

# CHAPTER 4.4 BIOLOGICAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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## INTRODUCTION

This section describes the natural environmental setting in Placer County, including information on special status plant and animal species found in the county. Information on the regulatory framework governing protection of wetlands and special status species is also provided, along with an assessment of potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures.

### Approach

Sources used in the preparation of this section include information obtained from previous field surveys (completed by others) including those recorded in the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) compilations of federal and state listed species.

Projects identified in the RTP would occur in various locations throughout the county. Without surveying each and every proposed project site it would not be possible to determine the biological resources present and those that might occur in the project areas. Therefore, for the purposes of this EIR, a general discussion of the regulations and the criteria for assessing project impacts to biological resources is included below. Each of the projects identified in the plan would be subject to the laws and regulations discussed below and would be considered individually when a specific project is identified for funding and implementation.

## SETTING

Placer County extends from the Nevada State line across the Sierra Nevada, through the Sierra Nevada foothills and into the southern portion of the Sacramento Valley. The county encompasses approximately 1,506 square miles or 898,820 acres. The topography of Placer County varies greatly, ranging from flat areas and rolling grassland in the west to foothills in the central area and rugged mountain terrain in the eastern portions of the county. The extreme variations of topographical features in the county provide a diverse range of habitat types, ranging from the alpine habitat of the Sierra Nevada to the grasslands of the valley floor. Consequently the range of flora and fauna found within the county is extremely diverse.

### Regulatory Framework

***Wetland/Watercourse Protection.*** Creek channels in the project area are under

the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the CDFG. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act regulates discharge of fill material into waters of the United States, which also includes wetlands. The ACOE is responsible for permitting any project that proposes fill of jurisdictional areas. CDFG is responsible for authorizing work in streambanks or streambeds pursuant to Fish and Game Code Sections 1601-1603. If a project results in filling of a wetland (e.g., construction of roadway or bridge across a stream channel) permits would be required for the project from state and federal wetland regulators.

***Special Status Species.* For the purposes of this document special status species are defined as follows:**

- Species considered to meet CEQA Guidelines Section 15380 criteria as rare, threatened or endangered, including plants or animals that are listed or proposed for listing as rare, threatened or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) or Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA);
- Plants or animals that are Candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act;
- Plants included on lists 1A, 1B, and 2 of the California Native Plant Society *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California* (CNPS 1994);
- Animals designated by the CDFG as “Species of Special Concern” or “Protected” or “Fully Protected” by state or federal government law( e.g., the Bald Eagle Protection Act and Migratory Bird Species Act).

Tables 4.4-1 and 4.2-2 include listings of Federal and State special status species known to occur in Placer County. These species have the potential to occur in project areas which could support the appropriate habitat types.

## **IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

### Standards of Significance

Based on policy and guidance provided by CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21001 and CEQA Guidelines), impacts of the proposed projects identified in this planning document would be considered significant if it causes one or more of the following effects:

- Adverse substantial effect to any species identified as a threatened, endangered, candidate, sensitive or special status species in local, regional plans or policies, regulations or by lists of species of concern from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or as defined by Section 15380 of the CEQA Guidelines;

