

13.0 PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES

This chapter describes the existing public services and utilities for the project area and any impacts anticipated with implementation of the proposed project. Public services and utilities included in this discussion are water, wastewater, fire protection, police protection, public schools, and maintenance of public facilities. Runoff and water quality are discussed in Chapter 11.0, “Hydrology and Water Quality.”

13.1 Environmental Setting

The project area is outside of existing municipal service areas for water and wastewater. The Spears Ranch portion of the Park contains an existing ranch house, with two supporting structures. Each of the buildings was formerly used as a single-family residence; the remainder is open space, including Coon Creek, which flows from the eastern portion of the Spears Ranch property to the westernmost property boundary. Other waterways within the Spears Ranch portion of the Park include Deadman Creek and Whiskey Diggins Canal.

13.1.1 WATER

Water sources in the project area are groundwater, Coon Creek, Deadman Creek, and Whiskey Diggins Canal. Potential groundwater sources in the area are rock fractures found in the existing hardpan; regional groundwater levels are expected to be greater than 50 feet in depth. An existing groundwater well serves the ranch house. For a more detailed description of water resources in the project area, see Chapter 11.0, “Hydrology and Water Quality.”

13.1.2 WASTEWATER

There is a septic system at the ranch house site; however, soils on-site are not optimal for septic systems. Soil data provided by the U.S. Geological Survey indicate limitations on the ability of project area soils to support the use of on-site sewage disposal, in which effluent from a septic tank is distributed into the soil through subsurface perforated pipe. Specifically, all soil complexes in the project area exhibit restricted permeability as a result of limited depth to bedrock or hardpan (USGS 2007). However, soil testing conducted for the project in 2008 indicated that soils suitable for septic systems exist in the southwest portion of the Park.

13.1.3 OTHER UTILITIES

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) provides electricity and natural gas service to most of Northern California and would supply the project area. AT&T provides telephone and communication services to the area, and the project area is within the service area of Auburn Placer Disposal Service. This company provides garbage pickup services and pickup service for recyclable materials.

13.1.4 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The project area is located in the Western Placer Unified School District, headquartered in Lincoln. Carlin C. Coppin Elementary School is the closest elementary school to the project area, located in the town of Lincoln approximately 9 miles from the project area. Carlin C. Coppin serves students from kindergarten through 5th grade (Carlin C. Coppin Elementary School 2007). The closest middle school to the project area is Glen Edwards Middle School, which is located in Lincoln approximately 11 miles from the project area and serves grades 6–8 (Western Placer Unified School District 2007). Lincoln High School, which serves grades 9–12, is the closest high school, also located in Lincoln approximately 10 miles from the project area (Lincoln High School 2007).

13.1.5 FIRE PROTECTION

The project area is within the fire protection area covered by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), under contract with the County. CalFire utilizes ground personnel/equipment and aerial equipment to fight fires within the project area (Placer County 2007). The project area is served by two of CalFire's existing staffed stations and two volunteer stations. The Ophir fire station is located on Wise Road in Auburn, approximately 12 miles southeast of the project area, and the Lincoln station is located on Oak Tree Lane in Lincoln, approximately 13.5 miles southwest of the project area. These stations have a total of two engines and a minimum of four full-time staff members. The Thermaland volunteer fire station, approximately 5 miles west of the project area, and the Fowler volunteer fire station, approximately 7.5 miles south, also serve the project area. Staffing levels are generally greater in the summer months (during fire season) and less in winter months because of the reduced demand for fire services. The two volunteer stations would be capable of providing four to 12 volunteer firefighting staff during an on-call situation (Eicholtz, pers. comm., 2007). According to the *Placer County General Plan* (General Plan), the County encourages the local fire protection agencies in the county to maintain an emergency response time of 10 minutes in rural areas of the county.

13.1.6 POLICE PROTECTION

Law enforcement services for the project area are provided by the County Sheriff's Department. The main station is based in Auburn. The Sheriff's Department operates three substations and three "service centers." The nearest facility to the project area that provides full police protection services is the Auburn station. Currently, the Auburn station is staffed by 25 patrol deputies and six patrol sergeants. In 2004, the station received approximately 51,000 calls for service from the reporting district in which the project is located.

