Attachment B

Biological Resources

CalVTP Project ID: 2023-04

Attachment B Contents

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Pursuant to SPR BIO-1, a data review of biological resources specific to the treatment area was conducted to identify sensitive species with potential to occur in the treatment area. Consulting botanist and Registered Professional Forester (RPF) Estelle Clifton of Clifton Environmental LLC performed a reconnaissance level survey over several project site visits in the spring of 2023, concurrent with ongoing botanical surveys to identify sensitive areas and potential sensitive species habitat. Additionally, Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) forestry staff and consultants (RPF and RPF-designees) have surveyed the project area during project planning in 2022 and 2023, at which time they assessed the suitability of the habitat for special-status species. MRC timber inventory data was used for preliminary identification of vegetation types within the treatment area.

The project area comprises the following vegetation types: Douglas-fir – tanoak forest (688 acres), Douglas-fir forest (172 acres), redwood forest (54 acres), tanoak forest (43 acres), white oak woodland (20 acres), black oak woodland (8 acres), and natural grassland (6 acres). The elevation range of the project area is 920 to 2,760 feet and spans 12 miles along an east-west trending ridge top with gentle to steep slopes. Limited wetlands and riparian vegetation occur in the ridgetop project area.

A list of potential plant and wildlife species was compiled (Table 1) for the project area (see below) using data obtained from the California Natural Diversity Database (accessed 3/6/2023), California Native Plant Society Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (accessed 3/6/2023) for the 9 USGS quadrangles surrounding the treatment area, and Appendix BIO-3 (Table 9a and Table 9b) in the PEIR (Volume II) for special-status plants and wildlife that could occur in the Northern California Coast ecoregion, which encompasses the treatment area.

Table 1. Sensitive plant and animal taxa with potential to occur in the project area. Species or taxa known to occur in or near project area are shown in bold type.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
Special-Status Plants					
Franciscan onion *Allium peninsulare var. franciscanum*	-	-	1B.2	Cismontane woodland and Valley and foothill grassland vegetation types. Clay, Serpentinite (often), Volcanic. 305 to 1000 feet. Perennial bulbiferous herb; blooms May to June.	May occur. The project area, though primarily forested, is adjacent to and contains pockets of grasslands. The nearest CNDDB occurrence is over 65 miles from the project area. The CNPS inventory lists the species for Mendocino County, but not for any of the USGS quads adjacent to the project area.
Raiche's manzanita *Arctostaphylos stanfordiana ssp. raichei*	-	-	1B.1	Chaparral, Lower montane coniferous forest (openings). Rocky, Serpentinite (often). Elevation 1035 to 3395 feet. Perennial evergreen shrub; blooms February to April.	Unlikely to occur. The vegetation types listed do not match types known to occur in the project area; however, an occurrence has been recorded less than 4 miles from the project area.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
Humboldt County milk-vetch *Astragalus agnicidus*	-	SE	1B.1	Broad-leafed upland forest and North Coast coniferous forest types. Disturbed areas, Openings, Roadsides (sometimes). Elevation 800 to 2565 feet. Perennial herb; blooms April to September.	May occur. The plan area provides suitable habitat, especially along roadsides. The nearest recorded occurrence (CNDDB Element Occurrence No. 21) is approximately 1 mile from the treatment area.
mountain lady's-slipper *Cypripedium montanum*	-	-	4.2	Broad-leafed upland forest, Cismontane woodland, Lower montane coniferous forest, and North Coast coniferous forest types. Elevation 2225-7300 feet. Perennial rhizomatous herb; blooms March to August.	May occur. The treatment area contains suitable forest types; however, the species tends to occur at higher elevations.
coast fawn lily *Erythronium revolutum*	-	-	2B.2	Bogs and fens, broad-leafed upland forest, and North Coast coniferous forest vegetation types. Mesic, streambanks. Elevation 1600 to 5250 feet. Perennial bulbiferous herb; blooms March to July	May occur. Habitat for the species occurs in the treatment area. The nearest recorded occurrence (CNDDB Element Occurrence No. 2) is over 6 miles from the plan area.
minute pocket moss *Fissidens pauperculus*	-	-	1B.2	North Coast coniferous forest types. Damp coastal soil. Elevation 1024 to 3360 feet. Moss.	May occur. Limited information is available on this species. It is likely a low-probability species however due to drier soil conditions in the project area.
Mendocino tarplant *Hemizonia congesta ssp. calyculata*	-	-	4.3	Cismontane woodland and Valley and foothill grassland vegetation types. Serpentinite (sometimes). Elevation 1400 to 4595 feet. Annual herb; blooms Jul-Nov.	May occur. The project area, though primarily forested with conifer is adjacent to and contains pockets of grassland and oak woodland. This taxon has been observed on the ownership approximately 1 mile (MRC records) of the project area.
bristly leptosiphon *Leptosiphon aureus*	-	-	4.2	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Coastal prairie, Valley, and foothill grassland vegetation types.	May occur. The project area, though primarily forested, is adjacent to and contains pockets of grasslands and woodland.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
				Elevation 1500 to 4920 feet. Annual herb; blooms April to June.	
broad-lobed leptosiphon *Leptosiphon latisectus*	-	-	4.3	broad-leafed upland forest and Cismontane woodland vegetation types. Elevation 1500 to 4920 feet. Annual herb; blooms April to June.	May occur. The project area, though primarily forested with conifer is adjacent to and contains pockets of oak woodland.
redwood lily *Lilium rubescens*	-	-	4.2	broad-leafed upland forest, Chaparral, Lower montane coniferous forest, North Coast coniferous forest, Upper montane coniferous forest. Roadsides (sometimes) Serpentinite (sometimes). Elevation 1910 to 6265 feet. Perennial bulbiferous herb; blooms April to August.	May occur. The treatment area contains suitable habitat for this species, and it has been observed on the ownership, with the nearest occurrence (MRC records) located approximately 1/2 mile from the project area.
white-flowered rein orchid *Piperia candida*	-	-	1B.2	broad-leafed upland forest, Lower montane coniferous forest, North Coast coniferous forest. Serpentinite (sometimes). Elevation 1310 to 4300 feet. Perennial herb; blooms May to September.	**CNDDB Element Occurrence No. 122** occurs within the project area. Suitable habitat for the species occurs throughout the forested habitat within the project area.
North Coast semaphore grass *Pleuropogon hooverianus*	-	ST	1B.1	broad-leafed upland forest, Meadows and seeps, North Coast coniferous forest. Mesic, openings. Elevation 671 to 2200 feet. Perennial rhizomatous herb; blooms April through June.	**CNDDB Element Occurrence No. 27** occurs within the project area. Forest openings in the project area provide potential habitat for additional occurrences.
angel's hair lichen *Ramalina thrausta*	-	-	2B.1	North Coast coniferous forest type. On dead twigs and other lichens. Elevation 430 to 1410 feet.	May occur. The project area is primarily conifer dominated forest within the elevation range for this species.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
Methuselah's beard lichen *Usnea longissima*	-	-	4.2	broad-leafed upland forest, and North Coast coniferous forest types. On tree branches; usually on old growth hardwoods and conifers. Elevation 1460 to 4790 feet.	This species has been recorded (MRC records) within the project area. Suitable habitat (dominant trees and snags) for additional occurrences may be present throughout the project area.

