4.4 LAND USE

This section includes a description of the existing land use practices on the project site, descriptions of relevant land use management policies, and an analysis of potential short- and long-term impacts on land use on the project site associated with implementation of any of the alternatives.

4.4.1 Affected Environment

4.4.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Geography of the Area

The Squaw Valley Ski Area (Squaw Valley) and Alpine Meadows Ski Area (Alpine Meadows) are located in Placer County, California, northwest of Lake Tahoe (see Exhibit 1-1 in Chapter 1, "Introduction") on both privately- and publicly-owned land. Between Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows is a large parcel of private land called the Caldwell property. The potential alignments for the proposed gondola would pass through this property to connect the base areas of the two resorts (see Exhibit 1-2 in Chapter 1, "Introduction"). West of the two resorts and the Caldwell property is the Granite Chief Wilderness (GCW).[1]

Existing Land Ownership and Uses

The project site is located on a mix of public and private lands. The private land consists of the Squaw Valley Ski Resort, owned by Squaw Valley Ski Holdings (SVSH) and the Caldwell property. Alpine Meadows is located on a mix of private and public lands and has been issued a special use permit for the skiing/resort operations that occur on the National Forest System (NFS) lands within its operational boundary. The GCW land within public NFS ownership (which lies west of the project site) is also managed by the Forest Service, but no development associated with the proposed project would occur within this area.

Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows

Since the inception of Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows, both resorts have offered exceptional recreational opportunities. SVSH purchased Squaw Valley in 2010 and Alpine Meadows in 2011. Currently, a lift ticket purchased at either resort provides access to both, but users who want to take advantage of this amenity must drive from one resort to the other or use the resort-provided shuttle service between resorts. The drive time between the ski resorts, with light traffic, is estimated at approximately 16 minutes (SE Group and RRC Associates 2018).

Caldwell Property

The Caldwell property encompasses a section of land, approximately 640 acres, and is largely undeveloped. The Five Lakes Trail, a dispersed recreation trail that provides access to the National Forest System-GCW, runs through the Caldwell property; the Five Lakes Trail is managed by the Forest Service via an easement with the landowner. The property includes both relatively minor sloped areas and rugged, steep terrain. It has a private home, auxiliary structures and lift towers (referred to as "KT South") extending to the top of the property. Although lift ropes have never been installed on KT South and the lift has never been operational, KT South was initially intended to connect the Caldwell property to the top of KT-22 at Squaw Valley. A gondola connection between Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows necessitates the construction of gondola infrastructure on the Caldwell property. In 2015, the landowner and SVSH (owner of both ski resorts) came to an agreement to allow access through the Caldwell property, which progressed plans for the Squaw Valley | Alpine Meadows Base-to-Base Gondola Project to the proposal stage (the subject of this document).

[1] An important distinction is drawn throughout this document between the public and private lands within the GCW. For clarity regarding this distinction, refer to the "Granite Chief Wilderness" section below and to Section 4.3, "Wilderness."

In 2017, the Caldwell property landowner submitted an application to Placer County for a proposed 38-home private residential community, including an additional private chair lift and associated amenities on the property.

Granite Chief Wilderness

The GCW is a designated wilderness area that consists of approximately 25,256 acres of land, 25,079 of which are federal lands managed as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) (U.S. Forest Service 2012); the other 177 acres are privately owned. The Wilderness Act of 1964 allows for the establishment and protection of wilderness areas through the NWPS, and the California Wilderness Act of 1984 designated certain new lands within the state of California that were to be managed as such, including the GCW.

When Congress enacted the California Wilderness Act of 1984, it mapped a boundary for the GCW that overlaps with a portion of the privately owned Caldwell property. Although this portion of the Caldwell property is technically within the GCW, as mapped by Congress, the land use management direction and restrictions imposed by the act apply only to, and have meaning only upon, federal lands; the extension of a wilderness boundary as mapped onto adjacent private lands does not provide for protection or management of those private lands as wilderness. For clarity regarding this distinction, this document refers to all lands (public and private) within the congressional map as the "GCW," the NFS lands within the GCW as "National Forest System-GCW," and the privately owned land of the Caldwell property within the congressionally mapped wilderness boundary as "private lands within the congressionally mapped GCW." Section 4.3, "Wilderness," provides in-depth information on these distinctions.

The National Forest System-GCW is a mostly natural wilderness area that allows for both day hiking and overnight camping. Far-reaching land use restrictions are imposed within the National Forest System-GCW to preserve its unrefined wilderness characteristics in the face of competing demands for use of those lands. Implementing the Squaw Valley | Alpine Meadows Base-to-Base Gondola Project would not affect current land use practices, or management, in the National Forest System-GCW because no development would occur within or upon this area.

4.4.1.2 REGULATORY SETTING

Federal

Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and Resource Management Plan and Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment

The stated purpose of the *Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (LRMP) is to "direct the management of the Tahoe National Forest (TNF) for the next 10 to 15 years. Its goals are to ensure the wise use and protection of TNF resources, fulfill legislative requirements, and address local, regional, and National issues" (U.S. Forest Service 1990). Regarding land use planning in the TNF, the LRMP focuses on coordinating federal policy with state and local policies for efficient management and on minimizing conflicts associated with the urban/rural wildland interface.

The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision Final Supplemental EIS (SNFPA) (U.S. Forest Service 2004) amended the LRMP in 2004. The LRMP and SNFPA, collectively referred to as the Forest Plan, established standards and guidelines related to land use on the TNF. As part of the analysis conducted for this Final EIS/EIR, these standards and guidelines were applied and evaluated for consistency.

Urban/Rural Wildland Interface

The urban/rural wildland interface is the transitional land between unoccupied land and human development, and it is a considerable issue on the TNF because approximately one-third of the land within the general boundaries of the TNF is privately owned (U.S. Forest Service 1990). Private parcels within congressionally designated National Forest boundaries are commonly referred to as "inholdings." The Caldwell property is among these private inholdings within the TNF as are portions of the Alpine Meadows

and Squaw Valley resorts. The Forest Service has no jurisdiction over land use development on private inholdings. A key LRMP land use goal is to manage NFS lands in urban/rural wildland interface situations with a commitment to work with private landowners and other agency neighbors to resolve possible conflicts while continuing to provide a wide range of multiple use goods and services (U.S. Forest Service 1990).

Management Area 086 – Scott

The TNF is divided into 109 management areas, each with its own resource management emphasis and standards and guidelines that direct Forest Service management of the lands contained within it. Squaw Valley is located on private land and is therefore not a part of any designated management areas; however, Alpine Meadows is partially located on NFS lands and is directed by the rules and regulations established for Management Area 086 – Scott (Scott Management Area) (refer to Exhibit 4.4-1 for a map of various management areas within the project area). The resource management emphasis makes clear that although ski area development is expected within the Scott Management Area, development will remain subordinate to the overall natural landscape (U.S. Forest Service 1990):

> Development of private sector ski area maintenance, operation, and planning will be emphasized during the planning period.... The desired future condition will resemble the unit's existing condition, roaded-natural appearing, except where ski expansion is approved. In those areas where base facilities are approved, there will be a shift from roaded-natural appearing to rural classification as development occurs. New base facilities will be rural in character. Upslope ski runs, and facilities should be subordinate to the overall landscape....[2]

The resource management emphasis and other rules and regulations established for the Scott Management Area direct the land uses allowed in that portion of the TNF.

