COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/RESOURCE AGENCY
Environmental Coordination Services
County of Placer

DATE: June 4, 2018

TO: California State Clearinghouse
Responsible and Trustee Agencies
Interested Parties and Organizations

SUBJECT: ***Revised*** Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed Placer County Hidden Falls Regional Park Trails Network Expansion Project

REVIEW PERIOD: June 5, 2018 – July 6, 2018

Placer County (County) is the Lead Agency for the Hidden Falls Regional Park Trails Network Expansion Project (Project), and is preparing a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the Project to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.).[1] The purpose of this Revised Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to provide responsible agencies and interested persons with sufficient information in order to make meaningful responses as to the scope and content of the SEIR. Your timely comments will ensure an appropriate level of environmental review for the Project.

An NOP was previously issued for the Project, inviting comment from January 31, 2017 through March 1, 2017. This Revised NOP is being released because the project description has been amended to reflect the potential use of 50 acres located at 5345 Bell Road in Auburn (APNs 026-110-012 and 018) (the "Twilight Ride property") for additional trailhead parking (approximately 100 auto and 40 horse trailer spaces), as well as potential horse-boarding.

Project Description: Hidden Falls Regional Park currently includes approximately 30 miles of trails that are open to the public. The Project would expand the trail system into areas northeast, west, and east of the existing park, where the County holds existing trail easements or owns property. In total, approximately 30 additional miles of trails would be added, along with the construction of two additional bridges over Raccoon Creek between the existing regional park trail network and Taylor Ranch (as well as one additional bridge over Raccoon Creek within Hidden Falls Regional Park that was analyzed under the prior EIR), additional parking, access areas, and other improvements, and possible improvement of off-site access roads. The park features in the expansion areas would include accessibility features compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, drinking water fountains and restrooms, on-site groundwater wells, fire suppression facilities, equestrian features (e.g., horse watering, hitching posts, barn, paddocks, horse boarding), other potential concessions compatible with the characteristics of the park (e.g., bicycle rentals, nature education classes), picnic areas, benches, bear-proof trash receptacles, and interpretive displays.

The parcels involved in the expansion to the northeast are either owned by Placer Land Trust, or are held in a Conservation Easement by Placer Land Trust, with associated trail easements held by the County. Other connecting areas west and east of the existing park are owned by Placer County or the County holds trail easements within the areas. The Project would require the County's approval of a modified Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to cover the existing Hidden Falls Regional Park as well as the expansion areas. This modified CUP would supersede the existing CUP for the regional park, and would cover the development and operation of the existing and expanded trail network, the associated parking and roadway improvements needed, and other miscellaneous park amenities (listed in the prior paragraph).

The SEIR will evaluate the feasibility of parking and access improvements that would make optimal use of the parking area at Mears Place, would create opportunities to use already-permitted parking off Garden Bar Road on a limited, reservation basis, and would provide new vehicle access to and parking for trail network expansion areas to the north, at both the Harvego Bear River Preserve area and the Twilight Ride property on Bell Road. The

[1] An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was previously certified in 2010 for the expansion of Hidden Falls Regional Park (State Clearinghouse No. 2007062084).

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phasing and associated road improvements discussed in the original EIR for the Garden Bar entrance will be further clarified. The SEIR will also consider a system whereby park access use permits could be issued to adjacent landowners who would provide overflow parking spaces/horse-boarding facilities to visitors, and management strategies that would link available parking to potential park users before they arrive at the site. Lastly, the SEIR will analyze the types of uses which will be allowed throughout the park.

Project Location: The proposed trail expansion area is located northeast, west and east of the existing Hidden Falls Regional Park, and south of the Bear River in Placer County. The Project area is approximately 40 miles northeast of Sacramento (see Figure 1, Regional Location Map). The existing Hidden Falls Regional Park area encompasses approximately 1,200 acres, and includes a parking area at Mears Place, as well as an already-permitted future parking area located off of Garden Bar Road. Figure 2 shows the Project area including regional highways (e.g., State Route 49) and local roads including Big Hill Road through the center of the Project area; Mt. Pleasant Road to the south; Bell, Cramer, and Lone Star Roads to the east providing access from State Route 49; and Garden Bar Road to the west.

The proposed expansion areas to the northeast of the existing park consist of the areas known as Taylor Ranch (321 acres) and Harvego Bear River Preserve (1,773 acres), as well as privately-owned parcels with trail easements, such as the Liberty Ranch (313 acres). The trails will also cross the Kotomyan Preserve (160 acres) and the Outman Big Hill Preserve (80 acres). These areas are owned by the Placer Land Trust and are to be held as conservation land in perpetuity. Entry to these areas is currently limited to guided tours led by the Placer Land Trust. Placer County has trail easement rights within these properties. A parking lot and trail connection is also proposed from a County-owned parcel off of Garden Bar Road to the west of the existing park. Additionally, parking and trailhead access are proposed from the Twilight Ride property on Bell Road, as well as from the Harvego Bear River property. Figure 3 shows the existing regional park and the boundaries of the proposed trail network expansion areas.

For more information regarding the project, please contact Lisa Carnahan, at (530) 889-6837. A copy of this NOP cover letter, as well as additional information on the Project, is available for review at the Auburn Public Library, the Rocklin Public Library, the Lincoln Public Library, the Placer County Community Development Resource Agency (Auburn), and on the Placer County website:

http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/communitydevelopment/envcoordsvcs/eir

NOP Scoping Meeting: In addition to the opportunity to submit written comments, one public scoping meeting will be held by the County to inform interested parties about the Project, and to provide agencies and the public with an opportunity to provide comments on the scope and content of the EIR. This meeting will be held on Thursday, June 14, 2018, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Placer County Community Development Resource Center, Planning Commission Hearing Room, 3091 County Center Drive, Auburn, CA 95603.

