DRAFT

INITIAL STUDY
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

MOUNT SAN JACINTO STATE PARK
ROUND VALLEY MEADOW AND STREAM HEADCUT REPAIR AND ELEVATION RESTORATION PROJECT

JUNE 2009

State of California
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

PROJECT: **Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration**

LEAD AGENCY: California Department of Parks and Recreation

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS: The Initial Study for this Mitigated Negative Declaration is available for review at:

- Inland Empire District Headquarters
  California Department of Parks & Recreation
  17801 Lake Perris Drive
  Perris, California 92570

- Mount San Jacinto State Park
  California Department of Parks & Recreation
  25905 Highway 243
  Idyllwild, California 92549

- Mount San Jacinto State Park Visitor Center
  Palm Springs Aerial Tramway
  1 Tramway Road
  Palm Springs, California 92262

- Riverside County Library, Idyllwild Branch
  58185 Pine Crest Avenue
  Idyllwild, California 92549

- City of Palm Springs Library
  Library Center
  300 South Sunrise Way
  Palm Springs, California 92262

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Department of Parks and Recreation (Lead Agency) proposes to restore the degraded lower portion of Round Valley Meadow, in Mount San Jacinto State Park, by borrowing nearby (on-site) native soil material to fill a gully created by past disturbance of the seasonal unnamed stream draining the meadow. The stream will be restored to a stable, natural course at its natural meadow surface elevation. The affected reach of meadow and stream totals about 300 feet in length and covers about 1/4-acre. Borrowed material will come from two nearby upland and depositional sites, one just under 1/10-acre and the other slightly over 1/3-acre; these areas will be stripped of an average of 12-14 inches of soil and topsoil and the resultant 700-800 cubic yards of material will be used to fill the gully and restore natural meadow grade. At project completion, the uppermost layer of borrowed topsoil will be positioned on top of the fill and borrow areas, to facilitate revegetation.

Excavation of the borrow areas and transport of material to the fill site will be accomplished using a Skidsteer or equivalent, a small backhoe-loader. The use of two such pieces of equipment will be required. This motorized equipment will be delivered to the Wilderness worksite, and later removed, by helicopter airlift. The use of motorized equipment in State Wilderness will be authorized consistent with the provisions of Public Resources Code 4351.1(b), following staff recommendation made consistent with PRC 4351.1(c) and DPR's Department Operations Manual (DOM), Section 0304.5.4. Compacting of fill material, salvage/harvest of logs and other large woody debris for construction of grade control structures, construction of short sections of log-rail fence, disposal of surplus woody debris (slash) by burning in small piles, and other hand labor will be performed by California Conservation Corps crews during 3 extended backcountry "spike" assignments, each expected to be 10 days in duration. The CCC crews will use hand tools (shovels, McLeods, etc.) and power tools (chain saws, compactors, weed-whackers), and will camp in existing primitive campsites near the worksite. Disturbed areas will be restored to a natural topographic appearance, and revegetated with native vegetation. The purpose of this project is to stop the continuing erosion of the stream through the meadow, which threatens to down-cut further through and cause drying of virtually the entire Round Valley Meadow.

A copy of the Initial Study is attached. Questions or comments regarding this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration may be addressed to:

Larrynn Carver
Inland Empire District
California Department of Parks & Recreation
17801 Lake Perris Drive
Perris, California 92570
Phone: (951) 443-2410
Fax: (951) 657-2736
Email: lcarver@parks.ca.gov

/s/ *DR* for *LC* _____ 6/18/09
Larrynn Carver Date
District Environmental Coordinator

Pursuant to Section 21082.1 of the California Environmental Quality Act, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has independently reviewed and analyzed the Initial Study and Negative Declaration for the proposed project and finds that these documents reflect the independent judgment of DPR. DPR, as lead agency, also confirms that the project mitigation measures detailed in these documents are feasible and will be implemented as stated in the Negative Declaration.

INITIAL STUDY
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project at Mount San Jacinto State Park, Riverside County, California. This document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code §21000 *et seq*., and the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations (CCR) §15000 *et seq*.

An Initial Study is conducted by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment [CEQA Guidelines §15063(a)]. If there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064(a). However, if the lead agency determines that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the applicant mitigate the potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level, a Mitigated Negative Declaration may be prepared instead of an EIR [CEQA Guidelines §15070(b)]. The lead agency prepares a written statement describing the reasons a proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, why an EIR need not be prepared. This IS/MND conforms to the content requirements under CEQA Guidelines §15071.

1.2 LEAD AGENCY

The lead agency is the public agency with primary approval authority over the proposed project. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15051(b)(1), "the lead agency will normally be an agency with general governmental powers, such as a city or county, rather than an agency with a single or limited purpose." The lead agency for the proposed project is DPR. The contact person for the lead agency is:

Douglas Rischbieter
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Central Valley District
22708 Broadway
Columbia, California 95310
(209) 795-3488
Email: dougr@water.ca.gov

1.3 PURPOSE AND DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this document is to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project at Mount San Jacinto State Park. Mitigation measures have also been incorporated into the project to eliminate any potentially significant impacts or reduce them to a less-than-significant level.

This document is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 - Introduction.
  This chapter provides an introduction to the project and describes the purpose and organization of this document.

- Chapter 2 - Project Description.
  This chapter describes the reasons for the project, scope of the project, and project objectives.

- Chapter 3 - Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures.
  This chapter identifies the significance of potential environmental impacts, explains the environmental setting for each environmental issue, and evaluates the potential impacts identified in the CEQA Environmental (Initial Study) Checklist. Mitigation measures are incorporated, where appropriate, to reduce potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.

- Chapter 4 - Mandatory Findings of Significance
  This chapter identifies and summarizes the overall significance of any potential impacts to natural and cultural resources, cumulative impacts, and impact to humans, as identified in the Initial Study.

- Chapter 5 - Summary of Mitigation Measures.
  This chapter summarizes the mitigation measures incorporated into the project as a result of the Initial Study.

- Chapter 6 - References.
  This chapter identifies the references and sources used in the preparation of this IS/MND. It also provides a list of those involved in the preparation of this document.

- Chapter 7 - Report Preparation
  This chapter provides a list of those involved in the preparation of this document.

1.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapter 3 of this document contains the Environmental (Initial Study) Checklist that identifies the potential environmental impacts (by environmental issue) and a brief discussion of each impact resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

Based on the IS and supporting environmental analysis provided in this document, the proposed Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project would result in less-than-significant impacts for the following issues: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality and Climate Change, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation/Traffic, and Utilities and Service Systems.

In accordance with §15064(f) of the CEQA Guidelines, a Mitigated Negative Declaration shall be prepared if the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment after the inclusion of mitigation measures in the project. Based on the available project information and the environmental analysis presented in this document, there is no substantial evidence that, after the incorporation of mitigation measures, the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment. It is proposed that a Mitigated Negative Declaration be adopted in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines.

CHAPTER 2
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project at Mount San Jacinto State Park, located near the town of Palm Springs, Riverside County, California. The proposed project would restore the hydrology of the Round Valley meadow, a sensitive but degraded and threatened 6.3-acre wetland feature, by restoring the thalweg elevation of the meadow's seasonal stream. Compaction due to volunteer trails and related visitor activity has caused entrenchment and headcutting of a portion of this stream. This erosion, which has occurred over recent decades, unnaturally dewaters the terminal end of the meadow and threatens to advance hundreds of yards further upstream and destroy the hydrology and wetland character and habitat of the entire meadow. This advancing erosion would also overload downstream areas with thousands of cubic yards of fine sediments, degrading water quality and aquatic habitat. This project will restore and protect high-value wetland meadow conditions, and prevent the aforementioned impacts of downstream sedimentation.

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

Mount San Jacinto State Park is approximately 13,770 acres in size and located in the high mountains of central Riverside County, about 5 miles west of the city of Palm Springs. The Park is foremost known for its alpine terrain with desert views and its 9,900 acres of unspoiled State Wilderness, but the 6.3-acre Round Valley meadow is a unique feature and supports a wetland plant community unmatched in the Park. The Round Valley meadow is roughly midway by trail between the upper Palm Springs Aerial Tramway station and 10,834' San Jacinto Peak, making it a relatively common destination of Wilderness visitors. The meadow is associated with a small seasonal stream that originates from the southeast slopes below 10,670' Jean Peak and nearby Wellman Divide, and is fed by additional springs that emerge in and around the meadow. The stream is officially unnamed, but makes up what could be considered the "middle fork" headwaters of Long Valley Creek. Round Valley is surrounded by several designated primitive campsites, popular with overnight Wilderness visitors. The project site is at the downstream (eastern) end of the meadow, immediately adjacent to a small footbridge that allows hikers to depart from the main trail (around the southern side of the meadow) and access the campsites around the northern side of the meadow. Maps depicting the general Park and project locations are in Appendix A.

2.3 BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The Round Valley Meadow is an exceedingly uncommon and fragile wetland habitat, made all the more rare by its isolation high above the Southern California desert. This meadow, and the meadow's seasonal stream, exhibit evidence of human-caused disturbances that have resulted in an unnatural and unstable erosional feature: a series of headcuts and “nick-points” that are prone to continue receding up-meadow and downcutting through the fragile meadow soils. Hamilton (1983) describes the outcome of this process occurring in nearby Tahquitz meadow: an inevitable drying trend resulting from gully erosion. Such drying trends inevitably and often irreparably alter vegetation patterns, with local extinction of fragile wetland plants as hydrologic conditions become unsuitable and they are displaced by upland species.

The history of human disturbance in Round Valley and surrounding mountain meadows is well-documented. Robinson and Risher (1993) recounted a history of cattle grazing in these areas that appears to have begun (necessitated by regional drought) in 1864, through a heyday to 1897, with a slow decline enduring from 1897 until about 1930. Hamilton (1983) described communicating with descendants of these original ranching families, recounting that one rancher alone ran nearly 1,000 head in the Wilderness (including Round Valley) during summers for 30 years.

Additional periodic disturbances appear to be associated with "volunteer trails" that develop in and around the meadow. These are especially prevalent during dry periods, when wet conditions do not deter off-trail travel into the meadow and along the stream course. Hamilton (1983) describes how local herbaceous vegetation experiences a rapid decline with a relatively small amount of trampling, and notes that Round Valley is one of the heaviest-use areas of the Park. This vegetation damage/removal, and related soil compaction, is a consequence of this visitor activity and was observed on-site in 2000 (Rischbieter 2000): trampling in the middle of the meadow had resulted in collection and concentration of surface flow from what would otherwise be dispersed, standing and low-velocity flowing water. Hamilton (1983) also noted the erosional rates in Round Valley were already accelerating decades ago, attributing this to past excessive grazing impacts and ongoing trail use.

Cooper and Wolf (2009) recently reviewed a series of aerial photographs (1962-2002) and discerned the progressive and ongoing degradation of meadow vegetation – the displacement of a formerly-dominant cespitose *Carex* species with a smaller rhizomatose *Carex* species. Their study also researched the composition of the encroaching lodgepole pine forest, as well as soil characteristics in Round Valley’s meadow and adjacent forest (formerly meadow) areas, and deduced that significant episodes of tree establishment into meadow areas coincided with periods of past cattle and recreational (equestrian) disturbance (Robinson and Risher 1993). Cooper and Wolf also warn that meadow degradation is continuing; although the gully appears to have only advanced longitudinally up to 15 feet since 1962, the effect of drying

conditions and tree growth and shedding is progressively degrading the habitat for the wetland *Carex* species.