California Rare Plant Rank
1A = Plants presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere 1B = Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere
2B = Plants rare or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere 4 = Plants of limited distribution – a watch list
Threat Ranks
0.1 - Seriously threatened in California (over 80% of occurrences threatened/high degree and immediacy of threat)
0.2 – Moderately threatened in California (20-80% occurrences threatened/moderate degree and immediacy of threat)
0.3 – Not very threatened in California (less than 20% of occurrences threatened/low degree and immediacy of threat or no current threats known)

Special-Status Wildlife					
red-bellied newt *Taricha rivularis*	-	SC	-	Coastal redwood forests and cold, rock, forest streams with moderate to fast current.	Several **CNDDB** records (**Element occurrences 41, 42 and 44-53**) occur within one mile of the project area (nearest is 1/2 mile). No suitable aquatic breeding habitat occurs within the ridgetop treatment area; however, adult newts migrating overland could pass through treatment areas or appurtenant roads
northern goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*	-	SC	-	Within, and in vicinity of, coniferous forest. Uses old nests and maintains alternate sites. Usually nests on north slopes, near water.	Unlikely to occur. Treatment area is primarily coniferous forest; however, the species is primarily associated with old growth or late seral forest, which is not present in the plan area.
grasshopper sparrow*Ammodramus savannarum*	-	SC	-	Grasslands and prairies, coastal scrub, sage scrub, agricultural fields, and rangeland. Builds dome-like ground nests out of grasses with a side entrance.	May occur. Though most of the treatment area is non-habitat (forested), openings in and around the controlled burn unit could provide nesting habitat.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*	-	FP	-	Rolling foothills, mountains, sage-flats, and desert. Cliff-walled canyons provide nesting habitat in most parts of the range; also, large trees in open areas.	May occur, though unlikely. Suitable nesting trees may be present at the edges of the treatment area adjacent to open grass-dominated habitat in the eastern portion of the treatment area. Golden eagles have been observed in Mendocino County, and on MRC property; however, the nearest CNDDB record is 43 miles to the ESE near Clearlake.
long-eared owl *Asio otus*	-	SC	-	Coniferous forest, oak woodlands, riparian forest, pinyon-juniper, and desert woodlands. Associated with open forests and forests adjacent to edges such as meadows, grasslands, and shrublands. Prefers to nest in abandoned structures generated by other bird species, but may also utilize arboreal mammal nests, tree platforms and deformities, cavities, and occasionally, heavily concealed structures on or near the ground.	May occur. Portions of the treatment area associated with open canopy forest or grassland that may contain suitable habitat.
marbled murrelet *Brachyramphus marmoratus*	T	E	-	Old-growth coniferous forest or residual old-growth areas with trees containing large limbs (> 4" to 6" in diameter) capable of harboring an egg, suitable canopy cover and crown height, and protection from wind, high temperatures and predators (e.g., jays and ravens). Suitable nest structures also include mistletoe brooms and other types of platforms. Nest trees typically have a decadent structure with	May occur but unlikely. No old growth or late-seral stands or individual trees suitable for nesting have been identified in the treatment area.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
				deformities, epiphytic plants, moss and lichens, and debris accumulations.	
Vaux's swift *Chaetura vauxi*	-	SC	-	Nesting habitat consists of residual old-growth trees with broken-top cavities (i.e., "stovepipe") or tall burned-out basal hollows. Also known to use artificial structures such as chimneys for nesting and roosting. Cavities must be large enough to facilitate flight so nests can be constructed on the inside of trees while hovering, using a mixture of twigs and saliva.	May occur but unlikely. No old growth or late-seral stands or individual trees suitable for nesting have been identified in the treatment area.
northern harrier *Circus hudsonius*	-	SC	-	Open landscapes such as grasslands, marshlands, rangelands, meadows, and riparian and aquatic vegetation bordering waterways, ponds, and lakes. Northern harriers utilize shrubs and fence posts in these open habitats for hunting perches. They build nests on the ground and thus require dense vegetative cover that remains undisturbed throughout the breeding cycle.	May occur in non-breeding season. The project area is located in the winter range for this species, so nesting is not expected. Wintering birds may use openings in and adjacent to the eastern end of the project area for foraging and nesting.
olive-sided flycatcher*Contopus cooperi*	-	SC	-	Nesting habitats are mixed conifer, mountain hardwood-conifer, Douglas-fire, redwood, red fir, and lodgepole pine. Most numerous in montane conifer forests where tall trees overlook	May occur. Open terrain is present at the eastern end of the treatment area. Species is often detected by ear on the ownership (MRC point count and MAMU survey records).

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
				canyons, meadows, lakes, or other open terrain.	
white-tailed kite *Elanus leucurus*	-	FP	-	Open habitats such as grasslands, agricultural fields, rangelands, and fresh- saltwater marshlands. Also sparsely wooded habitats including desert scrublands, oak savannahs, and riparian woodlands. Nesting and roosting habitat consists of dense forest with canopy cover for concealment. Communal roosts may be near or several miles from foraging areas.	May occur. Open foraging terrain is present at the eastern end of the treatment area.
American peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus anatum*	-	FP	-		Unlikely to occur. CNDDB record exists in the Bailey Ridge quad (Montgomery Woods). However, no rocky outcrops/cliffs are present in the treatment area.
bald eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*	-	E FP	-	Ocean shore, lake margins, and rivers for nesting and wintering. Most nests are within 1 mile of water. Nests in large, old-growth, or dominant live tree with open branches. Roosts communally in winter.	Winter Range. Unlikely to occur. Lake Mendocino 7 miles away.
yellow-breasted chat *Icteria virens*	-	SC	-	Nests in riparian areas, deciduous woodlands near streams and sloughs, especially those containing dense thickets of understory vegetation such as blackberry, willow, and wild grape. Females build cup nests in the dense understory vegetation 1-3 meters off the ground.	May occur in vicinity but unlikely to occur in treatment areas due to lack of riparian vegetation. This species was not detected during MRC songbird surveys.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
Bryant's savannah sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis alaudinus*	-	SC	-	Nests in salt marshes, estuaries, moist grasslands, bottomlands, river deltas, and bay-shore habitats. Reports of breeding adults in areas further inland away from coastal influence suggest possible nesting in drier grasslands. Savannah sparrows construct open-cup nests on the ground within vegetation of intermediate height.	Species may occur. Open grassland is present within and adjacent to small portions of the treatment area. This species was not detected during MRC songbird surveys.
Belding's savannah sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*	-	E	-	Nests in salt marshes, estuaries, moist grasslands, bottomlands, river deltas, and bay-shore habitats. Reports of breeding adults in areas further inland away from coastal influence suggest possible nesting in drier grasslands. Savannah sparrows construct open-cup nests on the ground within vegetation of intermediate height.	Species may occur. Open grassland is present within and adjacent to small portions of the treatment area. This species has not been detected during MRC songbird surveys.
purple martin *Progne subis*	-	SC	-	In the western U.S., this species utilizes woodpecker cavities in snags in coniferous forest to nest. Nest trees are usually at or near the tops of ridges and have a commanding view of the landscape. It may also use artificial structures (e.g., weep holes underneath bridges) for nesting.	May occur. The treatment area may contain dominant snags with suitable nesting cavities.
yellow warbler*Setophaga petechia*	-	SC	-	Riparian plant associations in proximity to water. Also nests in montane shrubbery in open conifer forests in Cascades and Sierra Nevada. Frequently found nesting and	May occur in vicinity but unlikely to occur in treatment areas due to lack of riparian vegetation. This species was not detected during MRC songbird surveys.