NOP Comment Period: Written comments should be submitted at the earliest possible date, but not later than 5:00 p.m. on **July 6, 2018** to Shirlee Herrington, Environmental Coordination Services, Community Development Resource Agency, 3091 County Center Drive, Suite 190, Auburn, CA 95603. (530) 745-3132, Fax: (530) 745-3080, cdraecs@placer.ca.gov.

Published in Sacramento Bee and the Auburn Journal, June 10, 2018.

1.1 BACKGROUND

In January of 2010, the Placer County Planning Commission (Commission) approved a Conditional Use Permit (CUP No. 20090391) and certified an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (State Clearinghouse No. 2007062084) which added the property formerly known as the Spears Ranch (979 acres) to the 221-acre portion of Hidden Falls Regional Park (Park) already open to the public. These actions authorized Placer County (County) to operate and maintain the expanded Hidden Falls Regional Park (HFRP).

Presently, the County is considering expansion of the HFRP trail network system onto conservation lands either owned by Placer Land Trust (PLT) or held in a Conservation Easement by PLT, with associated trail easements held by the County, or onto land owned by the County. The project would improve access to the regional trail network by extending the existing HFRP trail system onto the conservation land and providing parking to support recreational activities as described below in Section 2.

The proposed expansion and modification to existing CUP No. 20090391 is a "project" as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and subject to environmental review. In the case of the proposed HFRP trails expansion project, the County intends to prepare a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. The focus of the SEIR is to determine whether the proposed HFRP trails expansion would result in effects not discussed in the prior EIR. The SEIR will also determine whether the project substantially increases the severity of previously identified impacts, identify additional mitigation measures, if needed, and determine whether alternatives previously thought to be infeasible and not adopted for the prior project are in fact feasible and should be incorporated into project approvals.

1.2 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Once a decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency must prepare an NOP to inform all responsible and trustee agencies (agencies) and interested persons that an EIR will be prepared (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082). The purpose of an NOP is to provide stakeholders with sufficient information describing the proposed project and its potential environmental effects to enable agencies and the public to make a meaningful response related to the scope and content of information to be included in the EIR.

The County originally issued an NOP for the proposed HFRP trails expansion in January of 2017. Subsequent to the release of the January 2017 NOP, the County approved the terms of a purchase and sale agreement that could lead to the acquisition of additional land with direct access to the existing trail network and provide additional opportunities for parking. Because of the changes in the proposed HFRP expansion areas from those identified in the January 2017 NOP, the County has elected to release a Revised NOP. Comments on potential environmental issues raised in response to the January 2017 NOP remain valid and need not be resubmitted. The purpose of this notice is twofold:

(1) to solicit input, by **July 6, 2018**, from interested individuals, groups, and agencies about the desired content and scope of the draft SEIR to be prepared by Placer County for the proposed project, and

(2) to announce a public scoping meeting on the proposed project, to be held at 6:00 p.m. on June 14, 2018, at the County Administrative Center, located at 175 Fulweiler Avenue, Auburn.

All comments on the Revised NOP shall be submitted to the County no later than **July 6, 2018**. Comments should be submitted to:

Shirlee Herrington
Environmental Coordination Services
Community Development Resource Agency
3091 County Center Drive, Suite 190
Auburn, CA 95603.
Phone: (530) 745-3132
Fax: (530) 745-3080
cdraecs@placer.ca.gov.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed trail expansion area is located northeast, west and east of the existing HFRP, and south of the Bear River in Placer County, approximately 40 miles northeast of Sacramento (see Figure 1, Regional Location Map). HFRP encompasses approximately 1,200 acres in the Sierra Nevada foothills, consisting of the properties formerly known as the Spears Ranch and Didion Ranch. Figure 2 shows the project area including regional highways (e.g., State Route 49) and local roads including Big Hill Road through the center of the project area; Mt. Pleasant Road to the south; Bell Road, Cramer Road, and Lone Star Road providing access from State Route 49 to the east; and Garden Bar Road to the west. The existing park has two access points, with an existing parking area at Mears Place and an area for an already-permitted future parking lot off Garden Bar Road.

Most of the proposed trail expansion areas are located north and northeast of the existing park within the Taylor Ranch (321 acres) and Harvego Bear River Preserve (1,773 acres), and on privately-owned parcels with trail easements, such as Liberty Ranch (313 acres). Trails will also cross the Kotomyan Preserve (160 acres) and Outman Big Hill Preserve (80 acres). Additionally, parking areas with trail connections are proposed from a County-owned parcel off of Garden Bar Road to the west of the existing park, and from the Twilight Ride property on Bell Road to the Taylor Ranch, and from the Harvego Bear River Preserve to the trail system in that area. Figure 2 shows the existing regional park, the parcel off of Garden Bar Road, the Twilight Ride property off of Bell Road, and the boundaries of the proposed trail network expansion areas.

Figure 3 illustrates the existing and proposed points of access and parking including areas proposed for expansion. The majority of the trails expansion area is located between the existing regional park and the Bear River to the north. Most of these areas are owned by the Placer Land Trust and will be held as conservation land in perpetuity. Entry to these areas is currently limited to guided tours led by the Placer Land Trust. Placer County has trail easement rights within these properties.