State

There are no state laws or regulations containing land use policies or provisions that are relevant to the analysis for the project.

Local

Placer County General Plan

The *Placer County General Plan* (Placer County 2013) provides an overall framework for the development of the County and protection of its natural and cultural resources. A total of 23 community plans have been adopted under the *Placer County General Plan* to provide a more detailed focus on specific geographic areas within the unincorporated County. Two of them—the *Squaw Valley General Plan and Land Use Ordinance* (SVGPLUO) and *Alpine Meadows General Plan*—are relevant to the project and are discussed below. The goals and policies included within the community plans supplement, but do not supersede, the goals and policies contained within the General Plan.

The Land Use Element of the *Placer County General Plan* contains the following policies that may be applicable to the action alternatives (Placer County 2013):

General Land Use

- **Policy 1.A.1.** The County will promote the efficient use of land and natural resources.

- **Policy 1.A.2.** The County shall permit only low-intensity forms of development in areas with sensitive environmental resources or where natural or human-caused hazards are likely to pose a significant threat to health, safety, or property.

[2] The "roaded-natural appearing" and "rural" classifications refer to Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classifications, which direct which recreational activities are allowed on certain tracts of NFS lands. For a detailed explanation of these classifications, refer to Section 4.1, "Recreation."

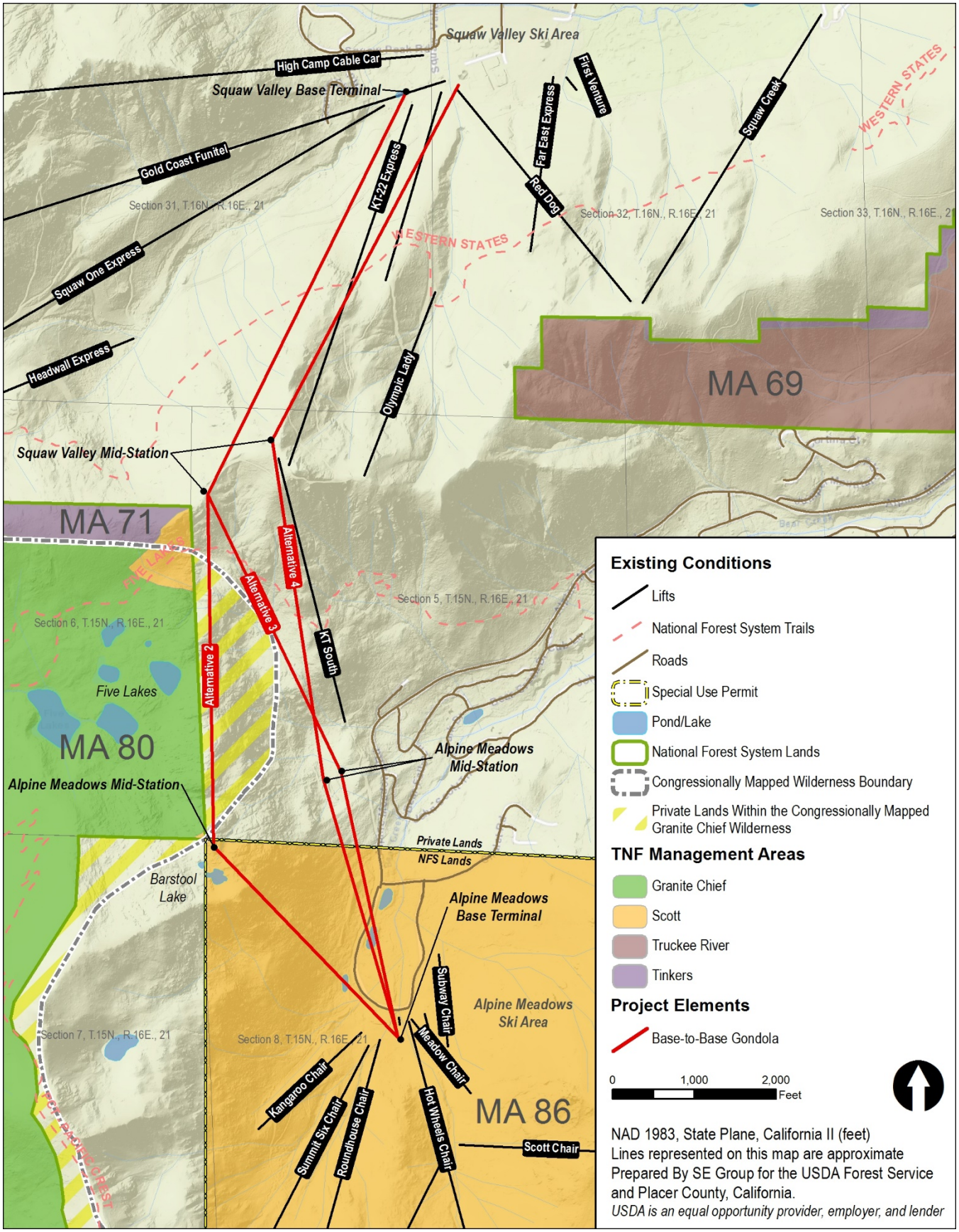

Exhibit 4.4-1 Forest Plan Management Areas in the Project Area, including Management Area 086 – Scott (Scott Management Area)

Recreation Land Use

- **Policy 1.G.1.** The County will support the expansion of existing winter ski and snow play areas and development of new areas where circulation and transportation system capacity can accommodate such expansions or new uses and where environmental impacts can be adequately mitigated.

- **Policy 1.G.2.** The County shall strive to have new recreation areas located and designed to encourage and accommodate non-auto mobile access.

Open Space, Habitat, and Wildlife Resources

- **Policy 1.I.1.** The County shall require that significant natural, open space, and cultural resources be identified in advance of development and incorporated into site-specific development project design. The Planned Residential Developments (PDs) and the Commercial Planned Development (CPD) provisions of the Zoning Ordinance can be used to allow flexibility for this integration with valuable site features.

- **Policy 1.I.2.** The County shall require that development be planned and designed to avoid areas rich in wildlife or of a fragile ecological nature (e.g., areas of rare or endangered plant species, riparian areas). Alternatively, where avoidance is infeasible or where equal or greater ecological benefits can be obtained through off-site mitigation, the County shall allow project proponents to contribute to off-site mitigation efforts in lieu of on-site mitigation.

Placer County Zoning Ordinance

The *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*, Chapter 17 of the *Placer County Code*, was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in July 1995 (Edition #1) and revised in 2011. The Zoning Ordinance, which is consistent with the *Placer County General Plan* and applicable community plans, regulates the use of land, buildings, and structures and establishes minimum regulations and standards for the development of land in Placer County. Placer County zoning designations for the portion of the project site within Squaw Valley are regulated by the SVGPLUO, and those for the portion of the site within Alpine Meadows are regulated by the Alpine Meadows General Plan and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance* where appropriate (see description of *Alpine Meadows General Plan* below).