Cumulatively, the unnatural concentration of surface flow continues to accelerate erosion of the meadow's fragile soil, and has opened a deep rent in the wetland, soil, and subsoil and the meadow's eastern (downstream) end. This scouring erosion, which has created a series of headcuts in a gully up to 10 feet deep, is poised to continue westward and upslope. In the upstream and intermediate reaches of the gully, “cantilevered blocks” can be seen in various states of detachment (Micheli and Kirchner 2002). Though the process of failure of a single block can take years in a wet meadow, there is no sign that this process is stabilizing or reversing in Round Valley. The largest headcut (also known as a "nick point") is presently temporarily arrested in the roots of meadow-edge conifers, but once these roots are undermined the erosion will accelerate and the damage will be irreparable. In 2002, the restoration of Mount San Jacinto State Park hydrologic resources, including the Round Valley Meadow, was identified and adopted as a goal of the Mount San Jacinto State Park General Plan (DPR 2002).

Left unchecked, progressive erosion and headcutting of the now-confined, channelized, and lowered stream will cause a resultant lowering of the water table. Once the meadow is unnaturally dried in this fashion, it will allow invasion by upland plants and its wetland character and habitat will be greatly and permanently diminished. This project will restore the natural wetland and streamside elevations, eliminate the headcut and concentrated streamflow, and discourage future volunteer trails through signage and split-rail or pole-fencing at the most critical points.

While the downcutting and eroded area has not yet advanced to a point where repair is impossible, it nevertheless requires work of a scale not feasibly accomplished with hand labor alone. For this reason, an exception to the prohibition of motorized equipment in State Wilderness is required, and will be authorized pursuant to Public Resources Code 4351.1(b), following staff recommendation made consistent with PRC 4351.1(c), and consistent with the provisions of DPR's Department Operations Manual (DOM), Section 0304.5.4. These techniques proposed to be used for stream and meadow grade restoration, though relatively innovative and uncommon, have been successfully implemented on a similar scale in a meadow in Calaveras Big Trees State Park (Rischbieter 1999) and in several other Northern California watershed restoration projects.

2.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This Project proposes to lift the entrenched meadow-portion of the meadow's seasonal stream out of its severely-eroded unnatural ditch, by filling the void with nearby native soil and stabilizing grade through application of large woody debris (logs salvaged from the meadow's edge). This will eliminate the "hydraulic drop" from the meadow into the chasm, allowing the water a much longer, slower, and less erosive path through undisturbed wetland vegetation. The stream course will meander, in a dispersed fashion, similar to that in the undisturbed areas of the meadow. The meadow stream

channel(s) will discharge to the stable, rocky-substrate channel seen throughout the downstream forest. Lowering (restoring) the gradient of this portion of the meadow's seasonal stream will stop headcutting and erosion of meadow soils. It will also permanently ensure stability of the streambed and improve natural wetland function of the meadow. Such a post-project condition is typical of undisturbed mountain meadows (Hagberg 1995).

Elevating the stream channel will likely raise the water table in the Round Valley Meadow. This will give a competitive advantage to the on-site native wetland plants and also may enhance summer and fall flow in downstream areas. Other objectives of this project include maintaining existing access around the edge of the meadow to the primitive campsites (last page of Appendix A), and interpreting the value of this unique wetland resource to Wilderness visitors. Future maintenance of the restored stream channel should not be necessary because the design is intended to be stable and consistent with natural processes; some minor natural adjustment of the channel may occur following project completion, and some routine hand-labor (such as occasionally used for trail maintenance) may be necessary over the short-term, consistent with the Monitoring Plan proposed for adoption.

2.5 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Department of Parks and Recreation (Lead Agency) proposes to excavate approximately 700 to 800 cubic yards of upland and/or previously deposited eroded soil and place it into a severely eroded and entrenched seasonal stream channel. This fill will affect and repair about 300 feet of degraded stream. Work will be accomplished with two small backhoe-loaders, delivered to and removed from the project site by helicopter airlift. Hand labor (with shovels, chainsaws, wheelbarrows, etc.) will be provided by crews from the California Conservation Corps, who will camp at the nearby primitive campsites for week-long or longer assignments over the course of this month-long project. The stream course will be rerouted over stable, undisturbed wetland vegetation adjacent to the fill area. Live and dead logs will be recruited from nearby forest, as a source of large woody debris and/or log weirs for surface grade stabilization. Some logs will also be used to stabilize the fill material internally, by burying them as the fill is placed in lifts; the volume of these logs will also contribute to the fill volume. Rerouted seasonal streamflow, when it resumes following the dry conditions expected during the construction period, will discharge into a stable channel at the downstream end of the meadow.

Borrowed material will come from two sparsely-forested upland locations within a few hundred feet of the fill site. Topsoil and some subsoil, averaging 12-14 inches deep over the two areas and totaling less than a half-acre, will be excavated by the backhoe-loaders and ferried to the fill site by loader bucket. At the fill area, precise placement of fill dirt will be accomplished with shovels and wheelbarrows. Water, if available, will be conveyed by gravity from a developed spring at the west end of the meadow using a series of standard garden hoses. The water will be transported approximately 1,400' to the eastern end of the meadow into a temporary 200- to 400-gallon tank or equivalent.

This water will be used to aid soil compaction in the fill zone and to control dust, if any, in the borrow area.

At project completion, disturbed areas, including borrow areas, will be regraded to mimic the natural topography and rehabilitated through scatter of leaf-litter and revegetation. Revegetation will be primarily accomplished through planting of up to 4,500 plugs of native meadow species, including *Carex* spp., that have been salvaged from the bottom of the existing gully before filling occurs. The replanting objective will be 4 sod plugs per square yard (Cooper and Wolf 2009); bare areas between replanted plugs will be protected from erosion by scattering of native thatch harvested from dispersed areas of the meadow (this native thatch will also include a seed-load that will contribute to revegetation the following spring, and will deter colonization by non-native plants). If a sufficient number of sod plugs cannot be salvaged on-site, seed-heads from the cespitose *Carex* species will be harvested by hand, and seeds germinated and grown in a local nursery to allow additional replanting to occur the following spring.

The route followed by the backhoe-loader, between the borrow areas and the fill site, may require scarification (with hand tools) and mulching with leaf-litter if significant topsoil compaction occurs. Limbs and "slash" that may be byproducts of trees and logs used for the project also will be used as scatter for erosion control in a manner of natural appearance; excess limbs and slash (if any) may be chipped with a small garden-sized power chipper, or burned near the worksite in small piles under the terms and conditions of a local burning permit. Burning of slash, if necessary, may be delayed until more favorable conditions (later fall, early winter, or spring); if burning small piles of slash needs to be delayed, piles will be discreetly located and covered with small tarps until burning. The small burn areas, if any, will be reclaimed and rendered inconspicuous by spreading nearby soil and forest/leaf litter. The trail crossing the stream at the foot of the meadow may be rerouted slightly, to avoid damage to restored areas and prevent recurrence of activities that contributed to the long-developing erosion problem. At popular places where off-trail use enters the meadow, a split-rail or pole fence will be constructed from nearby trees up to 8" in diameter. Small interpretive panels and/or other signage, to deter meadow foot traffic, will be added to these fenced and other points at the beginning of the next peak use season.

2.6 PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

The construction window for this project would be an approximately 30-day period beginning on or about September 10, 2009. All rehabilitation work of disturbed areas is also expected to be completed by the end of the 30-day period; in any case all work would be completed by November 15, 2009. Work is scheduled for this season because day and overnight Wilderness use diminishes dramatically in late summer and early fall, and because instream work will be done when the seasonal stream at the project site is dry or nearly dry. If hydrologic or other conditions are not suitable for project construction during the 2009 period, work may be rescheduled to the same period in a subsequent calendar year.

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is scheduled to be shut-down for seasonal maintenance from September 12 through 25, 2009. This is another circumstance that allows this project to proceed with a minimum impact to Park visitors. Otherwise, all existing areas of the Park would remain open to the public during construction, except for: portions of 1 or 2 parking lots (at the lower station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway) where equipment will be assembled prior to airlift, and 3 to 4 campsites adjacent to the project area that will be used by work crews and for staging. However, during excavation and movement of borrow material, hikers may be temporarily rerouted away from (around) areas where equipment is operating. It also may not be possible for hikers to completely circumnavigate Round Valley Meadow, as access through the eastern side of the meadow may be limited during construction. However, hikers would still be able to reach the northern end of the meadow using the trail along the western edge.

All work would occur between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., up to 7 days a week. Areas around the construction site would be barricaded, as necessary, to deter unsafe access. Inconvenience to the public would be negligible, but the noise of motorized equipment operating will contrast will normal public expectation of peaceful Wilderness experience during these daytime hours.

Work will be performed by 1 or 2 Conservation Crews of 12-14 people each, equipped with hand tools, and 1-4 DPR staff may also be on-site at any one time. Though most work would be performed with small power or hand tools, one or two backhoe-loaders will be used to excavate and distribute fill dirt. In advance and following completion of the project, a series of about 4 helicopter trips will move these backhoe-loaders and other equipment between the Park's main parking lot (at the foot of the Tramway) and the worksite. Staging areas for construction equipment and materials will be in an existing clearing, just aside the foot of Round Valley Meadow; the borrow areas are within a few hundred feet of the restoration area and depicted on the first figure in Appendix B.

2.7 VISITATION TO MOUNT SAN JACINTO STATE PARK

Annual attendance at Mount San Jacinto State Park averages about 375,000 visitors per year. However, only about 20,000 (5%) actually venture into the State Wilderness. Because backcountry use declines nominally in advance of and following Labor Day Weekend, the proposed work schedule is concentrated during this period. The proposed work schedule also coincides with a scheduled closure of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the primary access route to the Wilderness, which is scheduled to be shut-down for seasonal maintenance from September 12 through 25, 2009. This is another circumstance that allows this project to proceed with a minimum impact to Park visitors.

The proposed project is not expected to have any impact on future Park attendance. However, after completion, the proposed project site may become more attractive as an interpretive opportunity.

2.8 CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Restoration of the Round Valley Meadow was identified in 2000 as a high priority during the Resource Inventory phase (Rischbieter 2000) of the Mount San Jacinto State Park General Plan (DPR 2000). The proposed construction of the Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project is consistent with that General Plan and also with local plans and policies in effect. The use of motorized equipment in State Wilderness, for the purpose of resource management and restoration, is provided for in Public Resources Code 4351.1 *et seq*.

2.9 DISCRETIONARY APPROVALS

DPR has approval authority for the proposed Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project. Other agencies that are expected to exercise approval authority for elements of the project include the California Department of Fish and Game (Streambed Alteration Agreement under Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code); the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Quality Waiver or Certification to be issued under Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act); and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the U.S. under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act, activity authorized under Nationwide Permit #27).