2.2 EXISTING SETTING

Existing Regional Park

The existing HFRP encompasses 1,200 acres and contains approximately 30 miles of multi-use trails, with parking located at Mears Place. Trails within the park cross Raccoon Creek (formerly Coon Creek) and Deadman Creek in three locations via pedestrian bridges. Raccoon Creek flows through the park from east to west. Existing park amenities include interpretive displays, restrooms, well, drinking

fountains, picnic areas, benches, trash receptacles, and hitching posts and horse-watering areas for equestrians.

Since fully opening to the public in 2013, HFRP, with its two waterfall overlooks and other recreational amenities, has grown substantially in popularity and visitation. As a result, the public parking area at Mears Place can become congested during holidays and weekends during good weather, and visitors have been turned away during these peak-use periods.

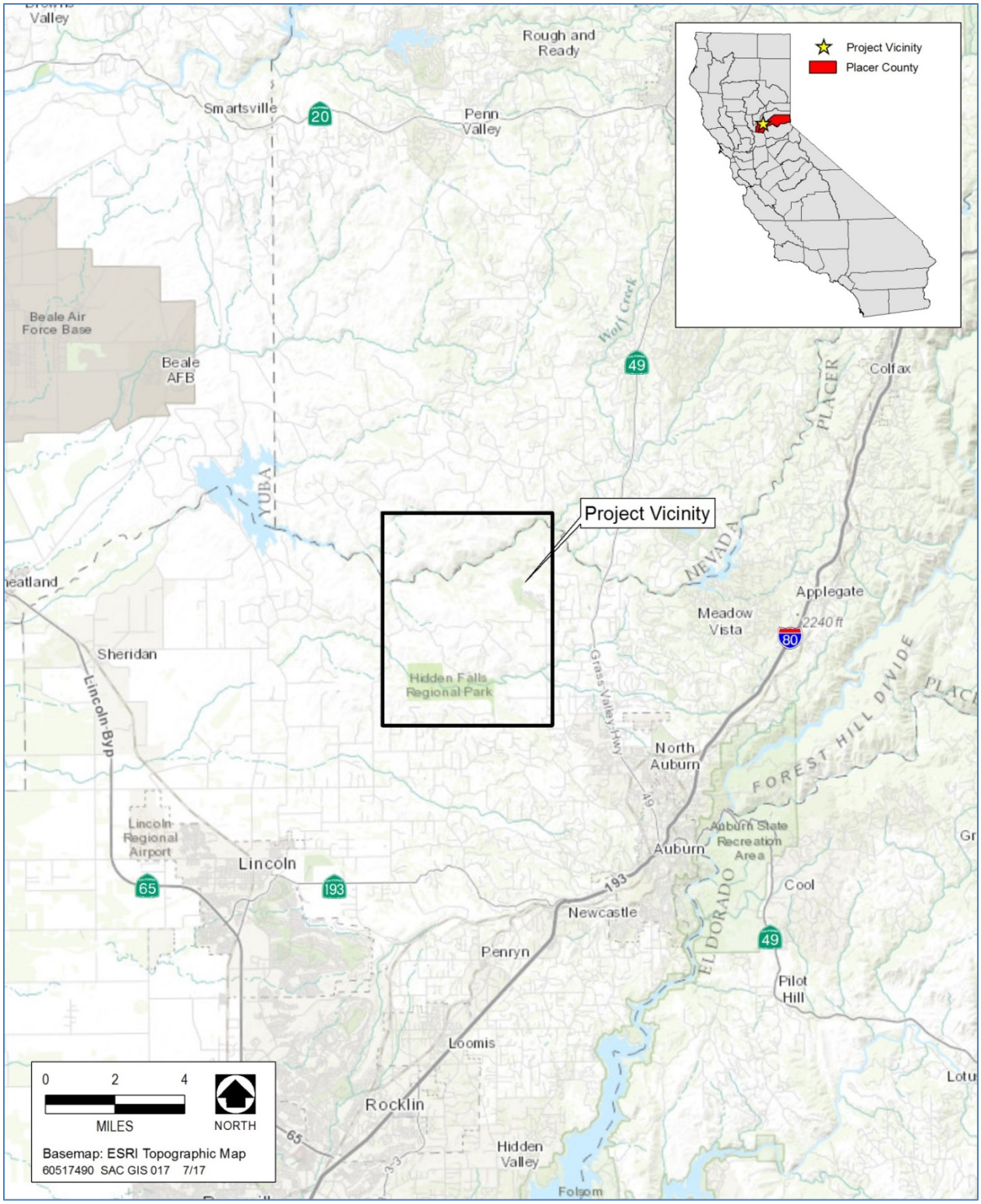

Figure 1 Regional Location

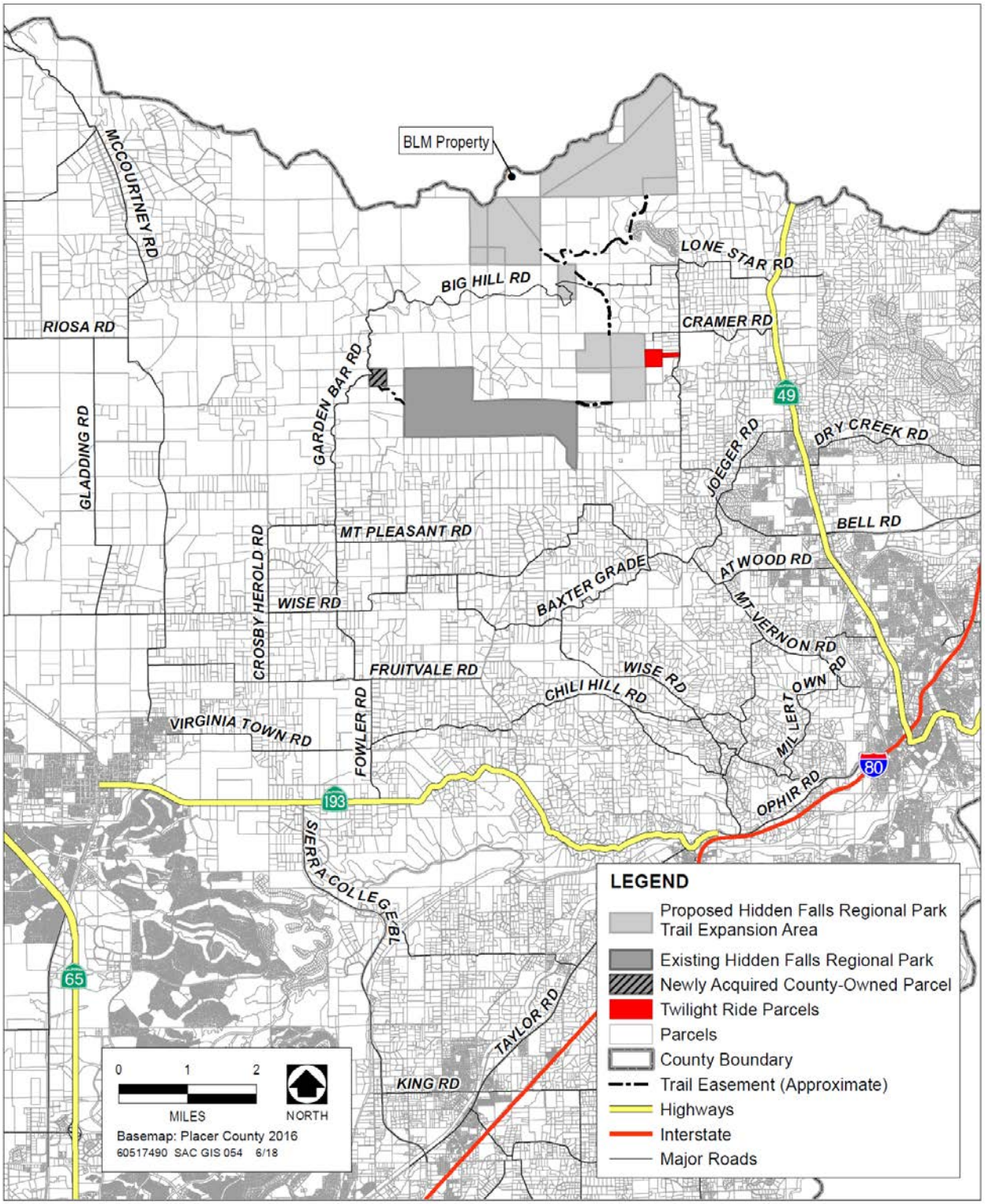

Figure 2 Project Area

The County Parks Division has implemented a series of operational measures to help rectify the existing parking issues, and to lessen the potential for visitors to be turned away at the entrance gate. Measures implemented to improve operations currently underway at the existing Mears parking lot include:

- Installing "No Parking" signs for a mile leading up to the park entrance;
- Use of Changeable Message Boards along the local roadways during high use days;
- Issuing daily messages on Social Media (Twitter and Facebook) regarding any trail closures and parking availability;
- Installing a web-cam with a view of the Mears Place parking area to provide real-time information on parking availability;
- Reconfiguring the Mears Place entrance to enhance traffic flow by including minor paving, signage, and pavement striping to change the direction of traffic and create a one-way flow; and