Squaw Valley General Plan and Land Use Ordinance

Placer County combined the *Squaw Valley General Plan* with the implementing ordinance, the land use ordinance, and approved the two documents together. Thus, Placer County considers these two documents to be interrelated and references them together as the SVGPLUO (Placer County 2006:1). The SVGPLUO establishes policies specific to Squaw Valley that build on the general policies found in the *Placer County General Plan* and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*. It is the primary document governing land use development in Squaw Valley. The Placer County Board of Supervisors approved the SVGPLUO on August 30, 1983. Placer County incorporated the SVGPLUO into the *Placer County Code* and refers to it as a community plan. (See *Placer County Code* Chapter 17, Appendix A; *Placer County Code*, Section 17.02.030.) Under *Placer County Code* Section 17.02.030, the regulatory provisions of the SVGPLUO apply to development in Squaw Valley unless the document explicitly defers to the *Placer County Code* or is silent regarding land use matters otherwise governed by the *Placer County Code*. In these cases, the relevant provisions of the *Placer County General Plan* or *Placer County Code* apply.

The SVGPLUO is the community plan for the approximately 4,700-acre Squaw Valley. Future development in Squaw Valley is required under the SVGPLUO to comply with the following guidelines (Placer County 2006):

- Both the quality and quantity of development must be planned to conserve, protect, and enhance the aesthetic, ecological, and environmental assets of Squaw Valley.

- Future development in Squaw Valley should occur only where public facilities and services, including transportation, can be efficiently provided.

- Intense utilization of already disturbed areas shall be promoted and preferred to fringe development or non-contiguous development of previously undisturbed areas.

- Decisions regarding future development should be based upon sound social, economic, and environmental practices.
- In planning for the future growth and development of Squaw Valley, an optimum balance of activities and facilities, which recognizes the strengths, weaknesses, and inter-relationships of various segments of the Truckee-Squaw Valley and Tahoe area economies should be encouraged.

The following development goals from the SVGPLUO have been considered for purposes of evaluating the action alternatives (Placer County 2006):

- cluster development should be encouraged to reduce the amount of land disturbed;
- development should be designed to minimize damage to existing vegetation and to ensure that all disturbed areas are revegetated and restored to their natural state;
- development should occur in either previously disturbed areas or areas of good tree coverage. Meadows, stream environment zones, steep terrain, and transition zones where vegetation changes should remain free of development; and
- encourage development of a destination resort.

The land use and zoning designations for the Squaw Valley portion of the project site are Forest Recreation (FR) (Placer County 2006). See Exhibits 4.4-2 and 4.4-3, respectively, for maps of the existing land use and zoning designations on the project site. The Forest Recreation designation for both land use and zoning is defined as follows (Placer County 2006):

> The intent of this district is to retain the general character of the forest environment while at the same time permitting active recreational development (SVGPLUO, Section 250). With few exceptions, lands in this district are considered too remote, too steep, or contain serious development constraints which would prohibit development of commercial or residential land uses. It is the further intent of this district to establish areas wherein public or private recreation facilities, either commercial in nature or publicly funded, can be developed to meet the year-round recreation needs of the residents and visitors in Squaw Valley.
>
> Permitted uses include forest stations and look outs, grazing, growing and harvesting of timber and other forest products, outdoor amphitheater, picnic areas, public and private playgrounds and parks, riding and hiking trails, stables and corrals, ski lifts and ski trails, structures and uses required for the operation of a public utility or performance of a governmental function, tennis courts, and helicopter skiing.

The SVGPLUO also states that proposed ski lifts must be shown on the General Plan Map (Future Potential Ski Lifts Map) to be considered (Placer County 2006):

> New ski lifts shall be limited to those shown on the General Plan Map [Future Potential Ski Lifts Map]. Further, these new ski lifts can be developed only when parking, circulation and transit can adequately accommodate the increased capacity thus made available.

Proposed ski lifts that are not currently shown on the Future Potential Ski Lifts Map require a General Plan Amendment to include the proposed ski lift as a potential development on this map.