2.10 RELATED PROJECTS

DPR often has other, relatively small maintenance programs and rehabilitation projects planned for this and other Park units, but none at Mt. San Jacinto State Park are related to the proposed Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project. Other ongoing and recently completed work at Mount San Jacinto State Park includes the improvement and reroute of the Stone Creek Campground ADA-compliant trail, the Idyllwild Zone fuels biodiversity project, the Point of Rocks Neighborhood Fuel Modification project, and the Live Tree Thinning Project in Stone Creek and Idyllwild Campgrounds to restore forest density to a healthy level through removal of dead and other hazard trees. No additional work, other than regular maintenance, is currently in progress or planned for this unit.

CHAPTER 3
ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

PROJECT INFORMATION

1. Project Title: Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration

2. Lead Agency Name & Address: California Department of Parks and Recreation

3. Contact Person & Phone Number: Douglas Rischbieter, Environmental Scientist
(209) 795-3488

4. Project Location: Mount San Jacinto State Park

5. Project Sponsor Name & Address: California Department of Parks and Recreation
Inland Empire District
17801 Lake Perris Drive
Perris, California 92570

6. General Plan Designation: State Wilderness

7. Zoning: Recreation

8. Description of Project: Excavate approximately 700 to 800 cubic yards of upland and/or previously deposited eroded soil and place it into a severely eroded and entrenched seasonal stream channel. This fill will affect and repair about 300 feet of degraded stream. Work will be accomplished with a small backhoe-loader, delivered to and removed from the project site by helicopter airlift. Hand labor (with shovels, chainsaws, wheelbarrows, etc.) will be provided by crews from the California Conservation Corps, who will camp at the nearby primitive campsites for several days at a time. The stream course will be rerouted over stable, undisturbed wetland vegetation adjacent to the fill area. Live and dead logs will be recruited from nearby forest, as a source of large woody debris and/or log weirs for surface grade and internal fill stabilization. Rerouted seasonal streamflow will discharge into a stable channel at the downstream end of the meadow. Disturbed areas, including borrow areas, will be regraded to mimic the natural topography and rehabilitated through scatter of leaf-litter and revegetation. Excess litter and slash, if any, will be burned on-site in small piles or chipped.

9. Surrounding Land Uses & Setting: Refer to Chapter 3 of this document (Section IX, Land Use Planning)

10. Approval Required from Other Public Agencies: California Department of Fish and Game for compliance with Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code; Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board for compliance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the U.S. under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act (activity authorized under Nationwide Permit #27).

1. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact", as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☒ Aesthetics	☐ Agricultural Resources	☐ Air Quality
☒ Biological Resources	☐ Cultural Resources	☒ Geology/Soils
☒ Hazards & Hazardous Materials	☒ Hydrology/Water Quality	☐ Land Use/Planning
☐ Mineral Resources	☒ Noise	☐ Population/Housing
☐ Public Services	☒ Recreation	☐ Transportation/Traffic
☐ Utilities/Service Systems	☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance	☐ None

DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☐

I find that, although the original scope of the proposed project **COULD** have had a significant effect on the environment, there **WILL NOT** be a significant effect because revisions/mitigations to the project have been made by or agreed to by the applicant. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☒

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** or its functional equivalent will be prepared. ☐

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated impact" on the environment. However, at least one impact has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document, pursuant to applicable legal standards, and has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis, as described in the report's attachments. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the impacts not sufficiently addressed in previous documents. ☐

I find that, although the proposed project could have had a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects have been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or Negative Declaration, pursuant to applicable standards, and have been avoided or mitigated, pursuant to an earlier EIR, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, all impacts have been avoided or mitigated to a less-than-significant level and no further action is required. ☐

/s/ *DR* for *LC*

Larrynn Carver
District Environmental Coordinator

6/18/09
Date

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers, except "No Impact", that are adequately supported by the information sources cited. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact does not apply to the project being evaluated (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on general or project-specific factors (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).

2. All answers must consider the whole of the project-related effects, both direct and indirect, including off-site, cumulative, construction, and operational impacts.

3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, the checklist answers must indicate whether that impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate when there is sufficient evidence that a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change may occur in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project that cannot be mitigated below a level of significance. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required.

4. A "Mitigated Negative Declaration" (Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated) applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures, prior to declaration of project approval, has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level.

5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR (including a General Plan) or Negative Declaration [CCR, Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, § 15063(c)(3)(D)]. References to an earlier analysis should:

   a) Identify the earlier analysis and state where it is available for review.

   b) Indicate which effects from the environmental checklist were adequately analyzed in the earlier document, pursuant to applicable legal standards, and whether these effects were adequately addressed by mitigation measures included in that analysis.

   c) Describe the mitigation measures in this document that were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and indicate to what extent they address site-specific conditions for this project.

6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate references to information sources for potential impacts into the checklist or appendix (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances, biological assessments). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should include an indication of the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7. A source list should be appended to this document. Sources used or individuals contacted should be listed in the source list and cited in the discussion.

8. Explanation(s) of each issue should identify:
   a) the criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate the significance of the impact addressed by each question **and**
   b) the mitigation measures, if any, prescribed to reduce the impact below the level of significance.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

I. AESTHETICS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is one of the most visited units of the California State Park System, and aesthetic resources are abundant throughout the Park. Whether it is the imagery of the sculptural branching pattern of the manzanita dominating the slopes along the west side of the Park or the strong vertical lines of the pine forests reaching upward towards the crisp blue sky, such scenes all contribute to the Park's grandeur and spirit. From the grand peaks and ridgelines to the intimate scale of the quiet meadows, the visitors begin to shape their own aesthetic value for the Park.

Walking upon a bed of fallen pine needles while taking in the fresh scent of the pine forest or sitting atop a ridgeline taking in the numerous scenic vistas, are only two of the many characteristics that make Mount San Jacinto State Park a special place. But if a single element stands out, it is the opportunity for solitude. Once you become aware of your presence within the wilderness and recognize the elements that make up the whole, the natural quiet inherent to the wilderness becomes apparent. This intangible and difficult-to-quantify quality is distinctive to Mount San Jacinto State Park because the majority of the Park is designated as a wilderness. And with the Park being in close proximity to highly populated areas, the opportunity for solitude becomes much more welcome.

The Round Valley Meadow is unique in the Park: it is the only formation of its kind. The aesthetics of the meadow are immeasurably enhanced by its interrelationship with the meadow's seasonal stream and the looming destinations of Jean and San Jacinto Peaks. It affords scenic surprises in all seasons: verdant with spring wildflowers, misty on cold fall mornings, pristine expanses of snow in winter. The meadow-forest interface and moist conditions attract diverse wildlife and enhance the experiences of almost every visitor to this destination in the Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness.

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

DISCUSSION

a) The project area is only visible from a short section of trail but it is a pristine setting. Construction activities will be short in duration, completed within about a month, thus scenic impacts are not expected to be significant. Restoring the creek and meadow to the natural conditions that existed prior to stream downcutting will improve aesthetic values, so long-term scenic resources would be enhanced and not damaged by this project. There will be short-term effects that would be limited in scope and scale. The restored vegetation will grow over the recontoured soil in the fill and borrow areas. Additionally, duff will be spread in the borrow areas. Less than significant impact given project design.

b) Restoring the creek channel to the natural conditions that existed prior to downcutting will improve aesthetic values, so scenic resources would not be damaged by this project. The project has been designed to avoid removal of large or significant trees or rocks. Some meadow-side trees may be affected in the future by a higher water table in the meadow; the scenic impact is not expected to be significant as the meadow naturally reclaims areas where upland vegetation has encroached over decades of meadow disturbance. Restoration of natural conditions will not affect the view from the nearby trail.

c) Restoring the creek channel to the natural conditions that existed prior to stream downcutting will improve aesthetic values. However, short-term effects to adjacent forest and meadow settings would occur as vegetation is disturbed for rehabilitation work. From past experience, meadow plants will reoccupy the disturbed area during the first growing season following construction. Replacement seedling trees will be transplanted into the recontoured borrow areas, in numbers greater than the number removed in these areas, at project completion as part of the project. Some of the topsoil initially removed will be stockpiled for replacement over the borrow areas. Additionally, duff will be spread, making the area indistinguishable from surrounding areas. No significant adverse impact as this restoration is included in the project description.

d) Lighting is not an element of this project and no new light sources would be introduced into the landscape. All construction work would be limited to daylight hours, eliminating the need for work lights. Work crews camping in the area would have lights in camp, but this is will not significantly exceed the amount of light that occurs when “public” campers use these established campsites. Public visitation, and thus the possibility of public impact, is also expected to be lower than normal during the work period, owing to the concurrently scheduled maintenance closure of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. This project would create no new source of light or glare and, therefore, would have no impact in this respect.

II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is zoned "Recreation" and does not support any agricultural operations or farmland. The closest land adjoining the park zoned as agricultural land or used for agricultural purposes from the project site is several miles away. There are adjoining lands, miles away from the project site, that are zoned "Residential" and "Commercial," but in general most of the Park is surrounded by the San Bernardino National Forest and designated Wilderness.

WOULD THE PROJECT*:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

* In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997), prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model for use in assessing impacts on agricultural and farmland.

DISCUSSION

a-c) No land adjoining the project site in any direction is zoned as agricultural land or used for agricultural purposes, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California. Therefore, this project would have no effect on any category of California Farmland, conflict with any existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act contract, or result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use. The project does not convert farmland to any other use. The project restores wetland and stream habitat. No impact.

III. AIR QUALITY and CLIMATE CHANGE.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is situated in central Riverside County at the borders of three distinct Air Basins: the Salton Sea Basin to the south, the Mojave Desert Basin to the north and east, and the South Coast Basin to the west. Moderately high precipitation, regular afternoon winds, and an elevation high above developed areas can result in relatively clean air at the Park. Because of these conditions, activities at the Park typically have no influence on various non-attainment conditions in surrounding Basins, which can include standards for carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, sulfides, ozone, and particulate matter (PM10).

WOULD THE PROJECT*:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan or regulation?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions that exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations (e.g., children, the elderly, individuals with compromised respiratory or immune systems)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

* Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied on to make these determinations.

DISCUSSION

a) Work proposed in this project is not in conflict with or would not obstruct implementation of any applicable air quality plan for Riverside County or the surrounding three Air Basins. While construction equipment emits ozone precursors, such emissions are included in the emission inventory that is the basis for regional air quality plans. Therefore, construction emissions are not expected to impede attainment or maintenance of ozone standards in the area. No impact.

b) This project scale is relatively small, and much of the work will be done with hand tools. However, in response to California Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, a preliminary estimation of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that will be produced by this project has been quantified. The GHG of most concern is CO2 because it is the most common, can last in the atmosphere for over 75 years, and "forces" more climate change than any other GHG. CO2 is the standard for GHG, and the effect of all other GHG gases are normally transformed into "CO2 equivalents," which is a common measure used to report total GHG emissions.

No state or federal agency has yet established significance criteria (thresholds of significance) for GHG or other impacts to global climate change. Neither has DPR established its own protocols for analyzing project-generated GHG emissions or set thresholds of significance. Policies have not been set, in part, because the science required to do so has not been fully developed. Although estimates have been made at the national and state levels for types of emissions and their sources, we do not yet know how to accurately measure GHG emissions for small projects. Although we can identify most of the factors and activities contributing project emissions, we cannot yet reliably quantify them. However, given the current state of the science, it is believed that habitat restoration projects such as the Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project, which will result in an improvement of wetland habitat with its known carbon-sequestering function (PCOR Partnership 2006), contribute very little, if any, net GHG emissions. As addressed herein, the primary GHG contributions from the Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project are short term and temporary, resulting from the combustion of fuels during construction of the project.