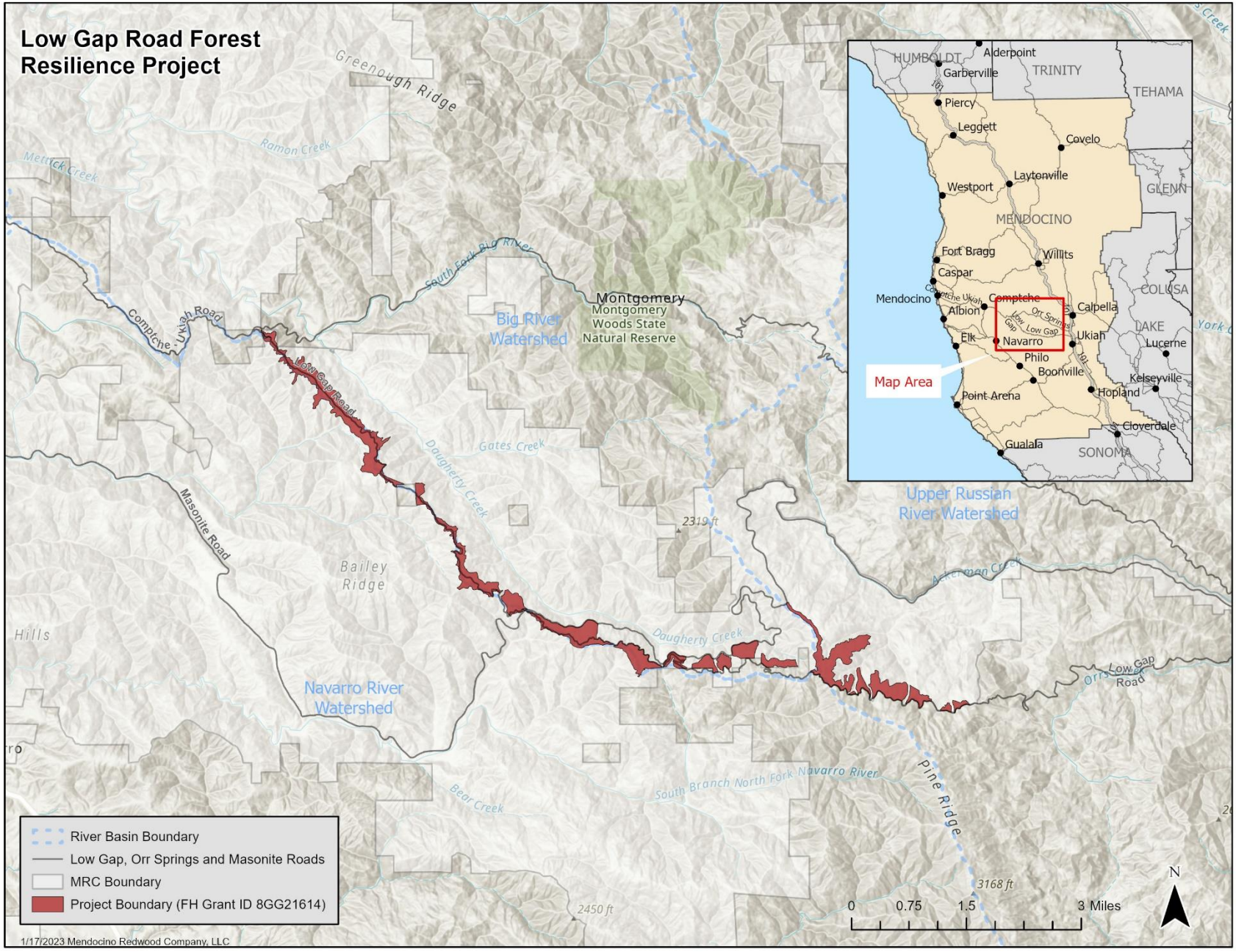
Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
				foraging in willow shrubs and thickets and in other riparian plants including cottonwoods, sycamores, ash, and alders.	
northern spotted owl *Strix occidentalis caurina*	T	T SC	-	On managed timberlands in this region spotted owls select redwood trees with platform nests (debris accumulations, stick nests,) disproportionately to their availability; and while residual old growth trees account for less than 1% of the trees on the landscape, they comprise 20-30% of the actual nest trees. Nesting habitat on MRC consists of trees averaging > 11 inches in diameter (dbh) that also includes trees with suitable nesting structures.	**Five NSO territories have activity centers within 1/2 mile of the project area (MEN0080, MEN0138, MEN0566, MEN0616, MEN0625**). Treatment areas were designed to avoid all current northern spotted owl core areas. Limited nesting/roosting habitat is available within the treatment areas.
Crotch's Bumble Bee *Bombus crotchii*	-	C	-	Requires floral resources, undisturbed nest sites and overwintering sites in grasslands and shrublands.	May occur. The species historical range overlaps the project area, and floral resources are available, especially in the eastern portion of the plan where openings, grassland, and woodland are present.
Western Bumble Bee *Bombus occidentalis*	-	C	-	Requires floral resources, undisturbed nest sites and overwintering sites. Nests, forages, and overwinters in meadows and grasslands with abundant flowers. Nesting habitat is typically underground, such as in old animal burrows, but also possibly above ground such as in cavities in logs. Overwintering sites probably in friable soil or	May occur. The species historical range overlaps the project area, and floral resources are available, especially in the eastern portion of the plan where openings, grassland, and woodland are present.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
				under plant litter and debris.	
Lotis Blue Butterfly *Lycaeides argyrognomon lotis*	E	-	-	Bog habitat with appropriate larval food sources such as Astragalus spp., Lathyrus spp., Lotus spp., Lupinus spp., Trifolium spp., and potentially members of the Ericaceae.	Species is presumed to be extinct. Bog-like habitat has not been identified in the plan area, however larval food source plant taxa are likely present.
pallid bat *Antrozous pallidus*	E	SC	-	Deserts, grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and forest. Most common in open, dry habitats with rock areas for roosting. Roosts must be protected from high temperatures. Very sensitive to disturbance of roosting sites.	May occur. Habitat potentially suitable for pallid bat is present within large trees, snags, or rocky areas within the treatment area.
Sonoma tree vole *Arborimus pomo*	-	SC	-	Coniferous forest dominated by Douglas-fir. Nests are typically built in larger-sized trees. Nests are constructed out of clipped Douglas-fir branches and lined with resin ducts from consumed needles.	May occur. The majority of the forested area in the project is Douglas-fir dominated. Sonoma tree vole nests have been documented in most planning watersheds on MRC lands where Douglas-fir trees are present.
ringtail *Bassariscus astutus*	-	FP	-	Associated with riparian areas in many forest and woodland types that occur over their geographic range. They use cavities, rocky outcrops, abandoned rodent burrows, and woodrat nests for rest and den sites.	May occur. No riparian forest is present in the project areas; however, forest and woodland habitat is present throughout.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
Townsend's big-eared bat*Corynorhinus townsendii*	-	SC	-	Open surfaces of caves, mines, undisturbed spaces in buildings, and more rarely, basal hollows of large trees. They may also inhabit bridges, tunnels, and possibly sea caves along the ocean. Caves, mines, and abandoned buildings, or other undisturbed anthropogenic structures, form the majority of maternity roosts in California. Bat use of basal hollow coast redwood trees is well documented; however, the literature suggests that Townsend's big-eared bats rarely use trees as maternity roosts.	May occur. No caves or anthropogenic structures have been observed in the treatment areas but trees or snags with basal hollows could be present.
western red bat *Lasiurus blossevillii*	-	SC	-	Roosts in and under foliage of trees and shrubs in riparian habitat, especially those that contain willow, cottonwoods, or sycamores. Day roosts may also be found in orchards and even in urban areas; may use caves in some areas. Roosts must provide adequate cover from solarization and potential avian and mammalian predators.	May occur in the vicinity, however no riparian habitat is present in the project area.
Humboldt marten *Martes caurina humboldtensis*	-	E SC	-	Primarily old growth coniferous forests with a well-developed understory shrub layer of salal, evergreen huckleberry, rhododendron, and huckleberry oak. They utilize resting and denning structures such as cavities in live, dead, or downed trees, rock piles, and subnivean	Unlikely to occur. Old growth or late seral forest in the project area.

Species	Listing Status			Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State	CRPR		
				habitats at higher elevations in the winter.	
fisher - West Coast DPS *Pekania pennanti*	-	T SC	-	Suitable habitat includes large trees with high canopy cover, snags, downed logs, and understory vegetation. Late-seral forests provide habitat heterogeneity at a level capable of meeting the fisher's life history needs. Research on intensively managed commercial timberlands in the redwood region of Humboldt County indicates fisher presence is supported as long as suitable resting and denning structures are retained and sufficient canopy cover exists around these elements.	May occur, though unlikely. There is no old growth or late seral forest in the project area.
American badger *Taxidea taxus*	-	SC	-	Open areas with friable soil, including grasslands, forest glades, meadows, marshes, open chaparral, and deserts.	May occur. Unlikely but chance of occurrence in grassland unit (broadcast burn). Nearest occurrence in CNDDB is 20 miles east (Lake County - Middle Creek Valley). Nearest in our ecoregion is 35 miles south in Sonoma County (Stewarts Point).