- Establishing an automated reservation system to help regulate parking availability by allowing visitors to reserve a space prior to traveling to the park.[1] Implementation of the reservation system began September 1, 2017. The intent of the reservation-based system of entry is to prevent patrons from being turned away due to unavailability of parking during peak usage times. Reservations to access the park are obtained online prior to coming to the park, thereby eliminating unnecessary vehicle trips to/from the park that must travel through the nearby neighborhoods.

The County will apply the knowledge gained from these operating methods in planning future parking areas for the expanded trails system so that any new parking areas function smoothly from the outset. Data from current use will be utilized in the SEIR to evaluate long term management strategies and provide for sustainable parking solutions which limit impacts on adjoining neighborhoods, improve the current user experience, and define future opportunities.

The existing 2009 Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for HFRP, CUP No. 20090391 approved on January 28, 2010, allows an additional parking area at the western end of the park, with access via Garden Bar Road. The County plans to construct a parking area to accommodate limited, reservation-based access off Garden Bar Road. Keeping vehicular travel to a limited number on Garden Bar Road will minimize off-site road improvements required to permit safe travel on the roadway. In anticipation of this access point becoming operational, the County acquired a new parcel off Garden Bar Road that would provide additional space dedicated for parking. Through an existing easement, this parcel would provide trail connections to the existing park. The Mears Place entrance to the park is currently under assessment with the intent to add a gated entry system and to add up to 25 additional automobile parking spaces in an overflow area. In addition, this SEIR will evaluate parking areas at the Harvego Bear River Preserve area and at the Twilight Ride property along Bell Road.