The project will likely have no net discharge of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. This is in part because this restoration project will restore at least a quarter-acre of functioning wet meadow, including its carbon-sequestering function, and will potentially enhance and preserve the long-term function of adjacent wet meadow acreage. Additionally, the scheduling of staffing for this project, where approximately 17 employees will remain onsite for three successive 10-day shifts (CCC "spikes"), will obviate the need for approximately 27 commute-to-work roundtrips per employee. Assuming an average one-way commute distance of 35 miles, with an average commuter fuel efficiency rate of 17 mpg, staff working on this assignment will save the approximately 1,900 gallons of gasoline that would ordinarily be consumed if they reported to their normal work location on a daily basis. This fuel savings will approximately fully offset the anticipated 16 barrels of diesel fuel (880 gallons) to be supplied onsite for the small

backhoe-loaders, and also the approximately 500 gallons of aviation fuel expected to be consumed by the heavy-capacity helicopter during the up to one hour of total actual flight time necessary to lift and remove four loads (two backhoe-loaders and two 20' containers) from the staging area to the worksite (about 0.1 hours of engine time is expected for each of the four-in and four-out lifts of these loads over the 2-mile flight distance). Up to 30 gallons of gasoline may be consumed by small power tools such as dirt compactors, chainsaws, and weed-whackers. The GHG emissions from these mechanized sources amounts to about 14.81 Metric tons of CO2-equivalents, while the eliminated emissions from gasoline saved by eliminating staff commutes totals about 17.13 Metric tons of CO2-equivalents (GGPI 2005). Thus, no negative impact to GHG emissions or climate change is expected.

Conversely, Dr. Peter Moyle, UC Davis aquatic specialist, has identified ten important efforts to improve aquatic systems' resiliency in light of climate change in California. One of those is to restore headwaters and montane meadows of aquatic systems. This project focuses on such an area and project results should improve Park and downstream conditions. This will benefit the environment by increasing system resiliency as impacts of climate change add additional stress on most species within the system.

c-d) The project area is relatively small, and most of the work will be done with hand tools. When heavy equipment is required, the area impacted by heavy equipment will be kept to a minimum. Natural soil conditions throughout much of the worksite are perpetually moist, so substantial dust is not expected to be generated by this project. Some water will be available on-site, for fill compaction, and can also be used for dust abatement if localized dust occurs. On-site burning of small amounts of forest debris (slash), if any, will be done within the terms and conditions of a local Burning Permit, and limited as described below. This activity is not expected to contribute substantially to any air quality violation, nor considerably increase any pollutant, nor subject any individuals to respiratory distress. Less than significant impact

e) Excess slash, if any, may be removed by burning in small piles (under the terms and conditions of a local Burning Permit). Since the odor of smoke is uncommon in this Wilderness setting, some visitors may find the odor unexpected and/or objectionable. To ensure this impact does not exceed an insignificant level, burning will only occur during conditions favorable for smoke dispersal away from main public use areas. Alternatively, burning may occur in the evening, when most visitors have left the Park. By limiting any burning in such a manner, this impact is expected to be less than significant.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park supports 14 vegetation types as defined in the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) classification, A Manual of California Vegetation. These vegetation types, reproduced from the General Plan, are listed below:

CalVeg	Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf Series	Bauder
Grassland	California annual grassland	Montane vernal lake
Desert (petran) chaparral		
Mixed chaparral	Scrub oak-chaparral;whitethorn Mixed scrub oak; Scrub oak birch-leaf mountain mahogany	
Timberland chaparral	Bush chinquapin; Greenleaf manzanita; Mountain whitethorn	
Canyon live oak	Canyon live oak	
Coulter pine forest	Coulter pine	
Jeffery pine forest	Jeffrey pine	
Mixed conifer forest	Mixed conifer	
Subalpine forest	Lodgepole pine	
	Montane meadow	

Of the various vegetation types represented in the Park, two can be considered significant, the montane vernal lake and the montane meadow habitat. The significance of these areas is twofold; the montane meadow habitat and the montane vernal lake are considered wetlands. Wetlands are particularly vulnerable to human impact as people are drawn to meadows and lakes for water and scenic beauty.

Montane meadow habitat is characterized by a dense growth of sedges and other perennial wetland herbs, generally from 0.5 to 1 meter (1.6 - 3.28 feet) high with some taller herbs reaching up to 2 meters (6.6 feet) tall. Flowering occurs mainly in the summer with plants dormant in the winter, and from fall through spring at higher elevations. Montane meadows are characterized by fine-textured, saturated soils. Distribution of the meadows is scattered throughout the lower montane forests of the Transverse and Peninsular Ranges ranging in elevation from 1,520 to 2,740 meters (about 5,000 to 9,000 feet). This habitat is best represented within Mount San Jacinto State Park at Round Valley, and also occurs in Long Valley.

Mount San Jacinto State Park supports approximately eight sensitive plant taxa (see Table below) which were found during the focused 1999 and 2000 General Plan survey efforts. One is listed as federally threatened and the remaining seven taxa are listed in the California Native Plant Society - Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California. Sixteen additional sensitive plant species have the potential to occur within the Park. Not all of the potential sensitive species were observed during focused survey efforts but many new locations of sensitive species, such as the shaggy haired alumroot (*Heuchera hirsutissima*) and lemon lily (*Lilium parryi*), were documented during the 1999-2000 surveys. In addition, cliff

cinquefoil (*Potentilla rimicola*) was recorded for the first time since historical occurrences were discovered over fifty years ago. None of the sensitive plant species were found in the vicinity of the project site at lower Round Valley.

Sensitive Plant Taxa Known to Occur within Mount San Jacinto State Park

Taxon	Common Name	Listing Status
Erigeron breweri var. *jacinteus*	San Jacinto Mountains daisy	CNPS 4
Heuchera hirsutissima	shaggy haired alumroot	CNPS 1B
Linanthus jaegeri [*Leptodactylon jaegeri*]	San Jacinto prickly phlox	CNPS 1B
Lilium parryi	lemon lily	CNPS 1B
Penstemon clevelandii var. *connatus*	San Jacinto beard tongue	CNPS 4
Potentilla rimicola	cliff cinquefoil	CNPS 1B
Streptanthus bernardinus	Laguna Mountains jewel-flower	CNPS 1B
Trichostema austromontanum ssp. *compactum*	Hidden Lake bluecurls	FT/CNPS 1B

The diversity of the plant communities within Mount San Jacinto State Park creates nine different wildlife habitats, as defined by the California Wildlife Habitat Relationship classification system (DFG 2008). These are listed below. A tenth wildlife habitat type, Pinyon-Juniper (PJN) woodland, may occur to a limited extent on the north and east facing escarpments.

Wildlife/Vegetation Classification

Wildlife Habitat Classification	Vegetation Classification (CalVeg)
Annual Grassland (AGS)	Grassland
Wet Meadow (WET)	Montane vernal lake
Mixed Chaparral (MCH)	Mixed chaparral and Desert chaparral
Montane Chaparral (MCP)	Timberland chaparral
Montane Hardwood (MHW)	Canyon live oak
Montane Hardwood Conifer (MHC)	Coulter pine forest
Jeffrey Pine (JPN)	Jeffrey pine forest
Sierran Mixed Conifer (SMC)	Mixed conifer forest
Subalpine Conifer (SCN)	Subalpine forest

In addition to the above vegetation-based wildlife habitat classifications, there are also rocky cliff and talus slope habitats in the Park that provide important habitat for species including bats, swallows, birds of prey, and certain reptiles, such as the granite night lizard (*Xantusia henshawi*). Rocky cliff and talus slope habitat is most prevalent in the northern and eastern portions of the Park. Collectively, the Park's 14 vegetation communities have the potential to support a variety of animal species, including 121 birds, 52 mammals, 22 reptiles, and 7 amphibians. To date, 147 vertebrate species have been confirmed to be present in the Park or use its resources during some portion of the year.

Typical wildlife species observed in the conifer forests of the Park include southern sagebrush lizard, large-blotched ensatina salamander, big brown bat, Merriam's chipmunk, western gray

squirrel, coyote, mule deer, and a variety of birds, including mountain quail, Stellar's jay, band-tailed pigeon, white-headed woodpecker, Clark's nutcracker, white-breasted nuthatch, mountain chickadee, fox sparrow, and dark-eyed junco. On the desert escarpments reside species such as the golden eagle, white-throated swift, canyon wren, pocketed free-tailed bat, western mastiff bat, desert spiny lizard, granite night lizard, ring-tailed cat, and peninsular bighorn sheep. In the chaparral and pine-oak woodlands of the western slopes one can find the western fence lizard, gopher snake, southern Pacific rattlesnake, western screech owl, southern spotted owl, acorn woodpecker, northern flicker, scrub jay, Bewick's wren, western blue bird, California myotis bat, California ground squirrel, striped skunk, raccoon, and bobcat.

The composition of animals in Mount San Jacinto State Park reflects the Park's location on the highest and most northerly section of the Peninsular Range. It is generally more similar to that of mountain ranges to the south than to the San Bernardino Mountains of the Transverse Range, only a few miles to the north across the San Gorgonio Pass. However, there are a few species that are more typical of boreal regions to the north. It is believed, by some, that the boreal zone was once more extensive within the State and that following the last ice age the zone contracted towards the north, leaving boreal fauna with habitat only on the highest mountains of southern California. Several boreal species currently reach their most southern distributional limit on Mount San Jacinto, including the State-listed threatened southern rubber boa (*Charina bottae*), the lodgepole chipmunk (*Tamias speciosus*, probably extirpated), and the San Bernardino northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus californicus*), all of which appear to be declining in abundance in the San Jacinto Mountains, possibly in response to continuing climatic changes. A recent survey for the lodgepole chipmunk, and flying squirrels, found neither occurring at or around Round Valley (Meyer 2007).

Of the vertebrate species that occur or could occur within the Park, 52 are on the California Department of Fish and Game's list of Special Animals, which means these species are either officially listed or are of concern to regulatory agencies and Park managers. These species include 2 amphibians, 8 reptiles, 18 mammals, and 21 birds. Those that are officially listed by regulatory agencies and confirmed to be present in the Park at this time are the State-listed threatened southern rubber boa (*Charina bottae*), the federally endangered peninsular bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*), and the federally-endangered Southern California populations of the mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana mucosa*). Mount San Jacinto State Park is included within the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CV-MSHCP), which covers several of the aforementioned species, but none of the sensitive species managed for under the CV-MSHCP are known to occur near Round Valley. A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) reveals no sensitive animal or plant resources reported directly at Round Valley (Appendix C).

The Peninsular bighorn sheep is distributed within the Peninsular Range from the San Jacinto Mountains south into Baja California, Mexico. This large, shy ungulate prefers open areas of low-growing vegetation for browsing, and steep, rugged terrain nearby in which to escape, give birth, and rest. It also requires a reliable water source for drinking. The southern rubber boa generally occurs in moist coniferous forest and woodland habitats at elevations exceeding 5,000 feet up to about 8,100 feet (DFG 2008; Dr. G. Stewart, pers. comm.). The mountain yellow-legged frog inhabits creeks and streams in ponderosa pine, montane hardwood-conifer,

and montane riparian habitats up to about 7,500 feet elevation (DFG 2008; Jennings 2007).