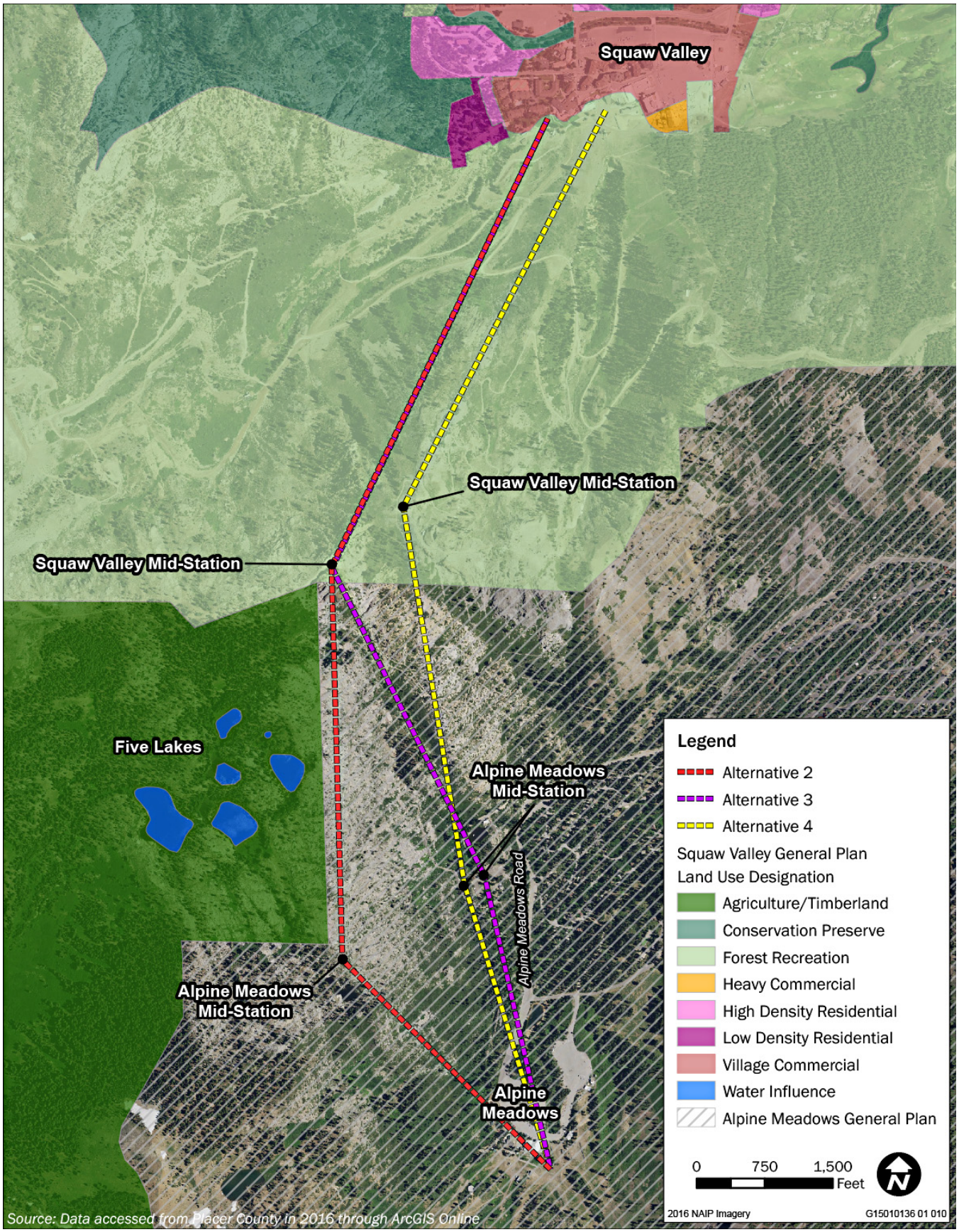

Exhibit 4.4-2 Existing Local Land Use Designations

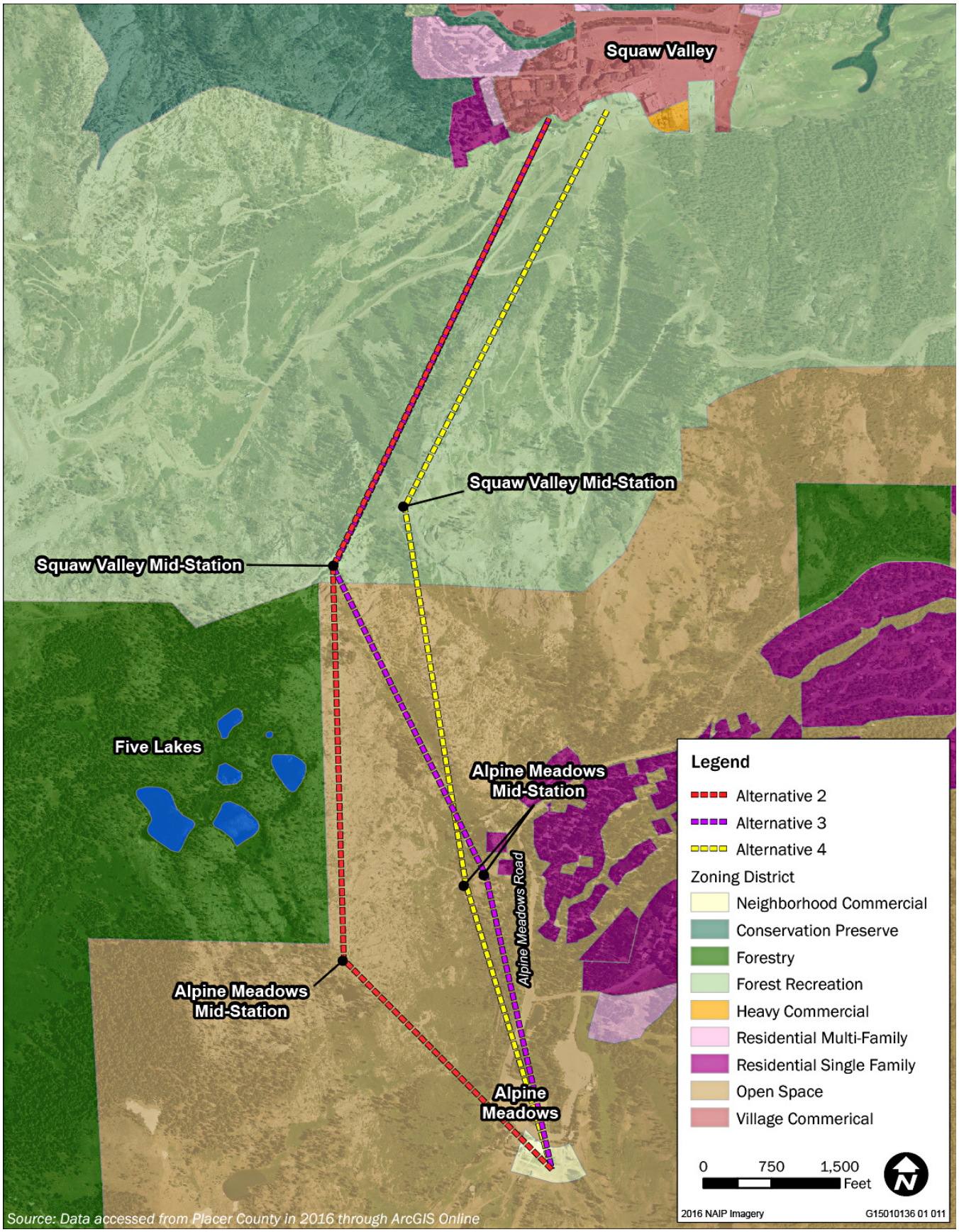

Exhibit 4.4-3 Existing Local Zoning Designations

Alpine Meadows General Plan

The Alpine Meadows General Plan was approved by the Placer County Board of Supervisors on May 1, 1968. It establishes policies specific to Alpine Meadows that build on the general policies found in the *Placer County General Plan* and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*, similar to the SVGPLUO. California planning law dictates that all land use decisions be consistent with the adopted general plans of the implementing jurisdiction; accordingly, the Alpine Meadows General Plan is the primary existing document governing land use development in Alpine Meadows, and it includes additional goals and policies that further refine the goals and policies of the *Placer County General Plan*.

The Alpine Meadows General Plan is the community plan for the approximately 2,278-acre Alpine Meadows ski area, which comprises 1,407 acres of NFS lands, 444 acres of private land, and 427 acres of state lands. The following basic goals, objectives, and procedures outlined in the Alpine Meadows General Plan are intended to guide future development in Alpine Meadows (Placer County 1968:2):

- Maintain the open, natural, mountain-recreation character. All aspects of the vast, unique, and outstanding physical beauty of the area must be consciously and continuously preserved.
- Establish a comprehensive development program for the entire valley in order to ensure a balanced and integrated plan for orderly growth.
- Establish and protect various land uses in relation to the estimated need of future populations and economies.
- Plan and develop the area to both permanent and visitor requirements, providing ample opportunity for interests and outlets during all seasons.
- Create a balanced selection of living environments and recreational outlets, sensitive to the terrain and undisturbed by trafficways, pollution, excessive slopes, scarring, and other deleterious effects.
- Provide a functional street pattern of efficient location and improvement with minimum disturbance and cost commensurate with present and future needs with emphasis on pedestrian movement.
- Make an energetic and extreme effort to create and maintain a distinct and individual identity for Alpine Meadows. To this end, the esthetic appeal of the area must be accentuated, a certain cultural and social atmosphere encouraged, and a strict design principle and control exercised.

The land use designations for the Alpine Meadows portion of the project site include open space and commercial (Placer County 1968).[3] The zoning designations for the Alpine Meadows portion of the site are Open Space (O) and Neighborhood Commercial (C1-D) (Placer County 1968) (Exhibit 4.4-3). The Open Space (O) designation is defined as follows (Placer County 1968):

> The purpose of this district is to protect important open space lands within Placer County by limiting allowable land uses to low intensity agricultural and public recreational uses, with structural development being restricted to accessory structures necessary to support the primary allowed uses, and critical public facilities.

The Neighborhood Commercial zoning designation is defined as follows (Placer County 1968):

> This district is intended to provide areas for small-scale, day-to-day convenience shopping and services for residents of the immediate neighborhood, which encourages pedestrian and bicycle access, and which is planned and designed to be compatible with surrounding residential areas.

[3] Land use designations for Alpine Meadows are not available in GIS format and thus are not included in Exhibit 4.4-1. For a map of land use designations applicable to the Alpine Meadows, refer to the Alpine Meadows General Plan.

The Alpine Meadows base area is managed according to the Neighborhood Commercial zoning designation, which does not allow for ski lifts. This Neighborhood Commercial zone is surrounded by the Open Space zoning designation, which does allow for ski lifts. A rezone is being included as a component of the project to address this potential zoning inconsistency.

4.4.2 Analysis Methods

4.4.2.1 METHODS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Evaluation of potential land use impacts is based on a review of documents pertaining to the project site, including the *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, and *Alpine Meadows General Plan*. In determining the level of significance, this analysis assumes that the action alternatives would comply with relevant federal, state, and local ordinances and regulations, including the policies presented above for the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, and *Alpine Meadows General Plan*.