TABLE 4.4-1-FEDERAL-LISTED SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat
<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	northern goshawk	SC	
<i>Acipenser medirostris</i>	green sturgeon	SC	
<i>Ambystoma californiense</i>	California tiger salamander	C	Vernal pools
<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	grasshopper sparrow	SC	Coastal Prairie
<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	grasshopper sparrow	SC	Valley and foothill grassland
<i>Arabis rigidissima</i> var. <i>demota</i>	Carson Range rock-cress	SC	Broadleafed upland forest
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	short-eared owl	SC	
<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	western burrowing owl	SC	
<i>Berberis sonnei</i>	Truckee barberry	E	
<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	American bittern	SC	Marshes and swamps
<i>Botrychium lineare</i>	slender Moonwort (= narrowleaf grapefern)	C	
<i>Branchinecta lynchi</i>	vernal pool fairy shrimp	T	Vernal pools
<i>Branta canadensis leucopareia</i>	Aleutian Canada goose	D	
<i>Buteo regalis</i>	ferruginous hawk	SC	
<i>Buteo Swainsoni</i>	Swainson's hawk	CA	
<i>Capnia lacustra</i>	Lake Tahoe benthic stonefly	SC	
<i>Carduelis lawrencei</i>	Lawrence's goldfinch	SC	Blue oak woodland
<i>Carduelis lawrencei</i>	Lawrence's goldfinch	SC	Coastal oak woodland
<i>Carduelis lawrencei</i>	Lawrence's goldfinch	SC	Riparian woodland
<i>Carduelis lawrencei</i>	Lawrence's goldfinch	SC	Valley oak woodland
<i>Chaetura vauxi</i>	Vaux's swift	SC	
<i>Charadrius montanus</i>	mountain plover	PT	
<i>Chlorogalum grandiflorum</i>	Red Hills soaproot	SC	Chaparral
<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	lark sparrow	SC	
<i>Clemmys marmorata marmorata</i>	northwestern pond turtle	SC	
<i>Clemmys marmorata pallida</i>	southwestern pond turtle	SC	
<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	Western yellow-billed cuckoo	C	Riparian woodland
<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	olive-sided flycatcher	SC	
<i>Cordylanthus mollis</i> ssp. <i>Hispidus</i>	hispid bird's-beak	SC	Meadows and seeps
<i>Cordylanthus mollis</i> ssp. <i>Hispidus</i>	hispid bird's-beak	SC	Playas
<i>Corynorhinus (=Plecotus) townsendii pallescens</i>	pale Townsend's big-eared bat	SC	
<i>Corynorhinus (=Plecotus) townsendii townsendii</i>	Pacific western big-eared bat	SC	

TABLE 4.4-1-FEDERAL-LISTED SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA (Continued)			
Cypseloides niger	black swift	SC	
Dendroica occidentalis	hermit warbler	SC	Lower montane coniferous forest
Dendroica occidentalis	hermit warbler	SC	Upper montane coniferous forest
Desmocerus californicus dimorphus	valley elderberry longhorn beetle	T	
Empidonax difficilis	Pacific-slope flycatcher	SC	
Empidonax traillii brewsteri	little willow flycatcher	CA	
Empidonax wrightii	grey flycatcher	SC	
Eriogonum umbellatum var. torreyanum	Donner Pass buckwheat	SC	Meadows and seeps
Euderma maculatum	spotted bat	SC	
Eumops perotis californicus	greater western mastiff-bat	SC	
Falco peregrinus anatum	American peregrine falcon	D	
Goeracea oregona	Sagehen Creek goracean caddisfly	SC	
Gratiola heterosepala	Boggs Lake hedge-hyssop	CA	Marshes and swamps
Gratiola heterosepala	Boggs Lake hedge-hyssop	CA	Vernal pools
Gulo gulo luteus	California wolverine	CA	
Haliaeetus leucocephalus	bald eagle	T	
Hydromantes platycephalus	Mount Lyell salamander	SC	
Hypomesus transpacificus	delta smelt	T	
Ivesia sericoleuca	Plumas ivesia	SC	Great Basin scrub
Ivesia sericoleuca	Plumas ivesia	SC	Lower montane coniferous forest
Ivesia sericoleuca	Plumas ivesia	SC	Meadows and seeps
Juncus leiospermus var. ahartii	Ahart's rush	SC	Vernal pools
Lampetra ayresi	river lamprey	SC	
Lampetra tridentata	Pacific lamprey	SC	
Legenere limosa	legenere	SC	Vernal pools
Lepidurus packardi	vernal pool tadpole shrimp	E	Vernal pools
Lepus americanus tahoensis	Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare	SC	
Lewisia longipetala	long-petaled lewisia	SC	Alpine boulder and rock field
Lewisia longipetala	long-petaled lewisia	SC	Subalpine coniferous forest
Lewisia serrata	saw-toothed lewisia	SC	Broadleafed upland forest
Lewisia serrata	saw-toothed lewisia	SC	Lower montane coniferous forest
Lewisia serrata	saw-toothed lewisia	SC	Riparian forest
Linderiella occidentalis	California linderiella fairy shrimp	SC	
Martes americana	American (=pine) marten	SC	Upper montane coniferous forest
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Broadleafed upland forest
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Closed-cone coniferous forest

TABLE 4.4-1-FEDERAL-LISTED SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA (Continued)

Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Lower montane coniferous forest
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Old growth
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Subalpine coniferous forest
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Upper montane coniferous forest
Megaleuctra sierra	Shirttail Creek stonefly	SC	
Melanerpes lewis	Lewis' woodpecker	SC	Blue oak woodland
Melanerpes lewis	Lewis' woodpecker	SC	Lower montane coniferous forest
Melanerpes lewis	Lewis' woodpecker	SC	Riparian woodland
Myotis ciliolabrum	small-footed myotis bat	SC	
Myotis evotis	long-eared myotis bat	SC	
Myotis thysanodes	fringed myotis bat	SC	
Myotis volans	long-legged myotis bat	SC	
Myotis yumanensis	Yuma myotis bat	SC	
Nebria darlingtoni	South Forks ground beetle	SC	
Oncorhynchus (=Salmo) clarki henshawi	Lahontan cutthroat trout	T	
Oncorhynchus mykiss	Central Valley steelhead	T	
Oncorhynchus mykiss	Critical habitat, Central Valley steelhead	T	
Oncorhynchus tshawytscha	winter-run chinook salmon	E	
Oncorhynchus tshawytscha	Central Valley spring-run chinook salmon	T	
Oncorhynchus tshawytscha	Critical Habitat, Central Valley spring-run chinook	T	
Perognathus inornatus	San Joaquin pocket mouse	SC	
Phacelia stebbinsii	Stebbins' phacelia	SC	Cismontane woodland
Phacelia stebbinsii	Stebbins' phacelia	SC	Lower montane coniferous forest
Phacelia stebbinsii	Stebbins' phacelia	SC	Meadows and seeps
Phrynosoma coronatum frontale	California horned lizard	SC	
Plegadis chihi	white-faced ibis	SC	
Pogonichthys macrolepidotus	Sacramento splittail	T	
Rana aurora draytonii	California red-legged frog	T	
Rana boylei	foothill yellow-legged frog	SC	
Rana muscosa	mountain yellow-legged frog	SC	
Rhyacophila spinata	spiny rhyacophilan caddisfly	SC	
Riparia riparia	bank swallow	CA	
Rorippa subumbellata	Tahoe yellow-cress	C	Lower montane coniferous forest
Scaphiopus hammondii	western spadefoot toad	SC	Vernal pools
Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat

TABLE 4.4-1-FEDERAL-LISTED SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA (Concluded)

Selasphorus rufus	rufous hummingbird	SC	
Sphyrapicus ruber	red-breasted sapsucker	SC	
Spizella breweri	Brewer's sparrow	SC	
Strix occidentalis occidentalis	California spotted owl	SC	
Thamnophis gigas	giant garter snake	T	
Vulpes vulpes necator	Sierra Nevada red fox	CA	Meadows and seeps
Vulpes vulpes necator	Sierra Nevada red fox	CA	Subalpine coniferous forest

Reference: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Endangered Species Program.  
<http://www.fes.gov/r9endspp/html>. 1997.

TABLE 4.4-2-CALIFORNIA-LISTED SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat
Accipiter Cooperii	Cooper's Hawk	SC	
Accipiter gentilis	northern goshawk	SC	
Agelaius tricolor	tricolored blackbird	SC	
Androsace Occidentalis Var Simplex	Simple Androsace	CNPS	
Aplodontia rufa californica	Sierra Nevada Mountain Beaver	SC	
Arabis rigidissima var demota	Carson Range rock-cress	CNPS	Broadleafed upland forest
Athene cunicularia	burrowing owl	SC	
Balsamorhiza Macrolepis Var Macrolepis	Big scale basalm root	CNPS	
Buteo swainsoni	Swainson's hawk	SC	
Carex sheldonii	Sheldon's sedge	CNPS	
Chlorogalum grandiflorum	Red hills soaproot	CNPS	
Clarkia biloba SSP brandegeae	brandegee's clarkia	CNPS	
Clemmys marmorata marmorata	northwestern pond turtle	SC	
Clemmys marmorata pallida	southwestern pond turtle	SC	
Clemmys memorata	western pond turtle	SC	
Cordylanthus mollis SSP hispidus	Hispid bird's beak	CNPS	
Cypseloides niger	black swift	SC	
Dendroica petecha brewsteri	yellow warbler	SC	
Downingia Pusilla	Dwarf Pusilla	CNPS	
Erigeron Miser	Starved Daisy	CNPS	
Eriogonum umbellatum var torreyanum	Donner Pass buckwheat	CNPS	
Fritillaria eastwoodiae	Butte County Fritillary	CNPS	
Glyceria Grandis	American Manna Grass	CNPS	
Gratiola heterosepala	Boggs Lake hedge-hyssop	E(CNPS)	Marshes, swamps, and vernal pools