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modification, on any species identified as a sensitive, candidate, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands, as defined by §404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☒	☐
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) No sensitive, special status, or candidate species are known to occur in or adjacent to the project site (Appendix C). The project may have the beneficial effect of enhancing habitat (Jennings 2007) suitable for California toad (*Bufo boreas halophilus*). Work will be conducted after surface water has dried up for the season, and a qualified biologist will survey the project area for amphibians and reptiles prior to commencement of work, thus no adverse impacts are anticipated. Any trees selected for falling will be inspected for nesting cavities, and avoided if nests are found, as recommended by Meyer (2007).

b) The project will not have a negative effect on any riparian or sensitive community. The restoration of natural hydrology and wetland conditions, a purpose of the project, will enhance these resources.

c) A length of existing, unnatural chasm within a wetland area will be filled. Although there will be temporary short-term effects during and after project construction, the replacement of this chasm with functional, high-value natural wetland conditions (a purpose of the project) at and adjacent to the project site is expected to significantly benefit this resource.

d) No fish are present in this watershed. The project area is in a seasonal reach of the stream, and there will be no or little surface flow at the time of construction. There will be no impact to permanent downstream reaches. Most trees removed for use as grade control structures, whether living or dead, will be less than 12" in diameter. If any larger trees are desired for these purposes, they will be inspected for wildlife nest or nursery sites or other significant habitat value. Such larger trees will not be used for the project if they provide such sites; alternative trees will be substituted. Furthermore, no wildlife would be expected to be in early ("nursery") life-stages at the time of year the project is scheduled. Thus, no impact is expected.

e) The project is consistent with the Mount San Jacinto State Park General Plan, but will require an exception to the general prohibition against use of motorized equipment in State Wilderness. However, the timing of project construction has been scheduled so that only a relative few Park visitors are likely to witness this disturbance, and site conditions will be restored to a natural appearance at the conclusion of the project. The interpretive signs placed following project completion will inform Wilderness users of the need for the restoration, and include an explanation of the need for the extraordinary exception to the general motorized equipment prohibition. Interpretive information about the purpose, need, and justification for the project will also be distributed at the trailhead (pamphlet and/or sign) as described in Mitigation Measure NOISE-2 (see Section XI, below). Thus, this impact is expected to be less than significant.

f) This project would not conflict with the provisions of any Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan. Mount San Jacinto State Park is included within the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan, but none of the sensitive species managed for under the CV-MSHCP are known to occur near Round Valley.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is within the ethnographic territory of the Cahuilla Indians, whose ancestors entered this region of southern California approximately 3,000 years ago. Ethnographers and linguists have divided the Cahuilla into three groups: the Mountain Cahuilla, the Desert Cahuilla, and the Western or Pass Cahuilla. The Cahuilla range once covered much of Riverside County and parts of San Bernardino, San Diego, and Imperial Counties. This territory was bordered on the north by the Serrano and the Chemehuevi, on the east by the Chemehuevi and Quechan (Yuma), on the south by the Kumeyaay (also called Diegueño, Ipai, Tipai, and Kamia), and on the west by the Gabrielino, Luiseño (Juaneño), and Cupeño.

The prehistoric Cahuilla were hunters and gatherers who lived in permanent villages and seasonally traveled into other portions of their territory to take advantage of various resources. The high mountain region that includes San Jacinto Peak was primarily used for hunting deer and gathering various plants. There are also places in the mountains that the Cahuilla (and other southern California tribes) consider to be sacred, including certain mountain peaks, springs, rock outcroppings, and other natural formations.

European contact with the Cahuilla came in 1774 when the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition passed through their territory. The Cahuilla were probably already aware of the Europeans and had most likely, been affected by European diseases through other American Indian groups. Some of the Cahuilla were baptized at Spanish missions in San Gabriel, San Luis Rey, and San Diego, and by 1819 several asistencias (San Bernardino, Santa Ysabel, and Pala) had been established near Cahuilla territory. The Cahuilla began to adopt some of the Spanish culture including cattle operations, intensive agriculture, wage labor, clothing, language, and religion, but they managed to maintain their political and economic autonomy until the establishment of the reservations, between 1877 and 1891, forced their relocation and took away many of their freedoms.

There have been 42 prehistoric and historic sites and isolated finds recorded within Mount San Jacinto State Park; however, only about five percent of the Park has been surveyed for cultural resources. Detailed descriptions and location information for the recorded sites were identified in the Mount San Jacinto State Park Resources Inventory completed prior to the General Plan (DPR 2002) and are also documented in other California State Parks files. For the purposes of environmental review for this project, confidential maps compiled for the 2002 General Plan were reviewed.

Native American sites located within the Park include bedrock mortars, basins, and slicks; rock shelters; lithic chipping waste scatters; and portable groundstone implements. Thirteen of these sites and isolated finds are located on the western side of the Park at lower elevations. Seven sites are located on the eastern side of the Park at elevations ranging from 8,390 to 9,040 feet. Although ethnographic accounts seem to indicate that the Cahuilla mainly used the higher elevations for hunting, the presence of grinding implements (including bedrock slicks

and basins, and portable metates) indicates that some sort of processing was also occurring at these higher elevations. Six of these prehistoric sites also include historic components and are included in the counts for both prehistoric and historic sites.

Acquired in February 1933, during the height of the Great Depression, Mount San Jacinto State Park was the culmination of over forty years of private and public attempts to preserve the San Jacinto Mountain wilderness from uncontrolled exploitation by lumber, game hunting and tourist interests. Through the cooperative efforts of California State Parks, the Federal government, and local officials, as well as concerned citizens, almost all of the San Jacinto high country was protected as wilderness. The oldest State Wilderness administrated by California State Parks, it was dedicated on June 19, 1937. Some of the Park's earliest improvements dating from this time include a number of surviving trails, bridges, campgrounds, wilderness shelters, and administration buildings. Designed by National Park Service (NPS) specialists and built by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) construction crews, they made it possible for California State Parks to administer on of the State's most dramatic wilderness areas. Many of these surviving Depression-era facilities continue to serve the Park today as historic links to a facility development program that not only improved the Park's accessibility, but, more importantly, provided jobs and hope throughout California during one of the greatest economic crises in the nation's history. Like those found in other state, local, and national parks, these resources have been recognized through California State Parks' thematic studies as historically significant.

While the Depression-era resources are of primary historical significance, there are other buildings and structures that represent the Park's continued development and improvement in response to the demands placed by increased use after World War II. In addition, the Park contains historical sites and artifacts that are linked to a period of time when the area was exploited by pioneer lumbering operations, livestock operations, as well as health-improvement and tourist operations.

There are 19 historic archaeological sites and isolated finds that have been recorded within the Park. These include trash dumps, historic camp remains, structure remains, rock shelters, and isolated artifacts. The trash dumps range from small can dumps to large refuse deposits dating from the late 1800s to the mid 1900s. Of the six historic camp remains, only three have been associated with specific activities: one to the CCC era, and the other two to historic logging. Two rock shelters that have been recorded may have been used both prehistorically and historically, but there are no specific indications of dates of use.

The majority of the Park's historical resources are associated with the work of the CCC during the 1930s. Administered by NPS staff and reserve military personnel, the historic resources that the CCC constructed in Mount San Jacinto State Park are part of the more than 1,500 buildings and structures that they erected within the California State Park System.

Among the historic resources directly associated with the CCC's work in the Park is the "Park Rustic" architecture of the Round Valley Ranger Station and the Peak Shelter. The Round Valley Ranger Station is a cabin made of upright dressed logs and fieldstone rubble. The Peak Shelter is a small, one-story cabin-like shelter. Its walls are composed of rough courses of cut

and dressed granite rock gathered from the surrounding area. The Campground and Administrative Center at Idyllwild are also of CCC construction. Other existing historic archaeological resources that may be associated with the CCC-era include: the remains of a small dam made out of native rock and cement, white and brown ceramic insulators and phone lines tied into pine trees, and a small bench made out of native rock and cement with “Hope Seat” etched into the cement.

A potentially historic resource along the upper portion of the Park’s eastern escarpment is an approximately two-mile section of the controversial Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. At the time of its completion in 1963, the tramway was the longest single-lift overhead suspension tramway in the world. It rises 6,300 feet from the tramway’s Palm Spring base to the Mountain Station. The steel towers and overhead cables are key character-defining features of one of the longest passenger aerial tramways in the world. While only 38 years old, the tramway has already established a place for itself in American history and engineering as an important example of the type of engineering and construction practices used during the early 1960s. It is also associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our collective history: the 37-year struggle between the tramway’s supporters and opponents.

In addition to constructing buildings, the CCC crews spent a great deal of their time improving campground facilities and trails throughout the Park. Combined with the historic Park-Rustic style buildings and native geological and plant features, these stone, wood, and concrete structures combine to form Cultural Landscapes. Consciously designed either by a landscape professional according to design principles or by amateurs following a recognized style or tradition, Mount San Jacinto’s CCC-era cultural landscapes also qualify as Historic Designed Landscapes. Adapting the design to complement the site’s natural features creates unique spatial arrangements. Examples are the grouping of heavy stone entry piers, a massive stone and concrete vehicle bridge, as well as stone “Diablo” stoves, benches, retaining walls, culverts, parking space delineators, and wood fences at the Idyllwild Campground and Administrative Center.

The concept of a Historic Designed Landscape can also be seen along the approximately 36 miles of improved trails that are still used today by Park visitors and staff to travel up to higher elevations. From temporary camps at Idyllwild, Tahquitz Meadow, and Round Valley, CCC crews improved the Wellman’s Cienega and the Deer Springs trails and repaired other existing trails. They also constructed the San Jacinto Peak Trail to the peak shelter. While the trails have experienced modifications and the addition of connecting trails to accommodate the Pacific Crest Trail, for the most part, the original trail system, as well as the associated CCC-built buildings and other structures, have retained their historic integrity.

Predating the historic CCC-era historic landscapes are cultural landscapes associated with the area’s lumber industry. One large site consists of the remains of a historic sawmill and nearby workers’ camp. The site includes foundation pads, debris fields, and trash pits.

POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT

WOULD THE PROJECT:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, as defined in §15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource, pursuant to §15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The Round Valley Ranger Station is one of a limited number of Civilian Conservation Corps-era structures and features remaining in the Park. However, the zone of sensitivity associated with this feature is limited to the western side of Round Valley, and no known historic resources have been identified on the eastern end of Round Valley (project site). Thus, the project is expected to have no impact on historic resources.

b) Archeological resources occur in the Park, but previous surveys in and around Round Valley have identified no archeological resources there or within the project construction zone. Thus, the project is expected to have no impact on archeological resources.

c) No human remains or burial sites have been documented at the Park. Though past cultural resource surveys have included Round Valley and the vicinity of the proposed project site, there is always some uncertainty about what may be uncovered when extensive excavation and earthwork is undertaken. However, no impact is anticipated because the average depth of excavation throughout the borrow area is only about 12 to 14 inches. In any case, excavation work would cease, and a qualified State Park Archaeologist summoned to investigate, if State Park staff (onsite at all times during construction) observe the uncovering of anything other than native soil matter during excavation activities.

VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The San Jacinto Mountains show evidence of tens of millions of years of geologic activity. These periods include deposition of sediment (Paleozoic or older), granitic intrusion (Jura-Cretaceous) and uplift and faulting (Pleistocene and recent). Earthquake activity during the early 1900s, and geological proximity to the San Andreas Fault, would suggest that this region is active.

The bulk of Mount San Jacinto State Park is made up of granitic rock. The outcropping within Mount San Jacinto State Park is a representation of the larger geologic formation known as the California Batholith, which was formed 120 – 90 million years ago in the mid-Cretaceous Period.

The soils and soil profiles within Mount San Jacinto State Park were identified in a soil survey of the San Bernardino National Forest Area, completed by United States Department of Agriculture and Soil Conservation Service. The soils within Mount San Jacinto State Park consist of shallow to moderately deep and somewhat excessively-drained soils that formed in material from weathered granite. The permeability of the soil ranges from rapid to very rapid and the erosion hazard ranges from moderate to very high.

Cooper and Wolf (2009) specifically investigated the meadow soils of Round Valley, reporting that organic matter in the sampled soils ranged from approximately 5 to 58% and was highly heterogeneous spatially. Most samples had relatively high organic content typical of wet meadows. Some sites with very high organic content, occurring in higher elevation patches of dense *Carex*, were suggestive of peat accumulation. Soil under the lodgepole canopy in the area south of the gully had an average 12.5% organic matter. These rich organic soils would have formed in a meadow environment, indicating that this area was part of the meadow prior to gully formation. Finally, some more barren sample collection sites near the meadow center presented very low organic matter content. It was not determined whether this was due to mineral sediment deposition during snowmelt periods, or soil erosion from the meadow during the 20th Century (Cooper and Wolf 2009).

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, issued by the State Geologist for the area, or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.)	☐	☐	☐	☒
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☐	☒
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☐	☒
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable, as a result of the project and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1997), creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste disposal systems, where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site, or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The project site is not in an area prone to landslide. Any risk of seismicity at Mount San Jacinto State Park is not expected to affect the project, as no structures other than log weirs and low fencing will be constructed. No impact.

b) The purpose of the proposed work is to restore the natural hydrology and topography of the area, to the greatest extent practicable. A temporary increase in erosion may occur at some locations because fill is exposed as part of the restoration, but the loss should not be substantial. Some compaction of topsoil may occur along the route followed by the backhoe-loader(s), but this will likely be limited in area as well as severity because the

equipment will be relatively small models, rubber-tired, and will follow only one or two routes between the borrow areas and the fill site. Compacted areas will be scarified and mulched at project completion, as described in Mitigation Measure GEO-1 below. Topography would change from the existing disturbed condition; imprudent grading, excavation, or fill placement during the restoration could initially affect natural topography. Minor side-casting of fill soil may bury some undisturbed topsoil adjacent to the existing chasm; this impact is limited by the comparatively larger area of restored meadow and topsoil overlay. Overall, the work would diminish erosion and, with the implementation of Mitigation Measures GEO-1 and GEO-2 below, any contribution to substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil by the proposed project would be reduced to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURES GEO-1
The filled chasm and elevated thalweg would be compacted in layers to prevent loose material from sloughing off, then smoothed and raked to provide uniform drainage and prevent concentration of flow. Bare ground would be mulched and thatched to minimize surface erosion, also using vegetation plugs removed during the work whenever possible. Any ground areas that suffer an inordinate amount of compaction from concentrated equipment traffic will be scarified with hand tools, prior to mulching and revegetation.

MITIGATION MEASURES GEO-2
Work will be conducted during the dry season when streamflow is minimal or non-existent. Other Best Management Practices (BMPs) prescribed by the California Department of Fish and Game (1602 Agreement) and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (CWA 401 Certification or Waiver) will be implemented and will reduce any impacts from erosion to less than significant.

c) The project is located within a meadow, where soil can be subject to disturbance if protective vegetation is removed. However, the goal of the project is to repair damage from headcutting and eliminate nick-points, stabilize the streambanks, and reduce the potential for lateral erosion and gullying. Project benefit, negligible impact.

d) Expansive soils do not exist in the project area. The project does not include construction of significant structures. No impact.

e) No septic tanks or waste disposal systems would be constructed or impacted by this project. No impact.

f) There are no known unique paleontological resources or sites, or unique geologic features, in the project area. No impact.

VII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is relatively free of hazardous materials. The main hazardous-type materials used and stored in and adjacent to the Wilderness area of the Park are small quantities of motor fuel, primarily at the upper Palm Springs Aerial Tramway station. Fuel is typically not transported through the Wilderness other than within individuals' backpacks and portable stoves when camping.

Hazards in Mount San Jacinto State Park are similar to any outdoor setting and include steep slopes, rushing water, wild animals, disease carrying insects, and inclement weather. In addition, the Park is in a remote portion of Riverside County and emergency transport to the nearest hospital would require up to a several-hour response time in some locations. No airstrips exist within the Park or immediately adjacent to Park property; the Palm Springs airport is about 10 miles away.

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials, substances, or waste into the environment?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites, compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5, and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Be located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport? If so, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Be located in the vicinity of a private airstrip? If so, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death from wildland fires, including areas where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	☐	☐	☒	☐

DISCUSSION

a) Fuel and related materials necessary for the operation and maintenance of construction tools and equipment are the only hazardous materials that will be transported to the project site. Diesel fuel will be delivered in commercially-sealed barrels (USDOT-approved shipping containers) in one trip at the beginning of the project, by helicopter airlift, and any unused fuel will be removed the same way after project completion. Properly-sealed containers of smaller quantities gas and oil and cleaners for power tools will also be delivered and stored by the same method. Project-site storage of fuel will be limited to one staging area, and an adjacent section of trail will be detoured during construction, so no impact to the public is anticipated.

b) Construction activities would require the use of certain potentially environmentally-hazardous materials, such as fuels, oils, and solvents. These materials are generally used for excavation equipment, chain saws, generators, and other construction equipment and would be contained within vessels engineered for safe storage. Large quantities of these materials would not be stored at the construction site, except for diesel fuel, but only one approved container would be in use at any one time. Spills, upsets, equipment failure, or other construction-related accidents could result in a release of fuel or other hazardous substances into the environment. The following mitigation measure would reduce the potential for adverse impacts from these incidents to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE HAZMAT-1
▪ All equipment would be inspected for leaks before arrival at the project site, again immediately prior to the start of construction, and regularly inspected thereafter until equipment is removed from the project site. ▪ Equipment would be cleaned and repaired (other than emergency repairs) outside the project area at an existing Park maintenance yard. Contaminated fluids or materials, if any, would be disposed of outside Park boundaries at a lawfully-permitted or authorized destination. ▪ The in-use container of fuel (diesel barrel) will be contained in a liquid-proof lined-enclosure of sufficient volume to contain inadvertent release of the entire contents.

c) The project is not located within one-quarter mile of any school and no schools are proposed for this area. No impact.

d) Mount San Jacinto State Park is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5. Therefore, no impact.

e-f) The project sites are not located within an airport land use plan, within two miles of a public airport, or in the vicinity of a private air strip. Therefore, no impact would occur as a result of this project.

g) All construction activities associated with the project would occur within the boundaries of Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness and work would not restrict access to or block any public road. Emergency response requirements, generally reliant upon foot-travel, would be no greater in the presence of the project. No impact.

h) The project site is located in a meadow area, containing generally moist soils and a high percentage of wetland vegetation that does not present a high fire risk. Although most of Mount San Jacinto State Park and the surrounding areas are dominated by montane forest and other vegetation that becomes highly flammable during the dry season (June-October), the construction equipment associated with this project would not be operating within high-fuel areas associated with this potential fire hazard. However, as an additional safety measure, power equipment (such as chain saws and generators) will have functioning spark arrestors. The project would not add any new uses that could create additional fire risks. Therefore, the impact of this project would be less than significant.

VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is an “island” surrounded by desert and intensely urban developed areas. Within the Park, the sensitive wetland resources are “islands within the island,” many plant and wildlife resources depend directly on these relatively uncommon, limited-size, easily-disturbed habitats. An example of this “island within an island” concept is the Long Valley Meadow and Round Valley Meadow. These areas are at different elevations within the same 4,000-acre watershed. The watershed is fed by runoff from the melting snowpack, which infiltrates the permeable soils; some of this water emerges from springs at the lower elevations. Each of these areas exhibit distinct natural features and characteristics, which all depend on the localized and surrounding hydrologic resources.

The one lake in the Park, Hidden Lake, is a "montane vernal lake" occupying a shallow basin in the eastern edge of the Wilderness. Hidden Lake is underlain by an impermeable layer of granitic rocks, which promotes prolonged water retention, and is surrounded by slopes and steep escarpments. The size of Hidden Lake varies from several acres to less than 1 acre, depending on the amount of precipitation and runoff in a given year. In some years it has been known to dry entirely. Hidden Lake, at approximately 8,694 feet in elevation, is the only natural montane vernal lake in Riverside County.

Major springs in the Park include Deer Springs, Wellman’s Cienega, Round Valley Meadow, Little Round Valley Meadow, Strawberry Cienega, and Long Valley Meadow. The watersheds and runoff flow into drainage channels such as Snow Creek, Fall Creek, Chino Creek, and Tamarack Creek. On the west side, runoff flows towards the North Fork of the San Jacinto River, Fuller Mill Creek, and Strawberry Creek.

Water quality in Mount San Jacinto State Park is generally very high as streams are free of pollutants. The Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board regulates water quality in the Park. Groundwater in the Park is free of pollutants and considered to be of very high quality because few potential pollution sources exist. The groundwater table fluctuates annually, depending on rainfall and seasonal temperatures, and varies throughout the area because of the influences of geology and topography.