The SEIR will also consider the potential environmental impacts of granting Use Permits to adjacent property owners who may be allowed to charge park visitors for use of parking spaces and/or provide horse boarding and access to the park through private gates. Use Permits would regulate the number and

[1] https://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/facility/parks/parks-content/parks/hidden-falls

size of allowed vehicles, hours of operation, private gate usage, and other conditions to facilitate orderly use.

County Parks staff will request the approval of a modification to the existing CUP that encompasses the allowed uses on both the existing park and expansion areas. As part of this project, the type and size of allowed events and facilities will be described in greater detail and analyzed in the SEIR. The events to be considered include, but are not limited to, those allowed by the existing CUP (educational facilities, interpretive/educational classes and programs, supervised group camping, disc golf, depredation hunting, and reservation-based events), and new uses such as small venue gatherings (i.e. those involving less than 25 attendees and no amplified sound), limited horse boarding, and rentals and concessions operating within the park boundary or expansion areas. All current and proposed uses would need to complement the passive recreational and nature enjoyment features characteristic of this regional park.

Expansion Area Characteristics

The proposed trail expansion areas are mainly located northeast of the existing park, and south of the Bear River, with other connecting trails directly to the east and west of the park. Figure 3 shows the boundaries of the trail expansion areas and shows that the project area has few roads and includes expansive undeveloped areas within the Raccoon Creek and Bear River watersheds. The area is characterized by blue oak woodland and oak–foothill pine woodland and is included in the proposed *Placer County Conservation Plan*, currently under development by the County.

The Placer Land Trust owns the Harvego Bear River Preserve, Taylor Ranch, Kotomyan Big Hill Preserve, and Outman Big Hill Preserve in fee. Taylor Ranch (321 acres) has an existing 4-mile loop trail that also crosses the 160-acre Kotomyan Preserve to the west. Raccoon Creek flows across Taylor Ranch and into Hidden Falls Regional Park. Twilight Ride is a 50-acre property that connects Taylor Ranch to Bell Road. It could provide parking for automobiles and horse trailers, facilities for horse boarding, and add another access point to the existing trail system. Liberty Ranch (313 acres) is a privately-owned cattle ranch currently under Williamson Act contract. This area has no existing trails; its intermittent drainages are tributary to the Bear River. The Placer Land Trust holds a conservation easement on the Liberty Ranch property and Placer County has a dedicated trail easement within the property that connects to the other Placer Land Trust parcels. The County's trail easement on the Liberty Ranch property is limited to a previously surveyed 25-foot wide corridor, whereas the trail easements on the remainder of the expansion area are "blanket" in nature. Therefore, there is less opportunity for trail alignment refinement on the Liberty Ranch property than there is within the rest of the expansion area under the current status of easement rights. The adjacent Outman Big Hill Preserve (80 acres) has no existing trails. Harvego Bear River Preserve (1,773 acres) has a working cattle ranch. The area has an extensive network of existing ranch roads and some trails built by the Placer Land Trust and consists of oak woodlands and grasslands adjacent to the Bear River. The area's intermittent drainages are tributary to the Bear River.

The parcel to the west of the park along Garden Bar Road is characterized by blue oak and oak-foothill pine woodlands. The County-owned parcels and easement areas directly east of the park abut Raccoon Creek, and connect the existing park with the Taylor Ranch Preserve.

The lands adjacent to these areas consist of rolling hills and are primarily private lands used for agriculture, grazing, and rural residences. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owns the area in between the two portions of the Harvego Bear River Preserve and south of the Bear River.