Listing Status
E = Endangered T = Threatened R = Rare C = Candidate for listing FP = Fully Protected
SC = CDFW Species of Special Concern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Greenough Ridge
Ramon Creek
Mettick Creek
South Fork Big River
Comptche - Ukiah Road
Low Gap Road
Big River Watershed
Montgomery
Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve
Gates Creek
Daugherty Creek
Masonite Road
Bailey Ridge
Hills
Navarro River Watershed
Bear Creek
South Branch North Fork Navarro River
Pine Ridge
Orrs Creek
Low Gap Road
Upper Russian River Watershed
Ackerman Creek
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3168 ft
2450 ft
HUMBOLDT
TRINITY
TEHAMA
GLENN
MENDOCINO
COLUSA
LAKE
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Alderpoint
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Leggett
Covelo
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Westport
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Caspar
Mendocino
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Calpella
Ukiah
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Navarro
Philo
Boonville
Point Arena
Hopland
Lucerne
Kelseyville
Cloverdale
Gualala
Low Gap
Orr Springs
Map Area
River Basin Boundary
Low Gap, Orr Springs and Masonite Roads
MRC Boundary
Project Boundary (FH Grant ID 8GG21614)
1/17/2023 Mendocino Redwood Company, LLC
0
0.75
1.5
3 Miles
N

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Low Gap Fuels Reduction Project Biological Features of Interest
6/26/2023

In general, the east side of the Low Gap Fuels Reduction Project contains more interesting floral communities than the west side of the project. The lower gradient watercourses provide a more suitable habitat for understory plant species as well as a significant reduction in erosion hazard and downed trees.

Unit A contains an especially nice plant community with dense patches of California fawn lily (Erythronium californicum), elderberry (Sambucus spp.), numerous seeps and springs, large diameter California Bay (Umbellularia californica) and big leaf maple (Acer macrophyllum) trees in riparian corridors and wolfy wildlife tree towards the Northeastern end of the unit. Because of the numerous seeps and small herbaceous wetland habitats observed, hand treatments are recommended in Unit A.

Unit B, while seemingly insignificant on its own, has value due to the proximity to Unit A and C. Unit B is primarily open grassland with almost no overstory, however the presence of the wildlife tree in Unit A and large hardwoods in Unit C creates a natural hunting ground for birds of prey. Small slumps create weak indicators of wetland communities in the grassland.

Unit C contains Oak woodlands (Quercus kelloggiil, Quercus garyana), large hardwoods and a riparian corridor home to red bellied newts.

Unit D contains wetlands, springs, seeps, large hardwoods, conifers, and an active red bellied newt population adjacent to watercourses on the eastern portion of the unit. Closer to Low Gap Rd, unit D also contains a small patch of Hooker's groundcone (*Kopsiopsis hookeri*).

Unit E was particularly unstable and steep and provided little habitat for understory growth and is predominately home to tan oak and Douglas-fir. Closer to Low Gap Rd, Unit E has a large community of Hooker's groundcone.

Starting with Unit F moving west, evidence of previous timber operations are more prominent. Skid roads with overgrown scrub and brush become more prominent in the remaining units. The southwestern corner of Unit F contains a knob of oak woodland, a tan oak forest and signs of nesting birds on the hillsides just west of Miller Ridge Road's intersection with Low Gap Road.

Beginning at unit F, Low Gap Road is lined with French Broom (*Genista monspessulana*) on both sides. French broom primarily borders all units on the west side and continues down the project until the intersection with Orr Springs Road. Fuels treatments have a high potential to increase and spread this invasive plant. Mitigations such as herbicide treatments should be employed to contain and reduce this species presence.

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Units G-P are homogeneous with mixed forest types of tan oak, Douglas-fir, madrone, and redwood. White Flowered Rein Orchid (*Piperia candida*) were found throughout portions of units G-P with the highest concentration being on previously used skid roads, particularly in Unit I and Unit J where the reference population is located.

Unit N was nearly impossible to survey on the north end as patches of the area have recently experienced an even age harvest and the floor was covered in slash .

Units O and P on the most northwestern portions of the project have boundaries that closely follow Low Gap Roar. Unit O has a wide, flat area that would appear to be a natural staging area, there is a wetland located at that location and care should be taken prior to operations. Unit P is overgrown and difficult to navigate. A large dense thicket of French broom (*Genista monspessulana*) is growing on the old logging road at the southwestern portion of unit P.

