacent residential areas

Agency, Public and Tribal Coordination and Consultation

Coordination and consultation input provided by Federal, State, and local agencies; Tribes; and the public was considered in the development of the EA.

Lead Agencies

The lead agency is the public agency that with discretionary authority over the Project and is responsible for carrying out or approving a Project. It is the lead agency's responsibility to determine what level of environmental review document is appropriate for the proposed project or action. Since this Project falls under CEQA, NEPA, and the TRPA Planning Compact, there are 3 lead agencies and 3 separate decisions on the Project. The County is the lead agency for CEQA. TRPA is the lead agency for the TRPA IEC. The USFWS is the lead agency for NEPA.

Cooperating, Trustee, and Responsible Agencies

Under NEPA regulations, a cooperating agency is any federal agency, other than the lead agency, which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative. Under CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, a trustee agency is a state agency that has jurisdiction by law over natural resources that are held in trust for the people of the State of California, and a responsible agency is a public agency, other than the lead agency, which has discretionary approval responsibility for reviewing, carrying out, or approving elements of a project.

For the Project, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is a trustee agency with jurisdiction over resources potentially affected by the Project. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is a responsible agency with discretionary approval for Project activities within the US 50 and SR 89 rights-of-way (ROWs). As the Project would involve the disturbance of more than one acre, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) would also be a responsible agency and would require compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction in the Lake Tahoe Hydrologic Unit. In addition, TRPA, the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy), and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) are considered responsible agencies under CEQA. Responsible and trustee

agencies should participate in the lead agencies' environmental process, review the lead agency's environmental document, and use the document when making decisions on Project elements.

Tribal Consultation

Native American correspondence was initiated with a letter to the NAHC. The letter requested a search of their Sacred Lands File (SLF) and a contact list for regional tribes that may have knowledge of tribal cultural resources within or immediately adjacent to the APE. A response was received from the NAHC on September 9, 2024, which indicated negative SLF results for the APE and its immediate vicinity.

Native American correspondence was initiated on October 14, 2024, to request consultation with all tribes affiliated with the Project area. Follow-up emails were sent on October 28, 2024, to tribes who did not respond to the initial outreach. On October 28, 2024, the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California responded that they require a Cultural Monitor to be present during ground disturbance activity. UAIC of the Auburn Rancheria deferred consultation to the Washoe Tribe on October 14, 2024. The Colfax-Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe, Susanville Indian Rancheria and Wilton Rancheria have not responded to date. Additional responses, if received during the public comment period, will be considered and included as part of the administrative record for the Project.

Public Comment

The Draft IS/IEC/EA was circulated for public review and comment between April 16, 2026, and May 15, 2026. A Notice of Intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration was sent to reviewing agencies and persons and organizations expressing interest in the Project. Copies of the Draft IS/IEC/EA were available online on the lead agency websites (El Dorado County and TRPA). Several comment letters were received from agencies, organizations, and interested members of the public. Comments primarily focused around noise and traffic concerns of nearby residents. A full summary and compilation of comments and responses can be found in Appendix A of the IS/IEC/EA document.

Intraservice Endangered Species Act section 7 consultation was initiated on 08/26/2024 and concluded on 06/25/2025. The National Historic Preservation Act section 106 consultation was initiated on August 29, 2024, and concluded on August 27, 2026, and reached a finding of no historic properties affected pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.4(d)(1). USFWS has further concluded that the activities fall under Appendix B of the *Programmatic Agreement among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and California State Historic Preservation Officer Regarding the Administration of Routine Undertakings in the State of California* (PA).

Proposed Action and Reasonable Range of Alternatives

The Service considered a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed agency action that are technically and economically feasible, and met the purpose and need of the proposal and also included an analysis of reasonably foreseeable effects of not implementing the proposed agency action. Alternatives considered in the NEPA analysis are summarized below.

Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) – Inspection Station would not be constructed.

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed relocation and construction of a WIS on Pomo Street would not occur. The existing seasonal watercraft inspection station at

2175 Keetak Street would continue to operate in its current configuration and location. No new inspection, decontamination, administrative, housing, stormwater treatment, or public access facilities would be constructed, and no site grading, vegetation removal, or infrastructure improvements would take place within the Project area. Watercraft inspection operations would remain constrained by the limitations of the existing site, including additional seasonal winterization requirements, limited on-site queuing capacity, and operational inefficiencies during peak boating periods and special events. On-site workforce housing would not be provided, and employees would continue to commute daily to the existing facility.

Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) – Construction of Permanent Watercraft Inspection Station

Under Alternative 1, El Dorado County, in cooperation with the aforementioned partner agencies, would construct a WIS on 4 Conservancy-owned parcels along Pomo Street in the Meyers community, which would be operated by a contractor selected and overseen by TRPA. Tahoe Resource Conservation District (RCD) is the current contractor for the existing inspection station. The Proposed Action would replace the existing seasonal inspection station at 2175 Keetak Street with a facility designed to improve inspection efficiency, traffic circulation, and operational sustainability. The Proposed Action would include construction of ingress and egress driveways, an on-site queuing area with capacity for up to 15 vehicles with trailers, an approximately 3,600-square-foot inspection and administration building with office space, a public restroom, storage, stormwater management features, decontamination facilities, and limited public access amenities including interpretive elements. Six units of on-site workforce housing and associated parking would also be provided.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would require a land exchange between the County and the Conservancy to consolidate ownership and support long-term land

management objectives. Construction would occur over an approximately 6-month period.

Rationale for the Decision

The selected alternative, Alternative 2, was selected because it best meets the purpose of and need for action, and is within the bureau's statutory authority.

The Proposed Action would not have reasonably foreseeable effects on the quality of the human environment. As discussed in Sections 5.4 (Biological Resources), 5.5 (Cultural Resources), 5.9 (Hazards and Hazardous Materials), and 5.18 (Tribal Cultural Resources), the Proposed Action would result in temporary, localized impacts primarily associated with vegetation removal, site grading, and construction activities within an area that has been previously disturbed and influenced by existing development, utility corridors, and adjacent transportation infrastructure.

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-1** through **BIO-3**, and construction controls, the Proposed Action would not adversely affect rare, threatened, or endangered species or substantially reduce wildlife habitat to non-self-sustaining levels. Potential impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources were identified; however, with implementation of **Mitigation Measure TCR-1** and adherence to inadvertent discovery protocols required by the TRPA, no adverse effects on cultural or tribal cultural resources would occur. The Proposed Action would not result in exceedances of criteria air pollutants or greenhouse gas thresholds, and therefore would not contribute to a cumulatively considerable increase in regional emissions. The Proposed Action would not contribute to cumulative losses of biological resources, cultural resources, tribal cultural resources, water quality, or regional VMT.

The Proposed Action would not result in impacts that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. The Proposed Action is located within an isolated portion of the unincorporated community of Meyers, with no other planned or reasonably

foreseeable development projects in the immediate vicinity that would contribute to cumulative impacts.

Summary of Reasonably Foreseeable Effects on the Quality of the Human Environment

Based on the effects analysis provided in the EA, implementation of the proposed action would not be anticipated to result in reasonably foreseeable significant effects on the quality of the human environment that are summarized below.

The Proposed Action would not cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. As discussed throughout the environmental analysis, the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts related to air quality (Section **Error! Reference source not found.**), hazardous materials (Section **Error! Reference source not found.**), or other public health and safety considerations (Sections **Error! Reference source not found.**, **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Construction activities would result in temporary increase in noise levels that could affect nearby residents. However, with implementation of **Mitigation Measure NOI-1,** including restrictions on construction hours and the placement of equipment as far as feasible from nearby residences, construction noise impacts would be minimized. With implementation of the aforementioned mitigation, the Proposed Action would not result in substantial adverse effects on human beings.

Mitigation Authorities and Commitments

Mitigation measures that serve to avoid, minimize, or compensate for effects are summarized in Chapter 4: “Summary of Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures”, Sections 1 and 2, and Chapter 7: “Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan”. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the selected alternative have been incorporated into the selected alternative.

Finding of No Significant Impact Determination

Based on review and evaluation of the EA that includes mitigation commitments documented in the EA, the proposed action is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment pursuant to section 102(2) of the NEPA. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement on the proposed action is not required.

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Melissa Conte, Acting Project Leader, USFWS

Lahontan National Fish Hatchery Complex