As described in Section 2.2.6, "Resource Protection Measures," the project incorporates a number of Resource Protection Measures (RPMs) designed to avoid and minimize environmental effects. These RPMs are considered part of the project by the Forest Service and will be conditions of approval of the Placer County Conditional Use Permit (CUP). The text of all RPMs is provided in Appendix B. The potential effects of implementing the action alternatives are analyzed as follows: The effect of the action alternatives was determined, relevant RPMs were applied, and the effectiveness of reducing adverse effects was determined. If additional measures were needed to further reduce effects, they were identified. There are no RPMs relevant to the analysis of effects on land use, and no further discussion of RPMs is included in this section.

4.4.2.2 EFFECTS ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

NEPA Indicators

An environmental document prepared to comply with NEPA must consider the context and intensity of the environmental effects that would be caused by or result from the action alternatives. Under NEPA, impacts should be addressed in proportion to their significance (40 CFR 1502.2[b]), meaning that severe impacts should be described in more detail than less consequential impacts. This is intended to help decision makers and the public focus on the project's key effects. The evaluation of effects considers the magnitude, duration, and significance of the changes. Changes that would improve the existing condition if they occur are noted and considered beneficial, and detrimental impacts are characterized as adverse. Where there would be no change, a "no effect" conclusion is used. The Forest Service has determined that the action alternatives could create inconsistencies with land planning documents, including the *Tahoe National Forest Plan* and Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows General Plans. The following analytical indicators are used to inform the Forest Service's determination of impacts:

- Identification of project inconsistencies with direction and policy contained in the *Tahoe National Forest Plan*, *Alpine Meadows General Plan Land Use Ordinance*, *Squaw Valley General Plan Land Use Ordinance*, and *Placer County General Plan* (including employee housing requirements) **(Impact 4.4-1)**
- Discussion of potential impacts on adjacent private landowners **(Impact 4.4-1)**

CEQA Criteria

Based on the Placer County CEQA checklist and Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementing any of the alternatives would result in a significant impact related to land use if it would:

- physically divide an established community **(Section 4.4.2.3, "Issues Not Discussed Further")**;

- conflict with General Plan/community plan/specific plan designations or zoning or plan policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect **(Impact 4.4-1)**;
- conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan or other County policies, plans, or regulations adopted for the purposes of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects **(Section 4.4.2.3, "Issues Not Discussed Further")**;
- result in the development of incompatible uses and/or the creation of land use conflicts **(Impact 4.4-1)**;
- affect agricultural or timber resources or operations (i.e., impacts on soils or farmlands and timber harvest plans or impacts from incompatible land uses) **(Section 4.4.2.3, "Issues Not Discussed Further")**;
- disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community (including a low-income or minority community) **(Impact 4.4-1)**;
- result in a substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area **(Impact 4.4-1)**; or
- cause economic or social changes that would result in significant adverse physical changes to the environment, such as urban decay or deterioration **(Section 4.4.2.3, "Issues Not Discussed Further")**.

4.4.2.3 ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED FURTHER

As discussed in the initial study prepared for the Gondola Project (Appendix A), the project site is located within and between Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows. No facilities would be located between homes or other development. Development of any of the action alternatives would not physically divide any existing communities. The proposed gondola would be available to the public (with the purchase of a lift ticket or season pass), including the neighboring residents, and would provide improved connectivity between the two existing ski areas and surrounding communities. Implementing any of the action alternatives would not result in any road closures and would not otherwise create barriers preventing access to other currently accessible parts of the project site. These issues are not discussed further in this Final EIS/EIR.

As discussed in Sections 4.12 through 4.15, the project site is not located in an area with an adopted habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan; therefore, implementation of any of the action alternatives would not conflict with such plans. This issue is not discussed further in this section.

4.4.3 Direct and Indirect Environmental Consequences

4.4.3.1 ALTERNATIVE 1 – NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Impact 4.4-1 (Alt. 1): Consistency with Relevant Federal and Local Rules and Regulations

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative would result in a continuation of existing conditions. There would be no new construction and no changes to land use practices on the project site. Therefore, it would not create any conflicts between land use practices and relevant planning documents. There would be **no effect** under both NEPA and CEQA.

Under Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative, the TNF and Placer County would not provide necessary authorizations to allow construction of the proposed gondola. The outcome would be a continuation of existing conditions, with no new construction and no installation or operation of new facilities. Therefore, there would be no changes to land use practices on the project site, which would preclude the possibility of conflicts between land use practices and relevant planning documents.

NEPA Effects Conclusion
With no changes to land use practices, there would be **no effect** related to this issue.

CEQA Determination of Effects
With no changes to land use practices, there would be **no effect** related to this issue.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.4.3.2 ALTERNATIVE 2

Impact 4.4-1 (Alt. 2): Consistency with Relevant Federal and Local Rules and Regulations

With the Forest Service Special Use Permit (SUP) amendment as well as Placer County's General Plan amendment (described in detail below), rezone, and CUP, Alternative 2 would result in the construction of a gondola. A General Plan amendment to the SVGPLUO is necessary to add the Base-to-Base Gondola to the Future Potential Ski Lifts Map and a rezone is necessary to change the existing zoning designation from Neighborhood Commercial to Open Space in the area where the Alpine Meadows base terminal would be located. Under NEPA, and considering the NEPA indicators, absent RPMs and/or mitigation measures, there would be an **adverse** effect related to consistency with relevant rules and regulations because a General Plan amendment and rezone would be necessary. There are no applicable RPMs that would mitigate this effect. Under CEQA, and using the CEQA criteria, absent RPMs and/or mitigation measures, there would be a **significant** effect related to consistency with relevant rules and regulations because a General Plan amendment and rezone would be necessary. If the General Plan amendment and the rezone are approved by the Board of Supervisors, these potential conflicts with the SVGPLUO and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance* would be eliminated; there would be **no effect** under NEPA, and a **less-than-significant** effect under CEQA. Furthermore, Alternative 2 would not lead to any physical land use conflicts regardless of whether or not the above entitlements are approved.

Proposed Land Uses
The proposed land uses for the project site are not expected to change overall land uses under Alternative 2. Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows would continue to be used by guests for the recreation opportunities that exist at both resorts. The developments that these ski resorts have planned mostly involve improving recreation opportunities and offering more of the demanded amenities for guests; Alternative 2 is an example of this type of development. The applicant's goal is to improve the recreation opportunities at Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows by improving access between the two resorts. The gondola ride would last approximately 16 minutes and would allow skiers and riders to access the other resort without using a vehicle. Implementation of this project would not constitute an appreciable change to the current land use policies in place at the two resorts.

The uses of the National Forest System-GCW would not be altered by Alternative 2 because no development is proposed within the National Forest System-GCW. The strict regulations imposed in the National Forest System-GCW would continue to dictate the land uses allowable there. However, Alternative 2 would result in the construction of a gondola on private lands within the congressionally mapped GCW. This development would be legally permissible as the land use management direction and restrictions imposed by the Wilderness Act of 1964 apply only to, and have meaning only upon, federal lands; the extension of a wilderness boundary as mapped onto adjacent private lands does not provide for protection or management of those private lands as wilderness. Refer to Section 4.3, "Wilderness," for more information on this topic.