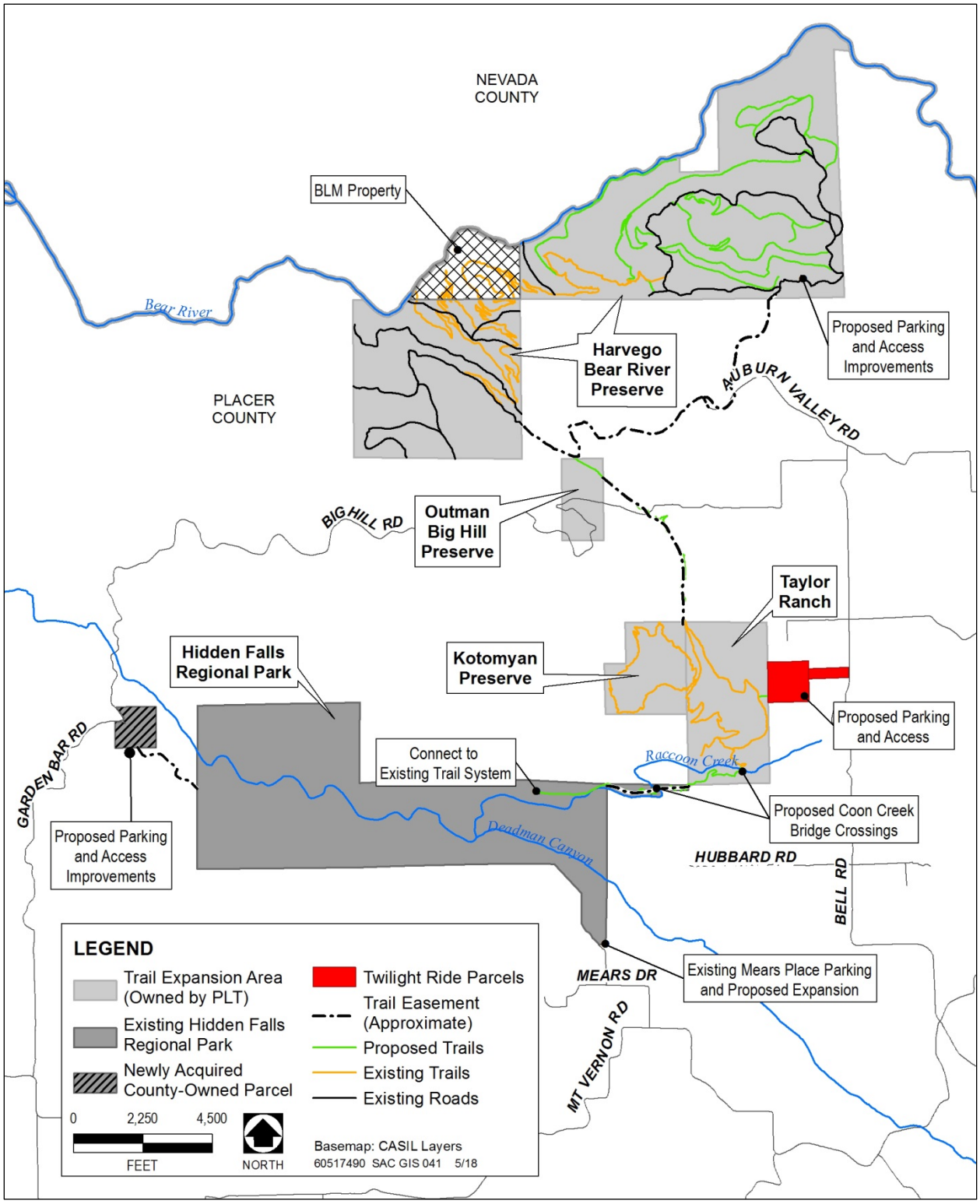

Figure 3: Proposed Project

2.3 PROJECT ELEMENTS

Placer County has collaborated with the Placer Land Trust to preserve approximately 2,500 acres of open space located north and east of HFRP. These lands, as well as connecting areas directly east and west of the existing park that are owned or held in easement by Placer County would accommodate the proposed future expansion of the public trail network from the regional park up to the Bear River. Combining the 30 miles of existing trails in the park with additional existing and new trails in the proposed trail expansion areas would provide more than 60 miles of multi-use, natural-surface trails. The expanded trails network would connect to the existing trail system in the regional park via existing easements between the park and trails in Taylor Ranch and Kotomyan Preserve, with additional connections through Liberty Ranch and Outman Big Hill Preserve to future and existing trails and ranch roads within the Harvego Bear River Preserve.

The County's discretionary actions would include approval of an amended CUP covering the existing HFRP and the expansion areas, including the designated lands to the northeast, the parcel west of the existing park that was recently acquired by the County, the areas east of the park that connect to Taylor Ranch and the Twilight Ride property. This permit and the County's SEIR would cover:

- Expanding the HFRP trails network from 30 miles to approximately 60 miles through the construction of new natural-surface trails within the lands owned or held in conservation easements by Placer Land Trust and on land owned by the County or where the County has easements;
- Project-level review of proposed trail corridors and parking areas and a program-level review of other areas within the Placer Land Trust parcels where trails or other amenities may be constructed;
- Constructing two additional bridges over Raccoon Creek between the existing regional park trail network and Taylor Ranch;
- Adding parking and access area improvements, including parking and access at Harvego Bear River Preserve for access to the northern areas of the expanded trail network, minor changes to the planned parking and access from Garden Bar Road to the west of the park, the addition of up to 25 more parking spots at the Mears Place entrance, and the potential addition of a parking/trailhead area with up to 100 vehicle and 40 equestrian parking spaces on the 50-acre Twilight Ride property;
- Allowing a limited number of privately-owned parking areas adjacent to the park boundaries with direct gate access into the park;
- Improving off-site roads which would provide access to new parking areas; and
- Identifying and clarifying the type and size of events and facilities allowed within the existing Hidden Falls Regional Park and expansion areas.

Trails and Amenities

The trails would be used for hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding, and would connect to existing County trail easements or County-owned property, as well as areas either owned or held in conservation easement by the Placer Land Trust. As with the existing park areas, no motorized vehicles (e.g., motorcycles and off highway vehicles) would be allowed within the trails expansion area. The use of motorized vehicles in special circumstances, such as for maintenance, emergency response, accessibility assistance, and/or electric bicycles (eBikes), will be regulated through Article 12.24 et seq. of the Placer County Code ("Public Recreation Areas"). The expanded trails network would include existing trails,

existing roads and paths, and new trails based on a conceptual trail layout developed by the County and the Placer Land Trust.

The preliminary layout for approximately 30 miles of new multi-use trail construction is shown in Figure 3 and is based on each area's opportunities and constraints, including topography, drainage crossings, locations of cattle operations, and scenery. The layout may be refined further based on the results of constructability assessments and biological and cultural resources surveys. Additional trails and amenities may be developed specifically for the benefit of visitors with physical handicaps, above and beyond minimum compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The park features in the expansion areas would include drinking water fountains and restrooms, on-site groundwater wells, fire suppression facilities, equestrian features (e.g., horse watering, hitching posts), picnic areas, benches, bear-proof trash receptacles, and interpretive displays. A horse barn with associated corrals and paddocks and limited horse boarding is a potential use under consideration for the Twilight Ride property.