13.2 REGULATORY SETTING

13.2.1 FEDERAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

No federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to public services are applicable to the proposed project.

13.2.2 STATE PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

No state plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to public services are applicable to the proposed project.

13.2.3 LOCAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND ORDINANCES

PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

The following are the relevant goals and policies identified by the *Placer County General Plan* (General Plan) (Placer County 1994) for public services.

GOAL 4.H: To provide adequate sheriff services to deter crime and to meet the growing demand for services associated with increasing population and commercial/industrial development in the county.

- ▶ **Policy 4.H.2.** The County Sheriff shall strive to maintain the following average response times for emergency calls for service:
 - a. 6 minutes in urban areas
 - b. 8 minutes in suburban areas
 - c. 15 minutes in rural areas
 - d. 20 minutes in remote rural areas

GOAL 4.I: To protect residents of and visitors to Placer County from injury and loss of life and to protect property and watershed resources from fires.

- ▶ **Policy 4.I.2.** The County shall encourage local fire protection agencies in the County to maintain the following standards (expressed as average response times to emergency calls):
 - a. 4 minutes in urban areas
 - b. 6 minutes in suburban areas
 - c. 10 minutes in rural areas

HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK VEGETATION, FUELS AND RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The following fire prevention measures, derived from the *Hidden Falls Regional Park Vegetation, Fuels and Range Management Plan*, apply to the project area and would be implemented by the County.

Short-Term (Less than 5 Years) Recommendations:

- ▶ Create defensible space (150 feet) around the perimeter of the parking/improvement area at the southeastern end of Park.
- ▶ Acquire an industrial-use knife chipper capable of chipping material up to 12 inches in diameter or participate in the existing County chipper program.
- ▶ Construct and maintain a fire-safe area adjacent to the interior park management road/emergency access down to and across Deadman Creek for 20 feet either side of the centerline of the road with at least 15 feet ground clearance above the road.
- ▶ Create shaded fuel break areas using hand crews and a chipper.
- ▶ Flag all boundaries of work areas and put up temporary signs to educate the public about shaded fuel breaks.
- ▶ Develop a plan that will outline measures to maintain defensible space around existing and proposed facilities, roads, and shaded fuel breaks.
- ▶ Finalize long-term plans for the Spears Ranch portion of the Park, including siting development areas and storage of park maintenance and emergency vehicles.
- ▶ Investigate options for locating a permanent crossing of Coon Creek, capable of supporting 90,000 pounds of heavy equipment.

Long-Term (More than 5 Years) Recommendations:

- ▶ Based on infrastructure plans, select one of the shaded fuel break areas that will help lower potential fire danger for those sites and assist in fighting fire.
- ▶ Create fire-safe areas adjacent to the main vehicle-access road system, including park maintenance/emergency access roads.
- ▶ Thin and clear defensible space areas around Park improvements such as buildings, parking areas, etc., as they are planned and built in the western portion of the Park.
- ▶ Thin out vegetation and mow grass-size vegetation in selected shaded fuel break areas.
- ▶ Develop a maintenance program for maintaining all defensible space, fire-safe, and shaded fuel break areas.

Grazing Recommendations

- ▶ The Park can either continue to be grazed on a year-round basis or seasonally.
- ▶ Carrying capacity estimates indicate that 75 cows would be an appropriate number to graze on a year-round basis in normal rainfall years.
- ▶ Develop at least two more livestock watering points, one on the Didion Ranch portion of the Park and the other on Spears Ranch portion of the Park to help improve livestock distribution.
- ▶ Consider the use of goats and/or sheep to reduce fuel loads, maintain shaded fuel breaks, and control noxious plants.
- ▶ Consider multi-species grazing to maintain shaded fuel breaks as the issues of electric fencing and guard dogs and public access are discussed. For the short term, it may make the most sense to use mechanical chipping and/or mowing to maintain the fuel breaks.