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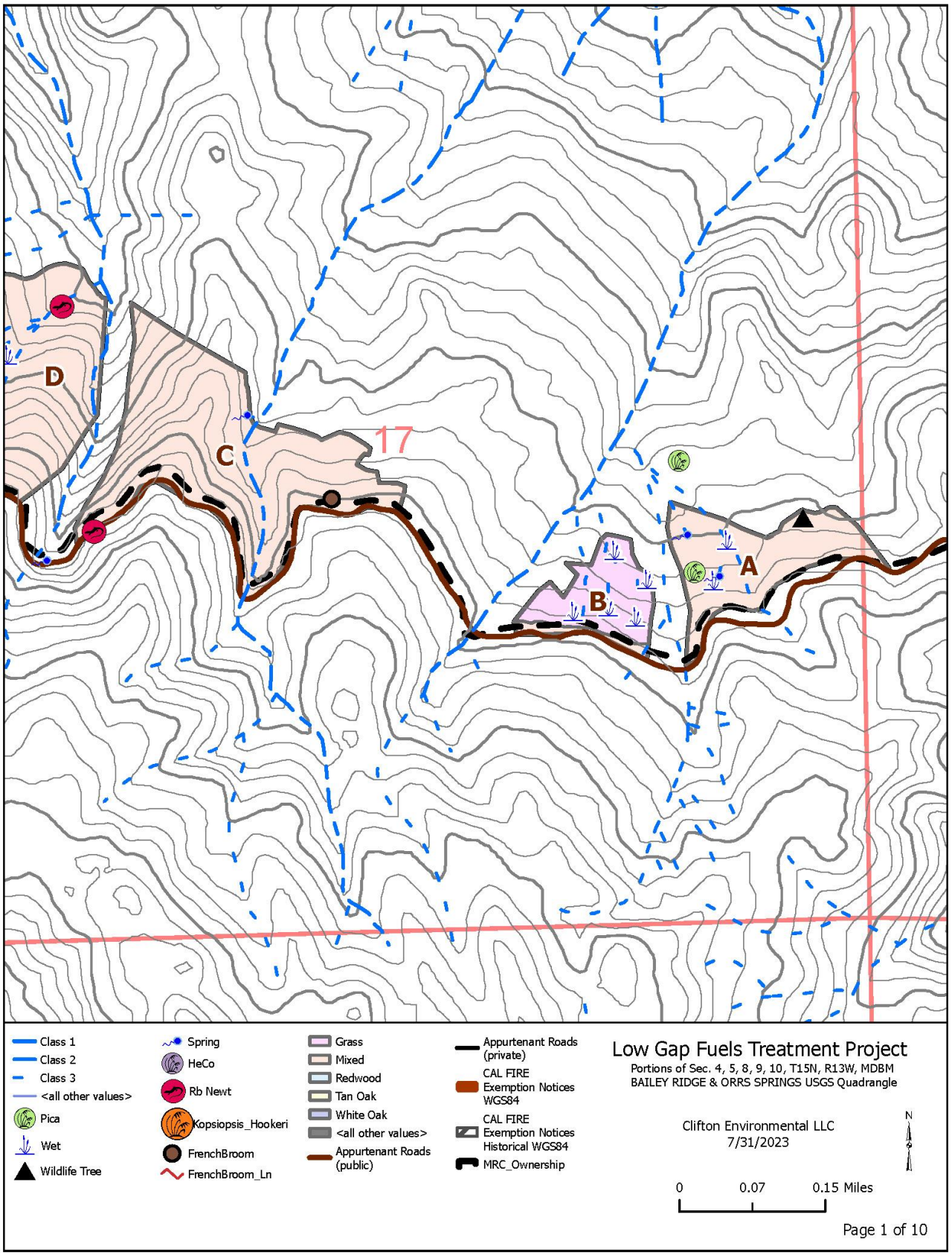
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Appurtenant Roads (public)
Appurtenant Roads (private)
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MRC_Ownership
Low Gap Fuels Treatment Project
Portions of Sec. 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, T15N, R13W, MDBM
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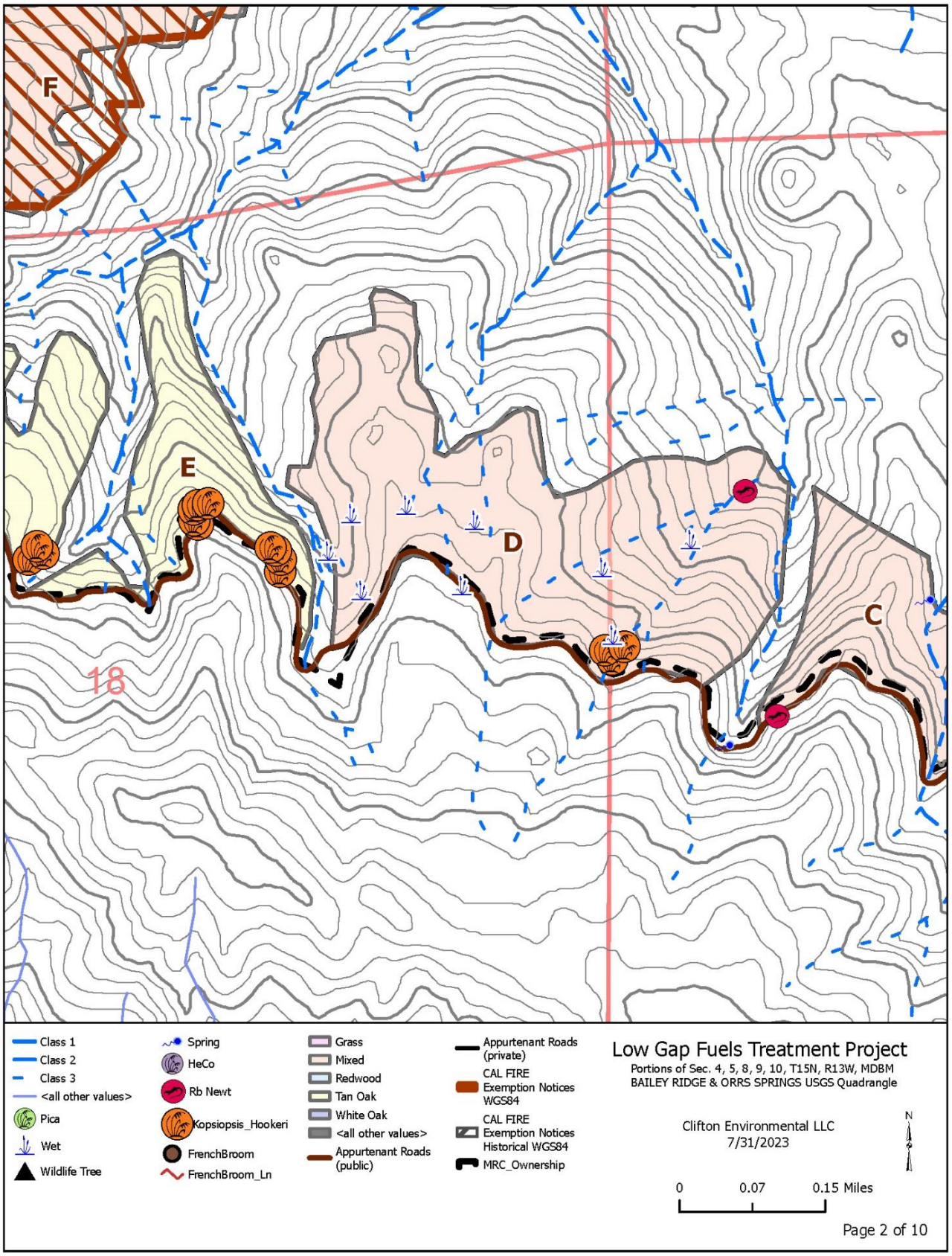