No substantial changes would be made to the land uses on the Caldwell property because the property would not be included as additional terrain for either of the ski resorts. However, the gondola would operate upon this land, and maintenance of the lift equipment would be required on occasion. As previously stated, lift towers currently exist on the Caldwell property as part of the incomplete KT South, so the presence of

gondola infrastructure (towers) and maintenance of this infrastructure would not constitute an appreciable change to the current setting.

Consistency with Relevant Plans, Policies, and Zoning

The analyses presented below describe the project's overall consistency with the policy framework of the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, and *Alpine Meadows General Plan*. Specific policies of these planning documents are discussed in further detail in the relevant resource chapters of this Final EIS/EIR, and Alternative 2's consistency with those policies is also analyzed therein. Similarly, project consistency with other County ordinances (e.g., the Noise Ordinance and Tree Ordinance) is discussed in relevant resource sections of this Final EIS/EIR. With regard to the SVGPLUO and the *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*, a General Plan amendment and small rezone would be required; if these entitlements are approved, Alternative 2 would be consistent with all relevant plans, policies, and zoning. The rezone and General Plan amendment are discussed in more detail below.

Consistency with Forest Plan

None of the components of Alternative 2 would conflict with the Forest Plan. The focus of the Forest Plan as it pertains to land use planning and management on the TNF is avoiding issues associated with the urban/rural wildland interface (defined above in Section 4.4.1.2). The area with the highest potential to have an urban/rural wildland interface issue is located near the border of the National Forest System-GCW and the Caldwell property, where the infrastructure closest to the National Forest System-GCW would be installed. The lift towers that currently exist on the Caldwell property (discussed in more detail above) have already introduced a semblance of ski area infrastructure to the area. Although installation of the gondola would add to this urban element, it would not constitute the addition of an urban element that would create a new urban/rural wildland interface issue. More importantly, the Caldwell property is privately owned and therefore not managed according to the policies and provisions contained in the Forest Plan.

Alternative 2 would not create any conflicts with the management direction provided for Management Area 086 – Scott, which directs that the area will experience ski area development and at the same time maintain its mostly natural character. It would be consistent with this directive because the project must comply with the project site's relevant Visual Quality Objective of *Partial Retention*. The *Partial Retention* Visual Quality Objective directs that "management activities must remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape" (see Section 4.2, "Visual Resources," for more information).

The Forest Plan directs that no impacts may occur on the National Forest System-GCW because it is protected as part of the NWPS in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964 (see Section 4.3, "Wilderness," for more information). No impacts associated with Alternative 2 would occur within the National Forest System-GCW because no development would occur there. All development that would occur within the congressionally mapped GCW would be located on private land; therefore, Alternative 2 would create no conflicts with the land use direction provided by the Forest Plan.

Consistency with Placer County General Plan and SVGPLUO

A General Plan amendment is proposed to the SVGPLUO to add the Base-to-Base Gondola as a proposed ski lift to the Future Potential Ski Lift Map, because the SVGPLUO requires that new ski lifts be limited to those shown on this map. Ski lift facilities (including the proposed gondola) are allowed uses in the project site's zoning districts with a CUP, which is being requested from the County as part of this project. The SVGPLUO contains text indicating that the number of new ski lifts would be limited to those shown on maps included in the SVGPLUO (i.e., the Future Potential Ski Lifts Map). These maps do not include the proposed gondola; therefore, a General Plan amendment is required as part of the project. The General Plan amendment must be requested and acted upon by the Board of Supervisors for Alternative 2 to be implemented.

The *Placer County General Plan* encourages the expansion of existing ski areas where the transportation and circulation system can accommodate such expansions, and the creation of new recreation areas that encourage nonautomobile access (see Policies 1.G.1 and 1.G.2). Similarly, the SVGPLUO states that "[f]uture development in Squaw Valley should occur only where public facilities and services, including transportation, can be efficiently provided." The project would be consistent with these policies because it includes the

following objective: "reduce visitor and Resort Shuttle System travel on roadways between the resorts" (refer to Section 1.3, "Purpose and Need and Project Objectives"). Moreover, the project itself would provide a new form of nonautomobile access between the resorts. Section 4.7, "Transportation and Circulation," provides an analysis of the project's potential effects on (and benefits to) the surrounding transportation system, including roadways, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and transit facilities/services.

The *Placer County General Plan* encourages the efficient use of land and natural resources and permits only low-intensity forms of development in areas with sensitive environmental resources (see Policies 1.A.1 and 1.A.2). Similarly, the SVGPLUO states that "[b]oth the quality and quantity of development must be planned to conserve, protect, and enhance the aesthetic, ecological, and environmental assets of Squaw Valley," and that "[i]ntense utilization of already disturbed areas shall be promoted and preferred to fringe development or non-contiguous development of previously undisturbed areas." The project site extends from the base of Alpine Meadows to the base of Squaw Valley, on land primarily used for ski facilities. It would be compatible with existing adjacent land uses because it would be designed to enhance the visitor experience at Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows and augment avalanche mitigation methods in Alpine Meadows near *the Buttress* area. No facilities would be located between homes or other development or in an established community. Project development would be of low intensity because it would involve primarily an aerial ropeway system. Ground disturbance would be limited to the towers, mid-stations, and terminals (a total of approximately 4.1 acres) connecting the ropeway system. Alternative 2 would, therefore, be consistent with these policies.

Policies of the *Placer County General Plan* and SVGPLUO restrict development in areas with slopes exceeding 25 percent. Much of the project site is steep, with slopes exceeding 80 percent in some areas, whereas other areas, such as the Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows base areas, where the terminals would be located, are nearly flat. However, as noted above, development in this area would be limited in terms of disturbance footprint and would be consistent with the existing use of the area for ski facilities. Further, project foundations and structures would be designed based on site-specific geotechnical conditions and in accordance with the seismic standards of the California Building Code, as described further in Section 4.16, "Soils, Geology, and Seismicity," which provides an analysis of the project's potential impacts pertaining to geologic, seismic, and soil conditions, including slope stability and avalanche hazards. Therefore, Alternative 2 would be consistent with these policies.

The project would not create any conflicts with employee housing requirements established by the *Placer County General Plan* Policy C-2, in the Housing Element, which states that full-time equivalent employee (FTEE) housing equal to 50 percent of the housing demand generated by a development project shall be provided. Because implementation of any of the action alternatives would generate 10 new employment positions (two full-time, year-round employment positions and eight full-time, seasonal positions) or six FTEEs, housing would need to be provided for 50 percent of the FTEEs or three employees (refer to Section 4.5, "Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice," for analysis supporting the conclusion that six FTEEs would be generated by the project). RPM REV-4 requires the applicant to either provide on-site housing or dedicate land for needed units and/or secure units elsewhere. If it can be demonstrated to the County that these mechanisms are infeasible, the applicant may pay an in-lieu fee.

Consistency with Alpine Meadows General Plan

The *Alpine Meadows General Plan* encourages the maintenance of the open, natural, mountain-recreation character and the preservation of the area's outstanding physical beauty. Both permanent residents and visitors are to be accommodated in the planning and development of the area, as well as the living (or natural) environment and recreational outlets. Alternative 2 would be consistent with these policies for the reasons described above, under "Consistency with Placer County General Plan and SVGPLUO." For example, the project would be located on land primarily used for ski facilities and would be compatible with existing adjacent land uses. No facilities would be located between homes or other development or in an established community. Project development would be of low intensity, with limited ground disturbance (approximately 4.2 acres in total). The project's potential environmental effects are evaluated throughout this Final EIS/EIR, and mitigation measures are recommended where appropriate. Additionally, the project identifies RPMs to

reduce potential adverse effects and ensure consistency with potential permits and approvals (see Chapter 2, "Description of Alternatives").