13.3 IMPACTS

13.3.1 ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Potential impacts on water, wastewater, fire protection, police protection, public schools, and other public facilities that would result from the proposed project were identified by comparing existing service capacity and facilities against anticipated future demand associated with implementation of the proposed project.

13.3.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Thresholds for determining the significance of impacts on public utilities and services were based on the Placer County CEQA checklist and Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. The project would have a significant impact on public services or utilities if it would:

- ▶ exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable regional water quality control board;
- ▶ require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects;
- ▶ require or result in the construction of new stormwater drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects;
- ▶ have insufficient water supplies available to serve the project and require new or expanded entitlements; or
- ▶ result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services (i.e., fire, police, schools, parks, and other public facilities).

Because the proposed project does not include new development, it would not result in demand for increased natural gas facilities or communication systems beyond their current capacity. Therefore, increased demand for these services is not evaluated further. Impacts related to water quality and water supply are discussed in Chapter 11.0, "Hydrology and Water Quality."

13.3.3 IMPACT ANALYSIS

IMPACT 13-1	Public Services and Utilities—Potential for Damage to Water or Wastewater Facilities. <i>Implementation of the proposed project would require the installation of up to two groundwater wells and a septic system within the Spears Ranch portion of the Park, and the existing groundwater well and septic system could be upgraded or abandoned and replaced as part of the project. The project would not damage any public water or wastewater facilities.</i>
Significance	<i>Less than Significant</i>
Mitigation Proposed	<i>None Warranted</i>
Residual Significance	<i>Less than Significant</i>

Up to two groundwater wells would be required for drinking water and restrooms as required to accommodate Park needs. The project would include renovation of the existing ranch house, and the two existing buildings southwest of the ranch house. Additional buildings may be constructed near the existing ranch house for overnight camp functions or environmental education. If constructed, these buildings would be within the facility development zone. Water for irrigation would continue to be supplied by the Nevada Irrigation District canal on the property, and irrigation needs are expected to be similar to past irrigation patterns.

Uses within the Park would include hiking, biking, equestrian uses, informational/educational classes and programs, multiple-day or overnight educational, agricultural, cultural, and scouting camps (subject to agreement and conditions determined by the County on a case-by-case basis), and access for school programs such as cross-country training and meets, and educational field trips that are consistent with passive recreation and education. The proposed uses within the Park, such as reservation-based events could result in an increase in Park attendance for the duration of the event. Any reservation-based events that would exceed the capacity of the on-site restrooms would need to supply portable toilets and any reservation-based events that would exceed the capacity of on-site wells would be required to supply their own water.

The existing water well on-site would be either rehabilitated to public-well standards or abandoned and replaced with a new well. A licensed well driller would be required to assess well locations and alternatives. A separate well would be drilled near the western parking area to serve the proposed restroom. A permit to construct the groundwater well and a public water provider's permit would be required. Although the existing well could be abandoned, it is not currently used for public consumption, and it would be replaced by another well that could better serve the Park, if rehabilitation is not feasible.

The proposed project would include permanent restroom facilities or portable and/or vault type restroom facilities. Restroom facilities would use low-flow toilets to reduce the use of water within the Park. The existing septic system constructed to serve the ranch house would be either used as is, expanded, or replaced, depending on its current condition and capacity needs for the future use of the ranch house. In addition, a new septic system would be installed to serve the parking-area restroom located at the entrance of the Park. This septic system would be located in the southwest portion of the Park. Associated underground pipelines would also be constructed to connect the septic system to the parking area and to the bunkhouse area. A contractor would remove septic tank sludge from the project area. Because the existing septic system does not currently support public use, it would be expanded or replaced by another septic system that could better serve the proposed uses around the existing ranch house.

Because no on-site water or wastewater facilities would be damaged as a result of the project and adequate water and wastewater facilities would be included for proposed uses, this impact would be less than significant.