Bridges

The existing trails in HFRP are connected by three bridges across Raccoon Creek/Deadman Creek and rock/culvert passages and timber bridges over intermittent streams. Within the existing park boundaries, there is one additional bridge over Raccoon Creek which was analyzed under the prior EIR and is still planned for construction. To provide connectivity within the park's expanded trail network, the County plans to construct two additional bridges across Raccoon Creek in the area that connects to Taylor Ranch (Figure 3). One tributary of Raccoon Creek that lies between Hidden Falls and Taylor Ranch would require spanning with multiple culverts, box culverts, or a bridge. These bridges would provide access for pedestrians, equestrians, emergency vehicles, and small maintenance vehicles, and would be designed to minimize impacts on stream hydrology and wildlife habitat. The County would also construct foot bridges over intermittent drainages throughout the expanded trails network. The foot bridges would be designed to fit the rustic character of the surroundings and may require construction or replacement of culverts or construction of rock-lined stream crossings.

Parking and Access

The SEIR will evaluate the feasibility of parking improvements that would make optimal use of the existing parking area at Mears Place, would create opportunities to use reservation-based parking off Garden Bar Road, and would provide new vehicle access to and parking for trail network expansion areas to the north and east. Potential on-site parking areas have been identified within the Harvego Bear River Preserve area, along with a site along Bell Road adjacent to Taylor Ranch, as indicated on Figure 3.

The SEIR will also evaluate a County proposal to issue permits to adjacent landowners who would provide overflow parking spaces to visitors, and management strategies that would electronically alert visitors to parking availability before they arrive at the site.

Planning for the proposed new or expanded parking areas will be based on evaluation of parking demands derived from existing peak period traffic surveys which identified the number of vehicles accessing the park and the number of vehicles turned away after the existing parking facility filled, and the average visit duration. However, to achieve other resource management goals, parking availability during periods of peak demand would remain limited and managed through an online reservation system, which began operation in winter of 2017.

The SEIR's traffic and parking analysis will address the effects of implementing the project with the anticipated parking supply and operation of the newly created management systems with regards to overflow parking demands and vehicle travel on adjoining streets during peak season Saturday conditions. The County will evaluate the extent to which these demand forecasts could be accommodated on-site and through parking management measures, such as the new reservation system, and extending those measures to the new parking areas.

The existing CUP for HFRP allows for an additional parking area at the western end of the park to be accessed via Garden Bar Road. The 2009 EIR contained a detailed phasing plan to develop parking in this area that began with a public access gate, connecting roadway to the existing access road, fencing and cattle guards on the access road, along with a staging area. Phase 1 also included permitting classroom sized groups to access the site through the Garden Bar entrance with an appointment so that the gate could be opened to allow entrance. The SEIR will consider additional phased improvements and management options to be implemented between Phase 1 and Phase 2. With the requirement to obtain a reservation prior to arriving at the park, unnecessary vehicle trips to the park would be eliminated, but roadway improvements may be needed to ensure public safety.

Roadway Improvements

The SEIR will evaluate potential roadway improvements and will use the information the County has collected on traffic count data to determine Saturday peak-hour traffic volumes, current roadway capacities, intersection levels of service (LOS), design limitations, and safety issues (roadway width, design speed, and sight distance limitations) in the analysis. Proposed roadway improvements will be identified by estimating potential future traffic volumes and roadway improvements needed to accommodate visitors traveling to and from the park.

Construction, Operation and Maintenance

The trails and other features described above would be constructed over a number of years as funding allows. Trail and bridge construction would coincide with favorable weather conditions. The trails would be constructed using a combination of methods, including both the use of small construction equipment and hand clearing of vegetation. Helicopter use may be required to access the most remote areas of bridge construction. Trail widths would vary as needed based on safety considerations and the requirement to avoid biological or cultural resources. Vegetation clearing would be scheduled outside the breeding season of migratory birds, including raptors. The proposed trail system and recreational facilities would be designed to be as low maintenance as practicable, although some regular maintenance of the trails and ancillary facilities would be required, including clearing vegetation, maintaining trails, and removing fallen trees. All operation and maintenance activities are expected to be similar to those currently undertaken within the existing park boundaries.

3.0 PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND SCOPE OF THE EIR

Placer County has determined that a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) should be prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of expanding the Hidden Falls Regional Park trails network. The SEIR will incorporate the content of the 2009 Hidden Falls Regional Park EIR and will

explain the basis for incorporating the previous EIR's conclusions regarding such topics as population and housing and mineral resources. As required by CEQA, the SEIR will describe existing conditions and evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed project and a reasonable range of alternatives, including the no-project alternative. It will address direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. The SEIR will identify feasible mitigation measures, if available, to reduce potentially significant impacts. Based upon preliminary environmental review, it was determined that the proposed project would not result in significant impact to the following areas and, therefore, these areas do not require further analysis in this SEIR: Population, Employment and Housing, Mineral Resources, and Recreation.

The following environmental effects will be evaluated in the SEIR:

Aesthetics. This section will assess the potential impacts of added parking facilities and additional trails on scenic vistas, scenic resources, visual character, and light and glare. This section will use photographs of existing public views and descriptions of proposed parking facilities to evaluate impacts. The impact evaluation will describe how the County's thematic/stylistic design guidelines for Hidden Falls Regional Park will guide the design and selection of rustic amenities to reduce their aesthetic impacts.

Agriculture and Forestry. This section will address potential impacts on Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance; conflicts with existing zoning or Williamson Act contracts; and conversion of farmland or forest land to other uses.

Air Quality. The air quality analysis will evaluate potential air pollutant emissions from trail and parking lot construction and expanded trail visits using current Placer County Air Pollution Control District methods and will incorporate the air quality and climate change goals, projections, and impact findings from the 2013 General Plan Update.