Consistency with Placer County Zoning Ordinance

A rezone would be required to change the existing zoning designation from Neighborhood Commercial to Open Space in the area where the Alpine Meadows base terminal would be located, as the Neighborhood Commercial zoning designation does not allow for the presence of ski lifts. In particular, the existing Open Space zone surrounding the base area would be modified slightly to encompass the proposed location of the Alpine Meadows base terminal. This rezone would be in addition to the General Plan amendment required to add the proposed Base-to-Base Gondola to the Future Potential Ski Lifts Map associated with the SVGPLUO, discussed above. With Board of Supervisor approval of these requested land use entitlements, the project would be consistent with Placer County zoning designations for the project site.

NEPA Effects Conclusion

Alternative 2 would require a Forest Service SUP amendment as well as a General Plan amendment, rezone, and CUP. If these entitlements are approved, Alternative 2 would be consistent with all anticipated land uses and policies included in the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, *Alpine Meadows General Plan*, and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*. Under NEPA, and considering the NEPA indicators, absent RPMs and/or mitigation, there would be an **adverse** effect because Alternative 2 would conflict with the current SVGPLUO and zoning designations; however, if the entitlements described above are approved, there would be **no effect** related to land use consistency because conflicts with the overall intent of relevant plans, policies, or zoning would be eliminated. There are no applicable RPMs that would mitigate this effect.

CEQA Determination of Effects

Alternative 2 would require a General Plan amendment to the SVGPLUO to add the proposed Base-to-Base Gondola to the Potential Future Ski Lifts map, a rezone to change the existing zoning designation from Neighborhood Commercial to Open Space in the area where the Alpine Meadows base terminal would be located, and the grant of a CUP. If these entitlements are approved, Alternative 2 would be consistent with the overall anticipated land uses and policies included in the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, *Alpine Meadows General Plan*, and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*. Under CEQA, and using the CEQA criteria, this effect would be **significant** because Alternative 2 would conflict with the current SVGPLUO and zoning designations; however, if the entitlements described above are approved, there would be a **less-than-significant** effect related to land use consistency because conflicts with the overall intent of relevant plans, policies, or zoning would be eliminated. There are no applicable RPMs that would reduce this impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.4.3.3 ALTERNATIVE 3

Impact 4.4-1 (Alt. 3): Consistency with Relevant Federal and Local Rules and Regulations

With the Forest Service SUP amendment as well as Placer County's General Plan amendment, rezone and CUP, Alternative 3 would result in the construction of a gondola. This development would involve the same project components and land uses as Alternative 2, with the primary difference being the modified location of the Alpine Meadows mid-station and associated alteration in the gondola alignment. With this modified alignment, the gondola would not be constructed within any part of the private lands within the congressionally mapped GCW. A General Plan amendment to the SVGPLUO is necessary to add the Base-to-Base Gondola to the Future Potential Ski Lifts Map and a rezone is necessary to change the existing zoning designation from Neighborhood Commercial to Open Space in the area where the Alpine Meadows base terminal would be located. Under NEPA, and considering the NEPA indicators, absent RPMs and/or mitigation measures, there would be an **adverse** effect related to consistency with relevant rules and regulations because a General Plan amendment and rezone would be necessary. There are no applicable RPMs that would mitigate this effect. Under CEQA, and using the CEQA criteria, there would be a **significant** effect related to consistency with relevant rules and regulations because a General Plan amendment and rezone would be necessary. There are no applicable RPMs that would reduce this impact. If the General Plan amendment and the rezone are approved by the Board of Supervisors, these potential conflicts with the SVGPLUO and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance* would be eliminated; there would be **no effect** under NEPA, and a **less-than-significant** effect under CEQA. Alternative 3 would not lead to any physical land use conflicts regardless of whether or not the above entitlements are approved.

The effects on land uses under Alternative 3 would be the same as those described above for Alternative 2 because the project components and land uses would be the same. The primary difference between these alternatives is the modified location of the Alpine Meadows mid-station and associated alteration in the gondola alignment. Under Alternative 3, the Alpine Meadows mid-station and associated gondola alignment would be located on portions of the Caldwell property that are entirely outside of the congressionally mapped GCW. This is discussed further in Section 4.3, "Wilderness." For the same reasons described above for Alternative 2, Alternative 3 would not create any conflicts with the land uses policies of any relevant planning documents following approval of the Forest Service SUP amendment as well as a General Plan amendment, rezone, and CUP.

NEPA Effects Conclusion

Alternative 3 would require a Forest Service SUP amendment as well as a General Plan amendment, rezone and CUP. If these entitlements are approved, Alternative 3 would be consistent with all anticipated land uses and policies included in the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, *Alpine Meadows General Plan*, and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*. Under NEPA, and considering the NEPA indicators, absent RPMs and/or mitigation, there would be an **adverse** effect because Alternative 3 would conflict with the current SVGPLUO and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*; however, if the entitlements described above are approved, there would be **no effect** related to land use consistency because conflicts with the overall intent of relevant plans, policies, or zoning would be eliminated. There are no applicable RPMs that would mitigate this effect.

CEQA Determination of Effects

Alternative 3 would require a General Plan amendment to the SVGPLUO to add the proposed Base-to-Base Gondola to the Future Potential Ski Lifts Map, a rezone to change the existing zoning designation from Neighborhood Commercial to Open Space in the area where the Alpine Meadows base terminal would be located, and the grant of a CUP. If these entitlements are approved, Alternative 3 would be consistent with the overall anticipated land uses and policies included in the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, *Alpine Meadows General Plan*, and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*. Under CEQA, and using the CEQA criteria, this effect would be **significant** because implementation of Alternative 3 would conflict with the current SVGPLUO and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*; however, if the entitlements described above are approved, there would be a **less-than-significant** effect related to land use consistency because conflicts with

the overall intent of relevant plans, policies, or zoning would be eliminated. There are no applicable RPMs that would reduce this impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.4.3.4 ALTERNATIVE 4

Impact 4.4-1 (Alt. 4): Consistency with Relevant Federal and Local Rules and Regulations

With the Forest Service SUP amendment as well as Placer County's General Plan amendment, rezone and CUP, Alternative 4 would result in the construction of a gondola. This development would involve the same project components and land uses as Alternatives 2 and 3, with the primary difference being the modified location of the Alpine Meadows mid-station and associated alteration in the gondola alignment. With this modified alignment, the gondola would not be constructed within any part of the private lands within the congressionally mapped GCW. A General Plan amendment to the SVGPLUO is necessary to add the Base-to-Base Gondola to the Future Potential Ski Lifts Map and a rezone is necessary to change the existing zoning designation from Neighborhood Commercial to Open Space in the area where the Alpine Meadows base terminal would be located. Under NEPA, and considering the NEPA indicators, absent RPMs and/or mitigation measures, there would be an **adverse** effect related to consistency with relevant rules and regulations because a General Plan amendment and rezone would be necessary. There are no applicable RPMs that would mitigate this effect. Under CEQA, and using the CEQA criteria, there would be a **significant** effect related to consistency with relevant rules and regulations because a General Plan amendment and rezone would be necessary. There are no applicable RPMs that would reduce this impact. If the General Plan amendment and the rezone are approved by the Board of Supervisors, these potential conflicts with the SVGPLUO and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance* would be eliminated; there would be **no effect** under NEPA, and a **less-than-significant** effect under CEQA. Alternative 4 would not lead to any physical land use conflicts regardless of whether or not the above entitlements are approved.