IMPACT 13-2 **Public Services and Utilities—Increase in Demand for Police Services.** *Use of the proposed Park would increase demand for police services in the project area. However, measures would be taken to minimize such demand.*

Significance *Less than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less than Significant*

The proposed project would lead to an increase in the number of visitors to the project area, which is located in a rural area between Auburn and Lincoln. Park use would occur primarily from sunrise to sunset, with limited overnight use subject to County approval on a case-by-case basis. Primary use of the area would include hiking, biking, and equestrian uses, as well as educational programs; and access for school programs such as cross-country training and meets, and educational field trips that are consistent with passive recreation and education would occur within the Park.

The increased visitation would add to existing law enforcement demands in the area; however, oversight of the Park would be provided through the collective efforts of the County Sheriff’s Department, County maintenance staff, volunteer patrol groups, and users of the trails and facilities. It is also expected that a full-time caretaker may live on the Park grounds, which is expected to reduce the number of incidents of vandalism, crime, and misuse of Park property. In addition, the Park would be closed at night and all gates on access roads to the Park would be locked to further deter unauthorized activities.

Because the collective options for Park patrol would reduce illegal activities, the project would not place a significant demand on existing police services. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

IMPACT 13-3 **Public Services and Utilities—Increase in Demand for Fire Services.** *Construction and use of the Park facilities may increase the risk of wildfire in the project area because more people would be allowed into an area that is not currently open to the public. However, the County would implement measures to reduce the potential for a fire within the Park. Therefore, the project is not expected to cause a significant increase in demand for fire services.*

Significance *Less than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less than Significant*

Fire services in the project area are currently provided by CalFire. CalFire has rated the overall fire danger for the property as medium, which is based on several factors: risks to hydroelectric power, soil erodability, water storage facilities, water transportation facilities, timber resources, range resources, air basins involved, historic buildings and landmarks, housing, recreational opportunities, wildlife, infrastructure, fire-flood watershed facilities,

ecosystem sensitivity, and the amount of available fuels, such as dried woods and low-lying shrubs (Placer County 2007).

There is a potential for wildfire to occur during construction if equipment such as a trail dozer or mini excavator generates sparks near vegetation in construction areas. Depending on the equipment required for Park maintenance, equipment-related fire risks could persist. Implementation of the proposed project would also open the project area to the public, and occasional campfires may be allowed within the Park in association with overnight educational or scout camps, which could result in an increase in the potential for wildfires.

Although the project could cause an increase in the potential for wildfires, the potential for wildfire resulting from human or natural causes has previously existed in the project area. Campfires would be allowed only under restricted conditions and would not be allowed outside of the designated campfire pit areas within the facility development zone. The County would consult with CalFire on local fire conditions and would not allow campfires during high fire hazard days. The County would also provide 2 weeks notification to CalFire of any events that would have greater than 30 vehicles and/or between 100 and 200 participants so that the potential fire hazard of the event can be evaluated. CalFire may request cancellation of events if there are high fire risk conditions such as red flag warning days. The project would also include fire suppression facilities, including the construction of an emergency access bridge over Coon Creek, a new helistop on the Spears Ranch portion of the Park for emergency use, a hydrant system, and an emergency water storage system to be used for fire protection. The helistop within the Didion Ranch portion of the Park would be relocated adjacent to the Didion Ranch parking area immediately south of the existing helistop and would continue to provide the same level of emergency access. In addition, the *Hidden Falls Regional Park Vegetation, Fuels and Range Management Plan* will continue to serve as a working guide to reduce the risk of fire in the project area (Placer County 2007). Refer to measures described in Section 13.2.3 above.

Although the project could increase the potential risk of wildfire in the project area, the measures described above would improve CalFire’s ability to respond more quickly to fires and would reduce the severity and size of potential fires. Therefore, the project is not expected to cause a significant increase in the demand for fire services. This impact would be less than significant.