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D
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Class 1
Class 2
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Pica
Wet
Wildlife Tree
Spring
HeCo
Rb Newt
Kopsiopsis_Hookeri
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MRC_Ownership
Low Gap Fuels Treatment Project
Portions of Sec. 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, T15N, R13W, MDBM
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7/31/2023
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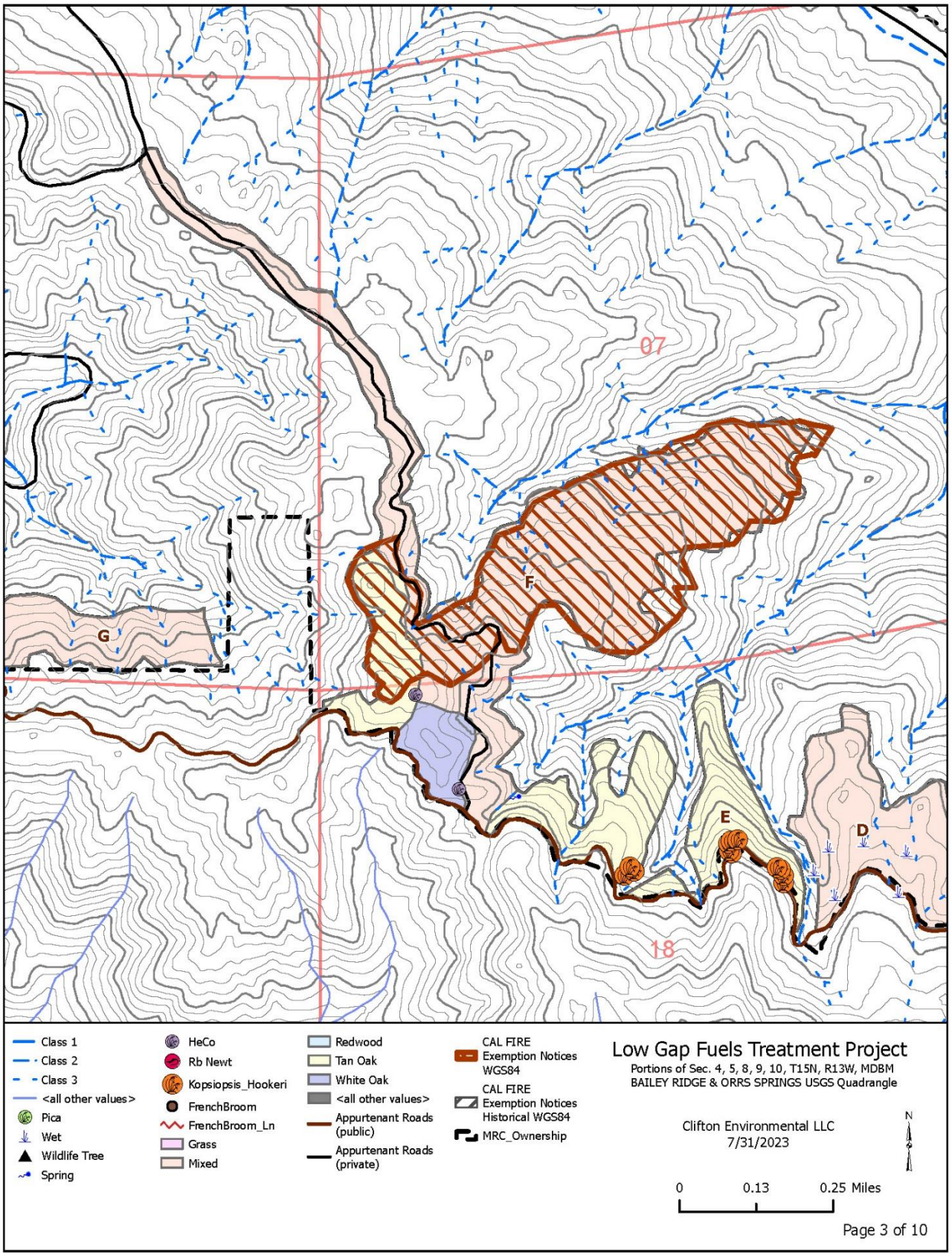
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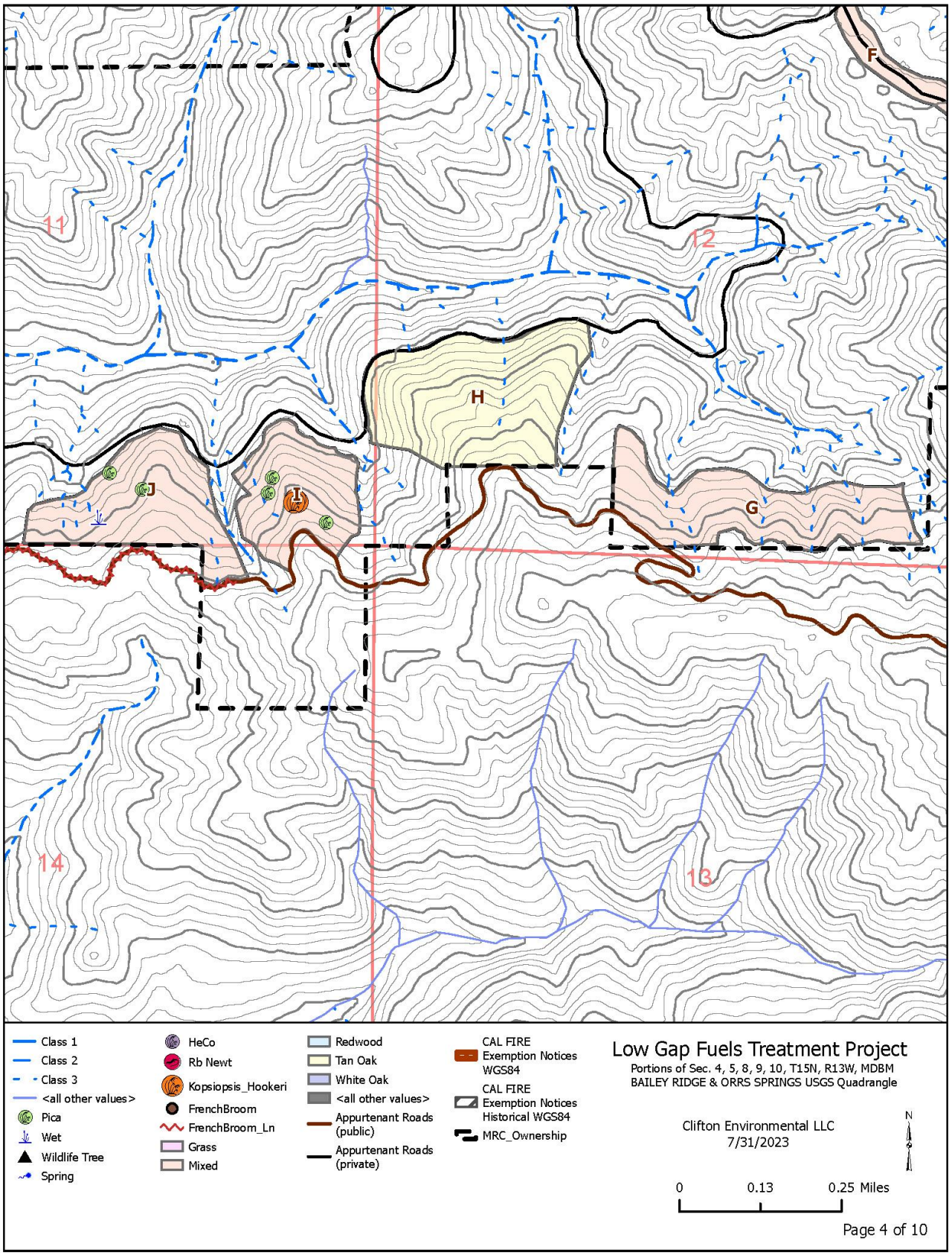
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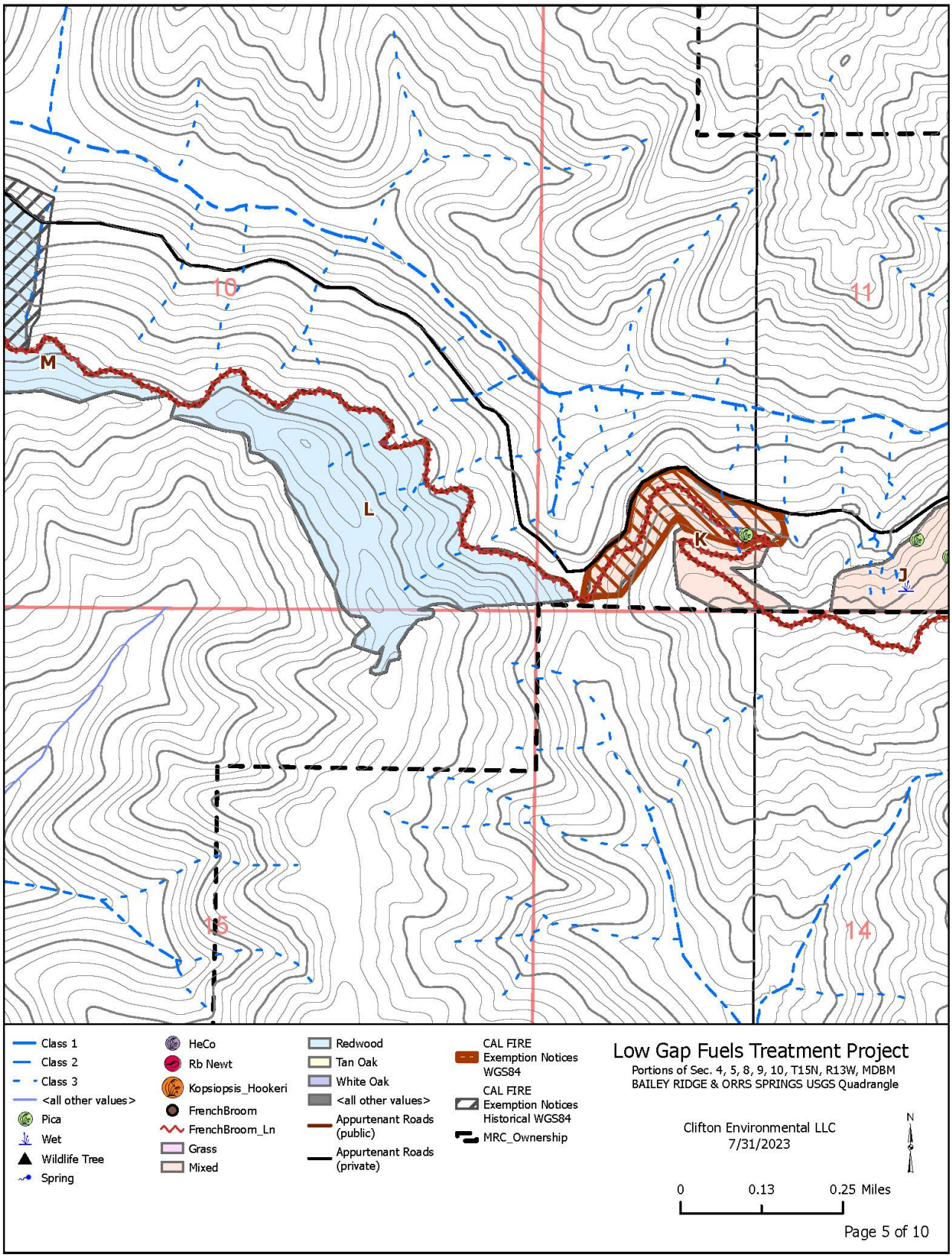
Page 4 of 10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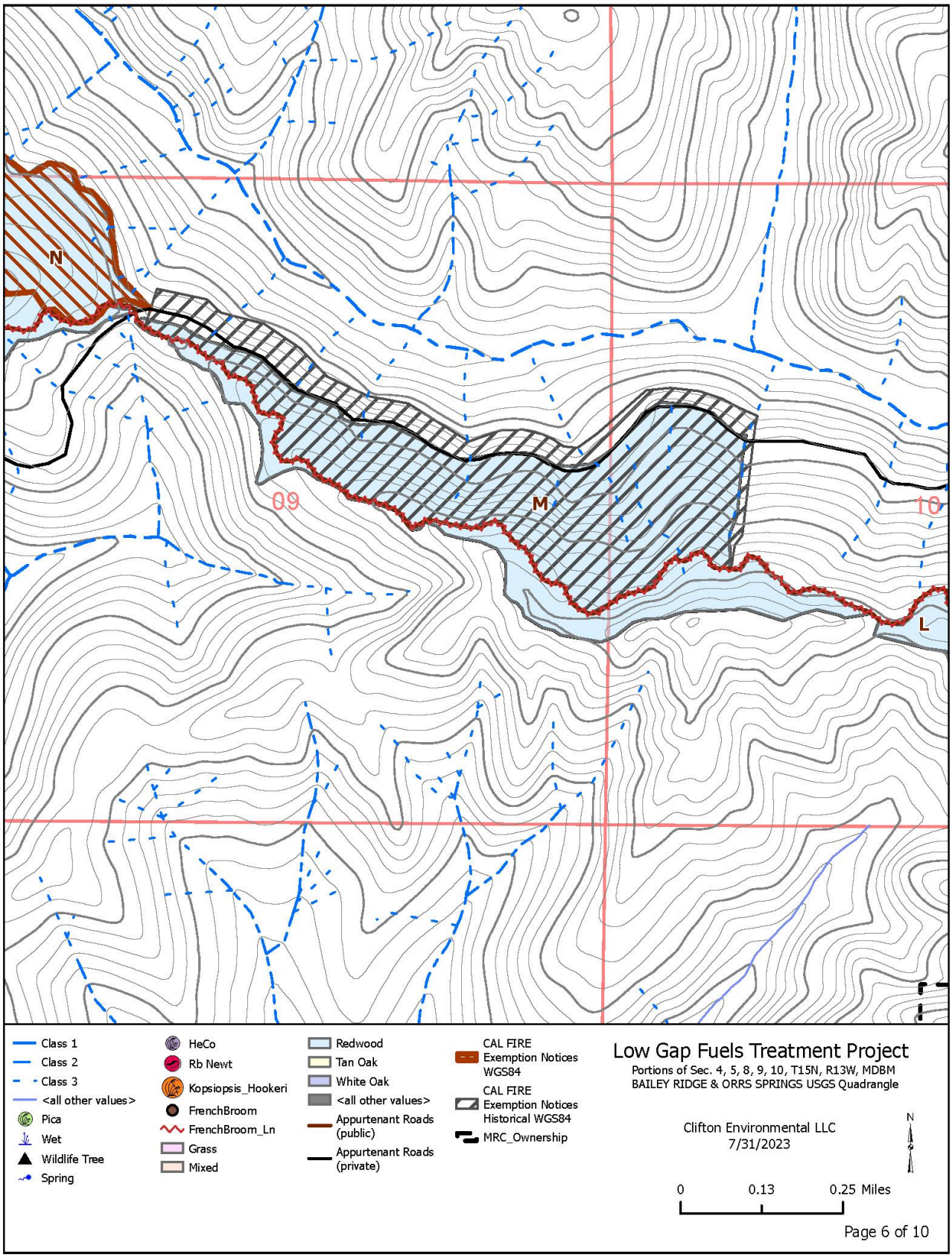