The effects on land uses under Alternative 4 would be the same as those described above for Alternative 2 because the project components and land uses would be the same. The primary difference between these alternatives is the modified location of the Alpine Meadows mid-station and associated alteration in the gondola alignment. Under Alternative 4, the Alpine Meadows mid-station and associated gondola alignment would be located on portions of the Caldwell property that are entirely outside of the congressionally mapped GCW. This is discussed further in Section 4.3, "Wilderness." For the same reasons described above for Alternative 2, Alternative 4 would not create any conflicts with the land uses policies of any relevant planning documents following approval of the Forest Service SUP amendment as well as a General Plan amendment, rezone, and CUP.

NEPA Effects Conclusion

Alternative 4 would require a Forest Service SUP amendment as well as a General Plan amendment, rezone and CUP. If these entitlements are approved, Alternative 4 would be consistent with all anticipated land uses and policies included in the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, *Alpine Meadows General Plan*, and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*. Under NEPA, and considering the NEPA indicators, absent RPMs and/or mitigation, there would be an **adverse** effect because Alternative 4 would conflict with the current SVGPLUO and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*; however, if the entitlements described above are approved, there would be **no effect** related to land use consistency because conflicts with the overall intent of relevant plans, policies, or zoning would be eliminated. There are no applicable RPMs that would mitigate this effect.

CEQA Determination of Effects

Alternative 4 would require a General Plan amendment to the SVGPLUO to add the proposed Base-to-Base Gondola to the Future Potential Ski Lifts Map, a rezone to change the existing zoning designation from Neighborhood Commercial to Open Space in the area where the Alpine Meadows base terminal would be

located, and the grant of a CUP. If these entitlements are approved, Alternative 4 would be consistent with the overall anticipated land uses and policies included in the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, *Alpine Meadows General Plan*, and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*. Under CEQA, and using the CEQA criteria, this effect would be **significant** because implementation of Alternative 4 would conflict with the current SVGPLUO and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*; however, if the entitlements described above are approved, there would be a **less-than-significant** effect related to land use consistency because conflicts with the overall intent of relevant plans, policies, or zoning would be eliminated. There are no applicable RPMs that would reduce this impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

4.4.3.5 SUMMARY OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

Table 4.4-1 provides a summary of the effects determinations for the direct and indirect effects evaluated above for each alternative.

For Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative, there would be no effect for all NEPA indicators and CEQA criteria.

Addressing the action alternatives, for Impact 4.4-1, there would be no effect for all NEPA indicators and a less-than-significant effect for all CEQA criteria. These determinations would only result following the approval of the Forest Service SUP amendment, as well as Placer County's General Plan amendment, rezone, and CUP. With these entitlements, all actions alternatives would be consistent with anticipated land uses and policies included in the Forest Plan, *Placer County General Plan*, SVGPLUO, *Alpine Meadows General Plan*, and *Placer County Zoning Ordinance*. While the proposed gondola alignment would differ under each action alternative, there is no meaningful difference in effects to land use between the action alternatives.

Table 4.4-1 Summary of Direct and Indirect Effects

Impact	Applicable Analytical Indicators and Significance Criteria	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4
4.4-1: Consistency with Relevant Federal and Local Rules and Regulations	Identification of project inconsistencies with direction and policy contained in the *Tahoe National Forest Plan*, *Alpine Meadows General Plan Land Use Ordinance*, *Squaw Valley General Plan Land Use Ordinance*, and *Placer County General Plan* (including employee housing requirements); discussion of potential impacts on adjacent private landowners	No effect	With General Plan amendment and rezone, no effect under NEPA and less than significant under CEQA	With General Plan amendment and rezone, no effect under NEPA and less than significant under CEQA Same as for Alternative 2	With General Plan amendment and rezone, no effect under NEPA and less than significant under CEQA Same as for Alternatives 2 and 3
	Conflict with General Plan/community plan/specific plan designations or zoning or plan policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect; result in the development of incompatible uses and/or the creation of land use conflicts; disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community (including a low-income or minority community); result in a substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area	No effect	With General Plan amendment and rezone, no effect under NEPA and less than significant under CEQA	With General Plan amendment and rezone, no effect under NEPA and less than significant under CEQA Same as for Alternative 2	With General Plan amendment and rezone, no effect under NEPA and less than significant under CEQA Same as for Alternatives 2 and 3

4.4.4 Cumulative Effects

4.4.4.1 METHODS AND APPROACH

The list of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects considered in this cumulative analysis is provided in Chapter 3 of this Final EIS/EIR. The spatial scope for this cumulative effects analysis of land use includes the extent of the Alpine Meadows and Squaw Valley developed ski areas and public and private lands immediately adjacent to the ski areas.

Any present or reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity of the project site that have the potential to create adverse impacts on existing land use practices are listed below.

Project	Potential Impacts
White Wolf project	Obstructions to the Five Lakes Trail
	Development on private lands within the congressionally mapped GCW
Alpine Sierra Subdivision	Increased residential development within project area

4.4.4.2 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in a continuation of existing conditions at the project site. Therefore, there would be no direct and indirect impacts and thus by definition no cumulative impacts on land use practices in the project area.

Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, there would be no cumulative effects under NEPA and less-than-significant cumulative effects under CEQA to the land use practices of the project area. The only reasonably foreseeable future action with the potential to result in cumulative effects in the project area is the White Wolf project. The White Wolf project would be additive to Alternative 2 and is in no way connected; implementation of the alternative is not dependent on the White Wolf project, and the White Wolf project is not dependent on implementation of Alternative 2.

The White Wolf project would change the residential land use on the Caldwell property from one to 38 residences, associated amenities and outbuildings, and an additional private ski lift. Although the White Wolf project proposes the development of 38 homes on the property, the residential land use of the Caldwell property would continue. The project would not contribute to this land use change and therefore has no cumulative effect under NEPA and a less-than-significant cumulative effect under CEQA.

The White Wolf project could result in development (homes, associated onsite improvements and a private lift) on the private lands within the congressionally mapped GCW as well as on the remainder of the Caldwell property outside of the congressionally mapped GCW. Alternative 2 would not contribute to this effect and therefore would result in no effect under NEPA and a less-than-significant effect under CEQA with regard to land use practices in the project area when considered cumulatively with the White Wolf project.

Alternatives 3 and 4

The contribution of Alternative 3 or Alternative 4 to the cumulative effects that could occur on land use as a result of the White Wolf project would have no effect under NEPA and a less-than-significant effect under CEQA. The primary difference between Alternative 2 and Alternatives 3 and 4 is the location of the Alpine Meadows mid-station and associated alteration in the gondola alignment. Under Alternative 3 or 4, the Alpine Meadows mid-station would provide lift access for residents of the homes that would be built with implementation of the White Wolf project. With the exception of this difference, the cumulative effects associated with Alternatives 3 and 4 would be nearly the same as those discussed above for Alternative 2.