IMPACT 13-4	Public Services and Utilities—Increase in Emergency Response Times. <i>The proposed project may cause an increase in demand for emergency services. However, adequate access to the proposed Park would be provided for emergency vehicles. Therefore, current emergency response times are not expected to increase.</i>
Significance	<i>Less than Significant</i>
Mitigation Proposed	<i>None Warranted</i>
Residual Significance	<i>Less than Significant</i>

The proposed project may cause an increase in demand for emergency services. However, adequate access to the proposed Park would be provided for emergency vehicles. The project would include a new helistop on the Spears Ranch portion of the Park and a relocated helistop on the Didion Ranch portion of the Park for emergency use. Emergency access bridges would be provided to provide emergency access across Coon Creek. Public access to the Park would be provided via Garden Bar Road, and emergency access would be available from the existing access road/easement from Garden Bar Road to the proposed western parking area. This existing access road would be improved in phases as part of the project. Additional emergency access to portions of the Park would be available via Mears Drive and trails within the Didion Ranch portion of the Park. The County would also provide

2 weeks notification to CalFire of any events that would have greater than 30 vehicles and/or between 100 and 200 participants to allow for improved emergency response, if needed. Also see Impact 8-6, “Potential Interference with Emergency Response Routes,” in Chapter 8.0, “Transportation and Circulation,” for further discussion of emergency access. This impact would be less than significant.

IMPACT 13-5 **Public Services and Utilities—Temporary Disruption of Utility Service during Construction.**
Implementation of the proposed project could require the relocation of utility poles that are adjacent to Garden Bar Road. Relocation of utility poles could cause temporary disruptions in service.

Significance *Less than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less than Significant*

Aboveground utility poles carrying electricity and telephone/communication lines are located along the length of Garden Bar Road. These utility lines serve the residences along Garden Bar Road and are maintained by PG&E and AT&T. Road improvements to Garden Bar Road could include some areas of widening that would require relocation of adjacent utility poles. Utility poles may need to be relocated outside the footprint of the road improvements. Electrical and/or telephone service could be disrupted during relocation of these poles. Potential disruption of utility services during construction activities would be temporary. In addition, the County would coordinate utility relocation as part of the construction to avoid disruption. Therefore, before road improvements begin, the County would consult with PG&E and AT&T to determine the best course of action to avoid or minimize disruption of electrical and/or telephone service. If disruptions in service cannot be avoided, the utility providers would notify all residences that would be affected. This impact would be less than significant.

IMPACT 13-6 **Public Services and Utilities—Increase in Solid Waste and Wastewater Generation.** *Operation of the Park would increase generation of solid waste and wastewater on the Spears Ranch portion of the Park and would increase the demand for solid waste disposal services. However, solid waste and wastewater generated by the project are expected to be minimal. In addition, the County would contract with Auburn Placer Disposal to provide solid waste disposal service to the Park and the on-site sewage disposal system and/or vault system would be designed to accommodate Park use.*

Significance *Less than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less than Significant*

The proposed project would increase generation of solid waste and wastewater on the Spears Ranch portion of the Park, which would increase the demand for solid waste and wastewater disposal services to the Spears Ranch portion of the Park. Auburn Placer Disposal service currently provides solid waste disposal service for the Didion Ranch portion of the Park. The County would expand this disposal service to include the Spears Ranch portion of the Park. Solid waste disposal would be provided on a weekly or more frequent basis if needed. Solid waste would be stored on-site in enclosed bear-proof trash receptacles located throughout the Park until the waste can be hauled off-site to the nearest waste disposal facility. Daily use of the project area is not expected to generate a

large amount of solid waste and would not exceed the capacity of any landfills. Large events that would exceed the capacity of the disposal services provided for the Park would be required to provide additional disposal services or pay a fee to cover additional disposal services provided by County staff as a condition of the Temporary Event Permit.

In addition, an on-site sewage disposal system and/or vault toilets would be provided as part of the project. The on-site system and/or vault system would be designed with enough capacity to accommodate daily Park uses, including occasional overnight camping. Large events would be evaluated through the review of the Temporary Event Permit application process to determine if additional portable toilets would be required to accommodate the event. Because the solid waste and wastewater generated by the project would not exceed the capacity of any landfills or on-site systems and large events would be required to provide additional capacity, if needed, this impact would be less than significant.

13.4 MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are necessary.