The site of the proposed project is typically a seasonal stream whose duration varies depending on water-year precipitation conditions. A permanent spring at the head of Round Valley has been improved with a pipe that makes it convenient for hikers and campers to get untreated water, but the flow of this spring normally quickly percolates into the nearby sandy soil. Other springs and runoff in the meadow flow overland in numerous channels that meander and alternately disperse and coalesce. Round Valley Meadow also probably serves to recharge the aquifer that supplies more permanent flow to lower reaches of Long Valley Creek; storage in these meadow soils may have a relationship to the production of downstream springs. There are no public water systems in the area impacted by the proposed project.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge, such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level that would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial on- or off-site erosion or siltation?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in on- or off-site flooding?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Substantially degrade water quality?	☐	☒	☐	☐
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area, as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map, or other flood hazard delineation map?	☐	☐	☐	☒
h) Place structures that would impede or redirect flood flows within a 100-year flood hazard area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death from flooding, including flooding resulting from the failure of a levee or dam?	☐	☐	☐	☒
j) Result in inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The project would be in compliance with all applicable water quality standards and waste discharge requirements (see Mitigation Measure HAZMAT-1 regarding potential impacts from accidents, spills, or upset). The project would result in a net decrease in non-point source pollution. Additionally, all work would be accomplished during late summer and early fall, when the intermittent stream is dry or nearly dry, further lessening any chance of impact to surface water quality. The project scope does not include waste discharge work of any kind. Project location, design, and timing, in combination with the Hazmat mitigation measure indicated above for accidental hazardous material exposure, would result in a less than significant impact to water quality and waste discharge.

b) The project would not deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge. Groundwater quantity may be influenced by changes in surface drainage patterns and/or changes in porosity of earth materials at fill sites. Increasing surface flows in certain locations through reconnection of channels would alter existing groundwater conditions at both the reconnected and the abandoned channel site. Newly restored fills would experience a period of interactive adjustment to groundwater flows as the fills consolidate over time; however, in the long term, both the fill and groundwater flows would evolve toward their pre-disturbance patterns. Fills will be compacted during their placement to speed this process of consolidation. Changes in the direction or rate of groundwater flow may be influenced by changes in surface drainage patterns. Substantial short-term reductions in the amount of groundwater or surface water available for public water supplies would not occur as a result of the project; the amount of local groundwater would eventually increase, due to the anticipated higher water table in the Round Valley Meadow. The impact of the project on groundwater supplies would be less than significant.

c) Existing (altered) drainage patterns would be restored to pre-disturbance patterns. Reconnecting diverted streams segments to their natural flow pattern could increase discharge in abandoned channels. However, significant geomorphic adjustments are not likely to occur due to the increased discharge because the reoccupied channels had originally formed under the expected post-treatment flow regime. Effects of reestablishing pre-disturbance drainage patterns and discharge have been evaluated to ensure increased discharge would not adversely impact fluvial geomorphic functioning at the site or downstream. The Best Management Practices described in Mitigations Measures GEO-1 and GEO-2 would reduce the potential for adverse impacts to a less than significant level; on-site erosion and siltation would be short term and less than the existing conditions that are being remedied.

d) The project is designed to reduce the severity of peak runoff events, and combined with completion of the work during the dry season, would reduce the possibility of project-related flooding on- or off-site. The work would significantly restore the creek's access to its natural and historic floodplain, reducing erosive velocities and allowing stormwater to percolate into the soil. The work would eliminate unnatural concentrations of flow in the entrenched channel, thereby reducing peak runoff events and streambank erosion. Runoff

would be more evenly distributed across the landscape in restored natural flow paths. Flood stages will be reduced although minor flood frequency may increase; the impact of minor modification of the flood regime is not expected to be significant on- or off-site.

e) The project would not create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems, or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. No stormwater systems are present downslope from the project. No adverse impact.

f) The project, in and of itself, reduces soil erosion and sediment inputs to streams, thereby improving water quality once construction is complete. However, there is the potential for short-term sedimentation and the accidental spillage of toxic substances (e.g., diesel fuel and hydraulic oil) during the construction process. The Best Management Practices described in Mitigations Measures HAZMAT-1, GEO-1, and GEO-2 would reduce the potential for adverse impacts to a less than significant level.

g,h) The project does not involve housing or construction of any structure designed for human occupation. No impact.

i) The project would not expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death from flooding, including flooding resulting from the failure of a levee or dam. No adverse impact.

j) Mount San Jacinto State Park is not in an area subject to any risk of inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow. No impact.

IX. LAND USE AND PLANNING.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The majority of the Park is bordered by the San Bernardino National Forest, most of which is designated as National Wilderness. On the west side, the communities of Idyllwild and Pine Cove are situated close to the Park boundaries. These two mountain villages support quaint cabins, inns, shops, and restaurants. Between these two villages along Highway 243, the County of Riverside operates the County Nature Center and a campground facility. On the east side, adjacent to the Park's steep escarpments facing the desert floor, are square parcels of undeveloped land owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

The project is located in Mount San Jacinto State Park and is under the planning guidelines of the 2002 General Plan (DPR 2002). The Plan presents the goals and guidelines that apply Park-wide for resource management and facility planning for public access, recreation, interpretation, resource protection, and park administration in a setting where many resources are rare and sensitive.

The proposed project is consistent with the "Hydrology" Section of the General Plan, specifically a Guideline which states, "Protect, enhance, and restore the Park's wetlands and hydrologic resources." This project implements a Goal of the General Plan to implement "strategies for stabilization and topographic restoration of severely eroded features and areas."

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with the applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of any agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, a general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The project would not physically divide an established community because no community exists within or adjacent to the State Wilderness. The nearest communities, Palm Springs and Idyllwild, are several miles away. No impact.

b) This project is essentially a Goal of, and is consistent with, the Mount San Jacinto State Park General Plan. It will not conflict with any other regional or other plan. No impact.

c) The project would not conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan. Mount San Jacinto State Park is included within the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan, but none of the sensitive species managed for under the CV-MSHCP are known to occur near Round Valley. No impact.

X. MINERAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

No significant mineral resources have been identified within the boundaries of Mount San Jacinto State Park. Mineral resource extraction is not permitted under the Resource Management Directives of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that is or would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource because no known mineral resources exist within the park. No impact.

b) The project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site because none exist within the park. No impact.

XI. NOISE.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is located in forested, rugged terrain in Southern California. Dominated by Wilderness, much of the park is literally a refuge from noise. The only usual, expected exceptions are the occasional voices of visitors and occasional air traffic. The latter can be both private and commercial, usually associated with the Palm Springs airport about 10 miles away.

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Generate or expose people to noise levels in excess of standards established in a local general plan or noise ordinance, or in other applicable local, state, or federal standards?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Generate or expose people to excessive groundborne vibrations or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Create a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project (above levels without the project)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Create a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project, in excess of noise levels existing without the project?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Be located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport? If so, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Be in the vicinity of a private airstrip? If so, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) Construction noise levels at and near the project area would fluctuate, depending on the type and number of construction equipment and tools operating at any given time. However, even short-term increases in ambient noise levels could disturb visitors nearing the project site and disrupt the ambience of the Wilderness and nearby campsites. For this reason, project construction is scheduled for as short a period as possible (approximately 30 days total) as the Park's peak use season is waning. Implementation of the following Mitigation Measures will reduce the adverse impacts to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE NOISE-1
• Construction activities would be limited to the hours between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. • Internal combustion engines used for any purpose at the job site would be equipped with a muffler of a type prescribed by the manufacturer.

MITIGATION MEASURE NOISE-2
• Interpretive material (trailhead sign and/or pamphlet) will be developed expressly for Wilderness visitors during this time, alerting them to the unusual, one-time construction activity and informing them of the benefits of the proposed project to sensitive Wilderness resources.

b) The project would not generate or expose people to excessive groundborne vibrations or groundborne noise levels because only relatively-small pieces of equipment will be used in this project. The sizes of the machines and equipment used do not generate excessive vibrations. No impact.

c) Project-related noise would only occur during actual construction. Once construction is completed, all noise-generating equipment will be removed from the site. The project would not create any source that would contribute to any increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project. No impact.

d) See Discussion XI(a) above. Campsites immediately adjacent to the project would be occupied by CCC workers during construction; otherwise, construction activities are limited to daytime hours. Implementation of the mitigations indicated in Mitigation Measure NOISE-1 would reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level.

e,f) The project is not within an airport land use plan and is not within 2 miles of an airport; therefore, the project would have no impact.

XII. POPULATION AND HOUSING

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project area including the upper meadow's seasonal stream watershed, located in Mount San Jacinto State Park, is two miles away from a residential unit that is occasionally occupied by State Park employees. No other housing exists within or adjacent to the Wilderness, and no housing developments are planned. The communities surrounding the Park are expansive urban areas and rural subdivisions, but are at least 5 miles away. Tourism does result in temporary seasonal fluctuations in the population of these areas, but the project would not contribute to these variations.

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a,b,c) The project would not induce substantial population growth because the project does not involve housing or new businesses. The project involves restoring a creek and a meadow within a State Wilderness and is not anticipated to discernibly affect public visitation or adjacent campsite use, much less have any direct or indirect effect on population growth. The project will not require hiring additional employees, and all current State Park employees associated with this project maintain housing in the region or provide their own temporary facilities. Therefore, no replacement housing will be required. Additionally, no individuals will be displaced because the project only involves temporary detour of a trail that has no access or use by residences. CCC Crews' use of 3-4 campsites in the work area will not affect campers because the Park's campsites typically do not fill during the months scheduled for project construction. All work would take place within the confines of the Park boundaries, with no additions or changes to the existing local infrastructure. Therefore, the project would have no impact on population growth or housing requirements in the area.

XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project area including the upper meadow's seasonal stream watershed is a gently-sloping to nearly flat area that is seasonally-popular with tourists. It is completely within the boundaries of Mount San Jacinto State Park. Trails provide moderately-difficult access to these locations for recreation, project work, or in an emergency.

Daily law enforcement and public safety services are provided year round by California State Park Rangers who provide primary patrol in developed and public use areas. Mutual aid coordination occurs with other local law enforcement agencies that have jurisdiction and maintain regular presence in the area (mainly the Riverside County Sheriff, Palm Springs Police Department, and California Highway Patrol).

CDF and USFS provide fire protection for the area and maintain fire stations in Riverside County. The USFS Air Attack base is located in San Bernardino, approximately 20 air-miles from Mount San Jacinto. Because of the roadless character of the Wilderness, fire suppression in the Park is essentially limited to hand-crews (by foot) and attack by aircraft.

No schools exist within the project area; and the nearest school is about 3 miles away from the work sites.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Result in significant environmental impacts from construction associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:	☐	☐	☒	☐
Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Parks?	☐	☐	☒	☐
Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) As noted in the Environmental Setting above, daily law enforcement and public safety services are provided year-round by California State Park Rangers assigned to Mount San Jacinto State Park, with primary patrols in public use areas. State Park Rangers have full law enforcement authority and only require assistance from other agencies as backup for unusual situations. No additional demands on Rangers or local law enforcement staff are expected as a result of this project.

No schools exist within or near the project area. No changes would occur that would affect existing schools or require additional schools or school personnel. No impact.

No adverse impact would occur at Mount San Jacinto State Park or any other public facilities as a result of this project. The project would improve Mount San Jacinto State Park by protecting the natural resources of the Park. The project would improve the aesthetic quality of a popular Wilderness area, improve visitor safety, reduce sediment sources, and encourage natural revegetation. Since no public use areas would be permanently closed nor access significantly limited as a result of this project, no other parks in the area should show a related increase in use. Requirements for maintenance of the restored stream channel are expected to require no more than the routine hand-labor occasionally used for trail maintenance, and this additional workload is expected to be less than significant.

The project would have no impact on fire protection. The project, as a whole, would have a less than significant effect on any public services.

XIV. RECREATION.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is one of the most visited units of the California State Park System, usually logging over 375,000 visitor-days each year. Visitor activities include sightseeing, hiking, camping, birding, and other forms of nature study. Also, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are pursued in the winter.

Even in light of this visitation, Mount San Jacinto State Park has a limited number of developed facilities that are concentrated mainly in the most westerly and easterly sections of the Park. On the west side, near the town of Idyllwild, are the Idyllwild Ranger Station, a maintenance building, and two Park staff residences. Adjacent to the Ranger Station is the Idyllwild Campground consisting of 33 developed sites including two with recreational vehicle hook-ups, two restrooms, showers, and a campfire center. Six miles north of the Idyllwild Ranger Station, along Highway 243, is the Stone Creek Campground. This campground has 50 developed sites and three restrooms.