TABLE 4.4-2-CALIFORNIA-LISTED SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA (Concluded)			
Gulo gulo luteus	California wolverine	T	
Histrionicus histrionicus	harlequin duck	SC	
Ivesia sericoleuca	Plumas ivesia	CNPS	Great basin scrub
Ivesia sericoleuca	Plumas ivesia	CNPS	Lower montane coniferous forest
Ivesia sericoleuca	Plumas ivesia	CNPS	Meadows and seeps
Juncus leiospermus var. ahartii	Ahart's dwarf rush	CNPS	Vernal pools
Juncus leiospermus var.leiospermus	Red bluff dwarf brush	CNPS	
Legenere limosa	Legenere	CNPS	Vernal pools
Lewisia serrata	saw-toothed lewisia	CNPS	Broadleafed upland forest
Lewisia serrata	saw-toothed lewisia	CNPS	Lower montane coniferous forest
Lewisia serrata	saw-toothed lewisia	CNPS	Riparian forest
Martes americana	Pacific fisher	SC	Upper montane coniferous forest
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Broadleafed upland forest
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Closed-cone coniferous forest
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Lower montane coniferous forest
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Old growth
Martes pennanti pacifica	Pacific fisher	SC	Subalpine coniferous forest
Phacelia stebbinsii	Stebbins' phacelia	CNPS	Cismontane woodland
Phacelia stebbinsii	Stebbins' phacelia	CNPS	Lower montane coniferous forest
Phacelia stebbinsii	Stebbins' phacelia	CNPS	Meadows and seeps
Rana aurora draytonii	foothill yellow-legged frog	SC	
Rana boylei	mountain yellow-legged frog	SC	
Rana muscosa	spiny rhyacophilan caddisfly	SC	
Rorippa subumbellata	Tahoe yellow-cress	E	
Sagittaria sanfordii	Sanford's arrow head	CNPS	
Scaphiopus hammondii	wstern spadefoot toad	SC	Vernal pools
Selasphorus rufus	red-breasted sapsucker	SC	
Sphaeralcea munroana	Munroe's desert mallow	CNPS	
Reference: California Department of Fish and Game. California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) for Placer County. 2000.			

- Adverse substantial effect to federally protected wetlands (including but not limited to marshes, vernal pools and riparian areas) as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or riparian and marsh areas under the jurisdiction of CDFG as defined by Fish and Game Codes 1601-1603.

- Substantial interference with movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established migration corridors;
- Removal or damage to any protected tree;
- Damage to a resource that is subject to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit requirements under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and that may provide valuable wildlife habitat, such as habitat for special status plant or animal species; or,
- Conflicts with any applicable habitat conservation plan.

For the purposes of the RTP, policies contained in the Placer County General Plan regarding protected trees, and any city or local ordinances that protect trees are used herein as significance criteria.

Within the Placer County General Plan, Chapter 12.16 includes the following:

**Chapter 12.16: Tree Preservation Generally (Tree Ordinance)** - This section of the County Code, part of Chapter 12 on **Roads, Highways and Public Places**, regulates development on land with trees protected by the ordinance.

Within Placer County, approximately 25 community plans have been developed, and each plan includes protection for trees and wildlife and natural resources.

**Impact 4.4-1: Implementation of the proposed RTP could result in adverse impacts to wetlands and special status plant and animal species and habitat in Placer County. This is considered to be a significant and unavoidable impact.**

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the following mitigation measure will reduce this impact, but it remains potentially significant and unavoidable.

- 4.4-1(a) *Mitigation for impacts to wetlands and special status species would be determined based on the impact assessment developed for each proposed project prior to implementation of the project. Mitigation would be determined in consultation with the appropriate federal, state, and local agency representatives and would be consistent with all applicable laws and regulations.*