Biological Resources. The biological resources section will address potential impacts on vegetation, wildlife habitat, special-status species, sensitive natural communities including wetlands, and trees/oak woodlands. Placer County recently conducted and is planning additional biological surveys (reconnaissance-level wildlife field surveys, special-status plant surveys, and wetland delineation) and a tree assessment in the proposed improvement areas.

This section will assess both direct impacts from construction and indirect effects from long-term trail use, visitation, and maintenance. It will also address potential impacts on wildlife migration corridors and any potential conflicts with the provisions of the proposed *Placer County Conservation Plan*.

Cultural Resources. This section will evaluate potential impacts on archaeological, historical, paleontological, and tribal cultural resources within the trail corridors and proposed parking areas. The County is conducting cultural resources surveys, including a records search and an archaeological pedestrian survey of the proposed new trails, parking areas, and road improvement areas. The County will also be conducting consultation with Native American Tribes in compliance with AB 52.

The assessment will describe the cultural setting, known resources, and methods used to identify and assess impacts; will evaluate potential impacts; and will present the mitigation measures that would be used during construction to reduce cultural resource impacts to less than significant.

Geology and Soils. This section will assess the potential geological and soils impacts of trail and parking area construction, including from grading and potential roadway improvements. The soils evaluation will

evaluate whether trail, bridge, or parking lot construction could result in substantial soil erosion, and will describe how the trails and bridges will be designed to minimize erosion to the extent practicable. The seismic evaluation will identify the potential for unstable soil or dangerous geological conditions (e.g., landslides, earthquakes) and will describe how those risks would be minimized by accounting for geology and soil factors in the structural design, construction, and operation of the trails and bridges.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions. This section will enumerate the project's greenhouse gas emissions based on additional visitor trips, construction and long-term operation and maintenance of the expanded trail network and the impact of those emissions on adopted plans, policies, or regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials. This section will address potential impacts from the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or releases of hazardous materials during construction and operations. The hazards evaluation would also evaluate potential exposure of trail users and any new structures to wildland fires.

Hydrology and Water Quality. This section will assess potential impacts on hydrology and water quality, including the potential for trail construction and the new bridges to affect Raccoon Creek water quality or hydrology, including from erosion or from restricting flow during high flows. This section would also evaluate whether installing wells for drinking water supply would deplete groundwater supplies.

Land Use. This section will evaluate the project's potential land use effects on adjacent parcels and land uses and consistency with Placer County's 2013 General Plan Update and regional plans and policies, as well as applicable habitat conservation planning currently underway as part of the *Placer County Conservation Plan*.

Noise. This section will evaluate potential short- and long-term noise impacts from trail and parking lot construction and ongoing use. Noise levels generated by construction equipment and trail/parking lot use will be estimated using noise modeling software and compared to County noise standards and ambient noise levels estimated based on existing land uses, including existing roadways and ranching operations.

Public Services. The expanded trail network has the potential to increase demands on law enforcement, fire protection, and other emergency services, such as search and rescue, beyond those of the existing Hidden Falls Regional Park. The SEIR will use updated records from law enforcement and other public services from the existing park uses to evaluate the need for public services in the expanded trail network areas and determine whether additional facilities are needed that could affect the environment during construction and operations.

Traffic and Transportation. This section will identify potential traffic (and parking) impacts based on existing conditions, the selected configuration for access roads and parking areas, and County level of service (LOS) standards. This evaluation will provide a quantitative assessment of increases in traffic levels and potential adverse circulation effects at intersections, known parking locations, and potential future parking locations. This section will also evaluate circulation and safety of trail users where trails cross roadways.

Utilities and Service Systems. This section will address potential impacts of adding drinking water supply, restroom facilities, and storm water drainage to serve the project area. It will also evaluate

potential impacts on landfill capacity and how Placer County would comply with solid waste laws and regulations.

Cumulative Impacts. Implementation of the proposed project could potentially result in significant impacts to the above resource areas. When taken together with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probable future projects, the project's contribution to the overall cumulative effect of all these activities could be considerable and will be evaluated in the SEIR.

ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE EIR. In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR Section 15126.6), the SEIR will describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that are capable of meeting most of the project's objectives, and that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. The SEIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the lead agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR will provide an analysis of the No-Project Alternative and will also identify the environmentally superior alternative.

4.0 PROJECT APPROVALS

Anticipated approvals and permits required prior to construction are listed below. All other regulatory framework will be discussed in the applicable sections of the SEIR.

4.1 APPROVALS REQUIRED BY PLACER COUNTY

The proposed project would require the following Placer County actions:

- Certification of the SEIR for the Hidden Falls Regional Park Trails Network Expansion Project and adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan;
- Conditional Use Permit Modification; and
- Grading Permit

The access-roadway improvements and utilities required to accommodate the expanded trail network may also require encroachment permits from the County Department of Public Works and Facilities and wastewater permits from the County Environmental Health Division.

4.2 APPROVALS ISSUED BY OTHER AGENCIES

The proposed project would require the following actions by entities other than Placer County:

- Clean Water Act Section 404 permit amendment for stream crossings at Raccoon Creek and other streams (United States Army Corps of Engineers);
- Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation (United States Fish and Wildlife Service);
- Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification amendment (Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region);
- Clean Water Act Section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit (Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region);
- Streambed Alteration Agreement amendment for stream crossings (California Department of Fish and Wildlife); and
- Encroachment permit for any construction within the floodplain of Raccoon Creek (Central Valley Flood Protection Board).