On the east side of the Park, the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway provides access into the Park. The Mountain Station and the upper two-thirds of the tram route lie within the Park. Within the Mountain Station are food services, a gift shop, conference rooms, restrooms, viewing decks, and an interpretive audio/video area. State Park volunteers, under the guidance of California State Parks, operate an information center located in the Mountain Station. North of the station is the Winter Park Authority's (WPA) potable water storage tank that supplies the water for both the station and two potable water tanks located within Long Valley. Potable water is transported to WPA's water tank by the Tram cars.

A Ranger Station and a minor maintenance building are located in Long Valley. WPA facilities within the valley included an abandoned mule ride operation with a staging area and corrals, and an Adventure Center that offers snow-oriented equipment rentals. The WPA also operates a downhill snow-tubing/sledding area adjacent to the Adventure Center. Two potable water storage tanks, one fire-fighting water storage tank, and several leach fields are located in the valley. Water for the fire-fighting tank is taken from Long Valley Creek.

Within the Wilderness, there are 49 primitive campsites located at four locations: Round Valley (Appendix A), Tamarack Valley, Little Round Valley, and Strawberry Junction.

A few historic facilities built by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), which remain in use by Park staff, are located within the Park. These CCC-constructed facilities include the Ranger Station at Round Valley, the maintenance shop and Residence #1 at Idyllwild Campground, the Peak Shelter, and amenities such as Diablo stoves and trail rockwork and cribbing.

The project site is located within the 9,900-acre State Wilderness. Visitation of this area is on the order of 20,000 visitors per year. The campsites that surround Round Valley Meadow usually only fill to capacity on Friday and Saturday nights between Memorial Day and Labor Day (plus an additional night on holiday weekends).

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The project may slightly increase day use of the rehabilitated areas of the meadow and creek, once construction is completed, primarily because of its value for interpretive programs. However, the overall increase would be minimal and would not accelerate the deterioration of any facility. No impact to other neighboring areas or parks is expected.

b) The project does not include or influence the construction of recreational facilities or the expansion of any facility; therefore, no impact would occur.

XV. TRANSPORATION/TRAFFIC.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

As stated earlier, Mount San Jacinto State Park is predominantly roadless Wilderness. Idyllwild and Pine Cove are situated close to the western Park boundaries and are connected by Highway 243.

On the eastern side of the Park, Tramway Drive leaves the northwestern edge of the City of Palm Springs and climbs steeply over 4 miles to the lower Palm Springs Aerial Tramway station. The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is partially located within Mount San Jacinto State Park. The tramway takes the visitor from the desert floor (2,643-foot elevation at lower tramway station which lies outside the State Park) into Mount San Jacinto State Park (8,516-foot elevation at the Mountain Station) in a matter of minutes. During the ride, the rotating tramway cars offer the visitor panoramic views of Palm Springs and the surrounding area, including the majestic mountain ranges of the Park and varied plant communities.

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Cause a substantial increase in traffic, in relation to existing traffic and the capacity of the street system (i.e., a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Exceed, individually or cumulatively, the level of service standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Cause a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location, that results in substantial safety risks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Contain a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or a dangerous intersection) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment) that would substantially increase hazards?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The project is many miles from the nearest road, and no new permanent or recurring-seasonal staff or crews will be added for this project. Therefore, this project will have no impact on existing traffic or the capacity of the existing (regional) highway and road system.

b) The project would not cause traffic levels to exceed, individually or cumulatively, the level of service standards for designated roads or highways because no traffic increase is anticipated. No impact.

c) The project sites are not located within an airport land use plan, within two miles of a public airport, in the vicinity of a private air strip, and do not serve as a normal reporting point for air traffic in the area. Nothing in the proposed project would in any way affect or change existing air traffic patterns; therefore, no impact would occur as a result of this project.

d) The project does not contain a design feature nor generate incompatible uses that would substantially increase traffic hazards, because the project does not contain elements influencing the design or use of any road. No impact.

e) The project would not result in inadequate emergency access because any emergency staff will continue to have access to the trail sections within the restoration zone. There will be no disruption to normal emergency access to any portion of the Park. No impact.

f) The project would not result in inadequate parking capacity because the parking areas at the lower Palm Springs Aerial Tramway station does not fill to capacity during the months scheduled for project construction. Park staff and construction workers will park in service areas or in closed areas at that staging site. Adequate parking exists in the other nearby parking areas that will not be altered or used by construction crews. No impact.

g) The project would not conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation because it does not reduce or increase transportation uses. No impact.

XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Mount San Jacinto State Park is serviced by several public utilities but provides its own water supply and wastewater disposal system. Surface water is supplied to the project area by precipitation, runoff during storm events, and snowmelt; potable water from WPA's wells at the lower Palm Springs Aerial Tramway station is conveyed to the upper Aerial Tramway station by tanks in the Tram cars and stored in WPA's Long Valley tank. A wastewater leach field is maintained in Long Valley.

Electricity for the developed areas of the Park is provided by Southern California Edison, commercial telecommunications are provided by AT&T, and propane gas is conveyed in small portable cylinders. Commercial propane delivery to domestic tanks occurs in the western developed areas of the Park. A local waste management company provides solid waste disposal services at the lower Palm Springs Aerial Tramway station and from the Idyllwild-area Park facilities.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Exceed wastewater treatment restrictions or standards of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Would the construction of these facilities cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Would the construction of these facilities cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Result in a determination, by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project, that it has adequate capacity to service the project's anticipated demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations as they relate to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a-b) No wastewater would be produced by this project. No impact.

c) The project would not require or result in the construction of new stormwater drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities. No impact.

d) An existing spring at the head of Round Valley will be tapped (by garden hose) to convey water to the project site (about 1,400 feet away). A turnout or sufficient bypass will be allowed at the spring to provide uninterrupted water supply for Park visitors (trail users). No other outside source of water is required during or after construction. The impact to the Round Valley spring will be short-term and will not be significant.

e-g) No impact; no wastewater or solid waste would be generated by this project.

CHAPTER 4
MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Have the potential to eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probably future projects?)	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on humans, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

DISCUSSION

a) The proposed project is expected to improve the quality of the environment by restoring high-value functioning wetland, substantially increasing the habitat for several wildlife and wetland plant species. Although some mortality of upland plant species, including some meadowside trees, may occur, this will be succeeded by slight expansion of the meadow habitat and is thus considered a less than significant environmental impact. No rare or endangered species occur within the vicinity of the project.

b) The proposed project has been evaluated for potential significant impacts to cultural resources. The project site is not in an area containing historic or prehistoric resources and will not impact examples of California history or prehistory. No impact is anticipated.

c) Mount San Jacinto State Park periodically conducts other maintenance programs and rehabilitation projects, as well as routine, ongoing maintenance; these general maintenance activities will continue in the foreseeable future. However, the proposed project is completely unrelated to other routine projects, and is several miles distant from most

regular Park activity. At this isolated Wilderness project site, and at developed Park areas, no cumulative impacts are anticipated.

d) Project-related environmental effects have been determined to pose a less than significant impact on humans. However, possible impacts from construction accidents (Hazards and Hazardous Materials) and Noise, though temporary in nature, have the potential to result in adverse effects on humans. Most significant are the impacts created by noise and other disturbance from the use of mechanized equipment in State Wilderness, but these adverse impacts are expected to be less than significant because of the full implementation of all mitigation measures incorporated into this project.

Furthermore, the conditions necessary to authorize use of mechanized equipment in State Wilderness for the purposes of resource management, as prescribed by Department Operations Manual Section 0304.5.4, are met by this project:

1) Reasonable alternatives to the use of mechanized equipment, for the purpose of excavating, moving, and compacting 700 to 800 yards of soil over a distance of several hundred feet, within a reasonable timeframe, do not exist;

2) A significant resource management need exists, being the inevitable major future erosional damage predicted to occur in Round Valley, and the result of the work will be substantially unnoticed (owing to topographic restoration of natural-appearing grade, and revegetation);

3) The use of this mechanized equipment will be non-recurring, and is limited in time and area to the minimum necessary; and

4) The District Superintendent will provide prior written approval, assuring that the above requirements are met.

The above findings will be compiled into a staff recommendation pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 4351.1(c), including a “Minimum Tool Analysis” that will the basis of the Director of California State Parks authorizing this project pursuant to PRC 4351.1(b).

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES

The following mitigation measures would be implemented by DPR as part of the Round Valley Headcut Repair and Elevation Restoration Project. Additionally, the project description contains methodologies that will avoid, minimize, and restore potential adverse environmental effects on aesthetics, biological resources, and hydrology. The intent of the project is to enhance and restore these attributes in the Round Valley Meadow.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

MITIGATION MEASURE GEO-1

- The filled chasm and elevated thalweg would be compacted in layers to prevent loose material from sloughing off, then smoothed and raked to provide uniform drainage and prevent concentration of flow. Bare ground would be mulched and thatched to minimize surface erosion, also using vegetation plugs removed during the work whenever possible. Any ground areas that suffer an inordinate amount of compaction from concentrated equipment traffic will be scarified with hand tools, prior to mulching and revegetation.

MITIGATION MEASURE GEO-2

- Work will be conducted during the dry season when stream flow is minimal or non-existent. Other Best Management Practices (BMPs) prescribed by the California Department of Fish and Game (1602 Agreement) and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (CWA 401 Certification or Waiver) will be implemented and will reduce any impacts from erosion to less than significant.

HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

MITIGATION MEASURES HAZMAT-1

- All equipment would be inspected for leaks before arrival at the project site, again immediately prior to the start of construction, and regularly inspected thereafter until equipment is removed from the project site.
- Equipment would be cleaned and repaired (other than emergency repairs) outside the project area at an existing Park maintenance yard. Contaminated fluids or materials, if any, would be disposed of outside Park boundaries at a lawfully-permitted destination.
- The in-use container of fuel (diesel barrel) will be contained in a liquid-proof lined-enclosure of sufficient volume to contain inadvertent release of the entire contents.

NOISE

MITIGATION MEASURES NOISE-1

- Construction activities would be limited to the hours between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
- Internal combustion engines used for any purpose at the job site would be equipped with a muffler of a type prescribed by the manufacturer.

MITIGATION MEASURE NOISE-2

- Interpretive material (trailhead sign and/or pamphlet) will be developed expressly for Wilderness visitors, alerting them to the unusual, one-time construction activity and informing them of the benefits of the project to sensitive Wilderness resources.

CHAPTER 6
REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A
MAPS

1) VICINITY MAP
2) U.S.G.S. QUADRANGLE EXCERPT
3) ROUND VALLEY CAMPSITE/TRAIL MAP

APPENDIX B

PROJECT DESIGN GRAPHICS

1) AERIAL PHOTO OF PROJECT AREA
2) LATERAL CROSS-SECTION (TYPICAL) OF STREAM AT SITE (J)
3) LATERAL CROSS-SECTION (TYPICAL) OF STREAM AT SITE (L)
4) TOPOGRAPHICAL RELATIONSHIP OF FILL AREA AND ADJACENT BORROW AREA

APPENDIX C

CNDDB RECORD SEARCH

1) CNDDB MAP OF PROJECT AREA AND VICINITY
2) CNDDB REPORT

APPENDIX D

MINIMUM TOOL AUTHORIZATION ANALYSIS AND REQUEST