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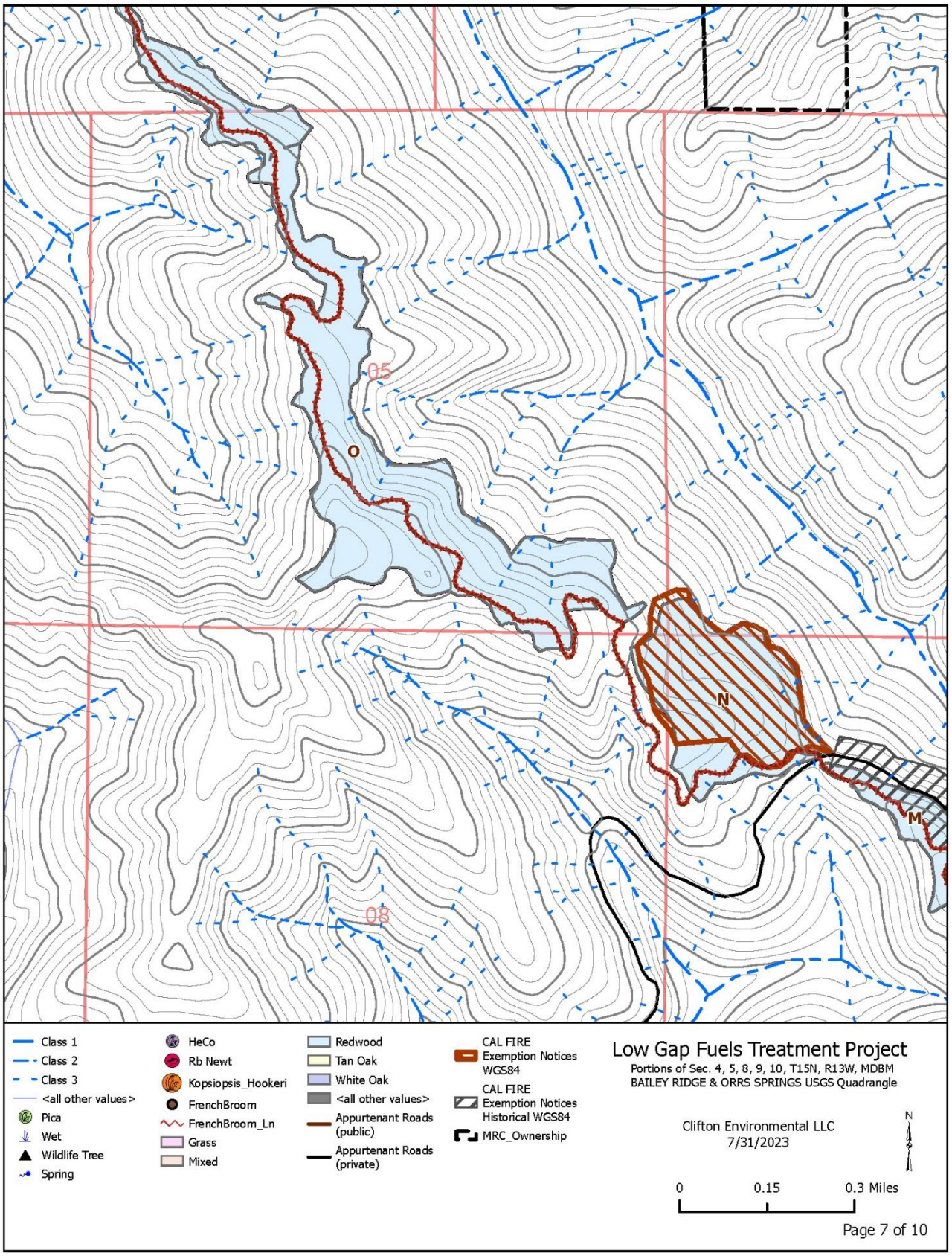
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Low Gap Fuels Treatment Project
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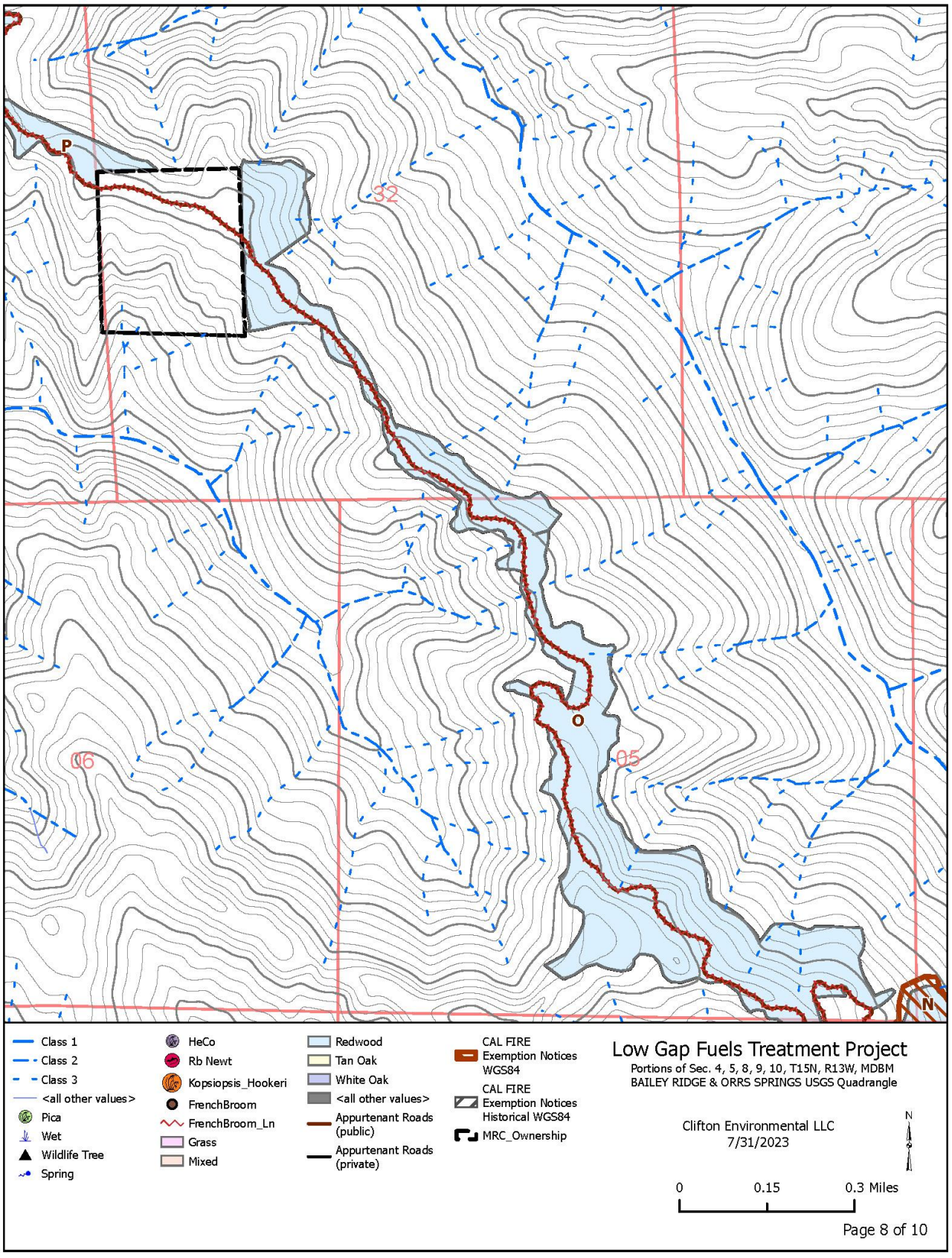
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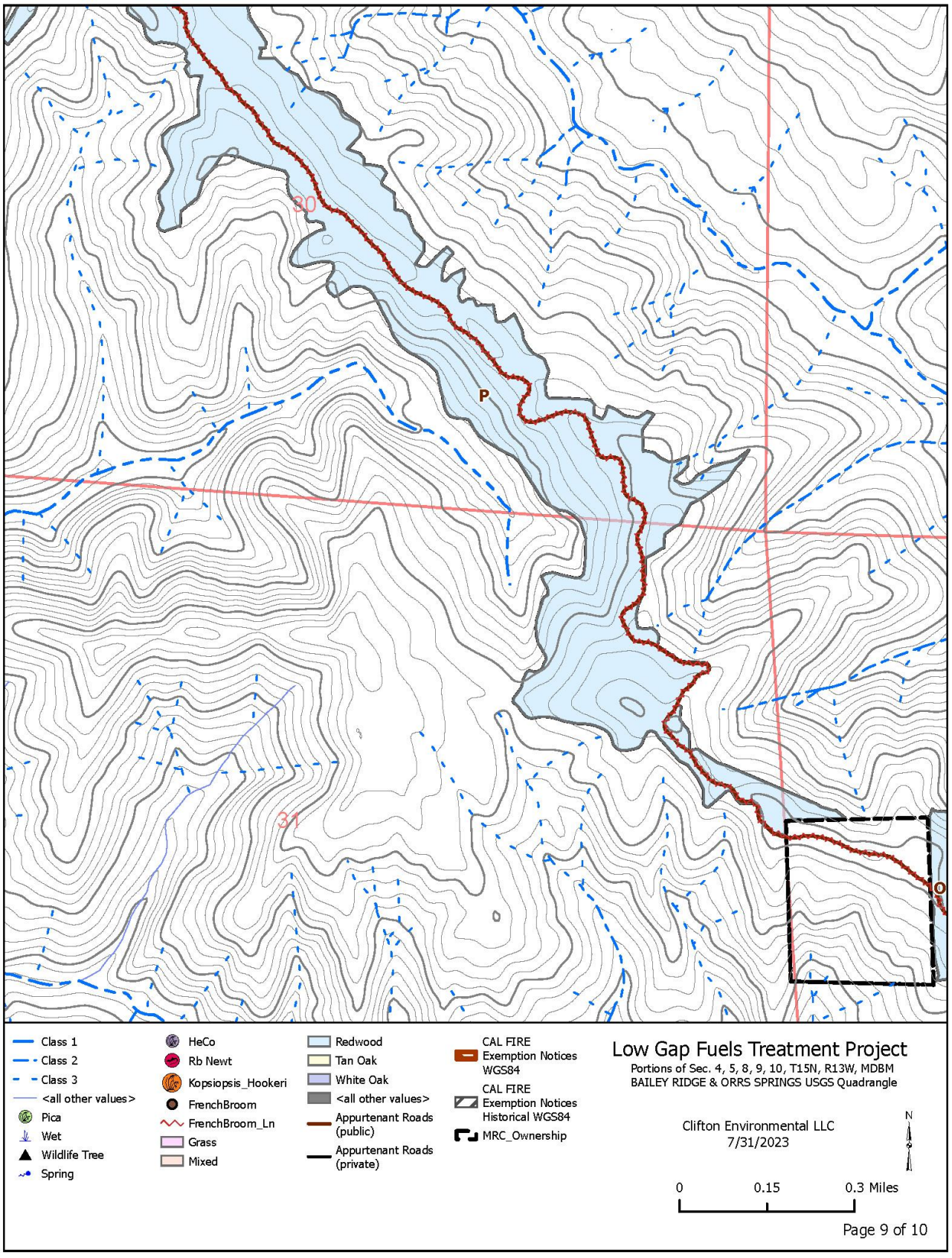
Page 8 of 10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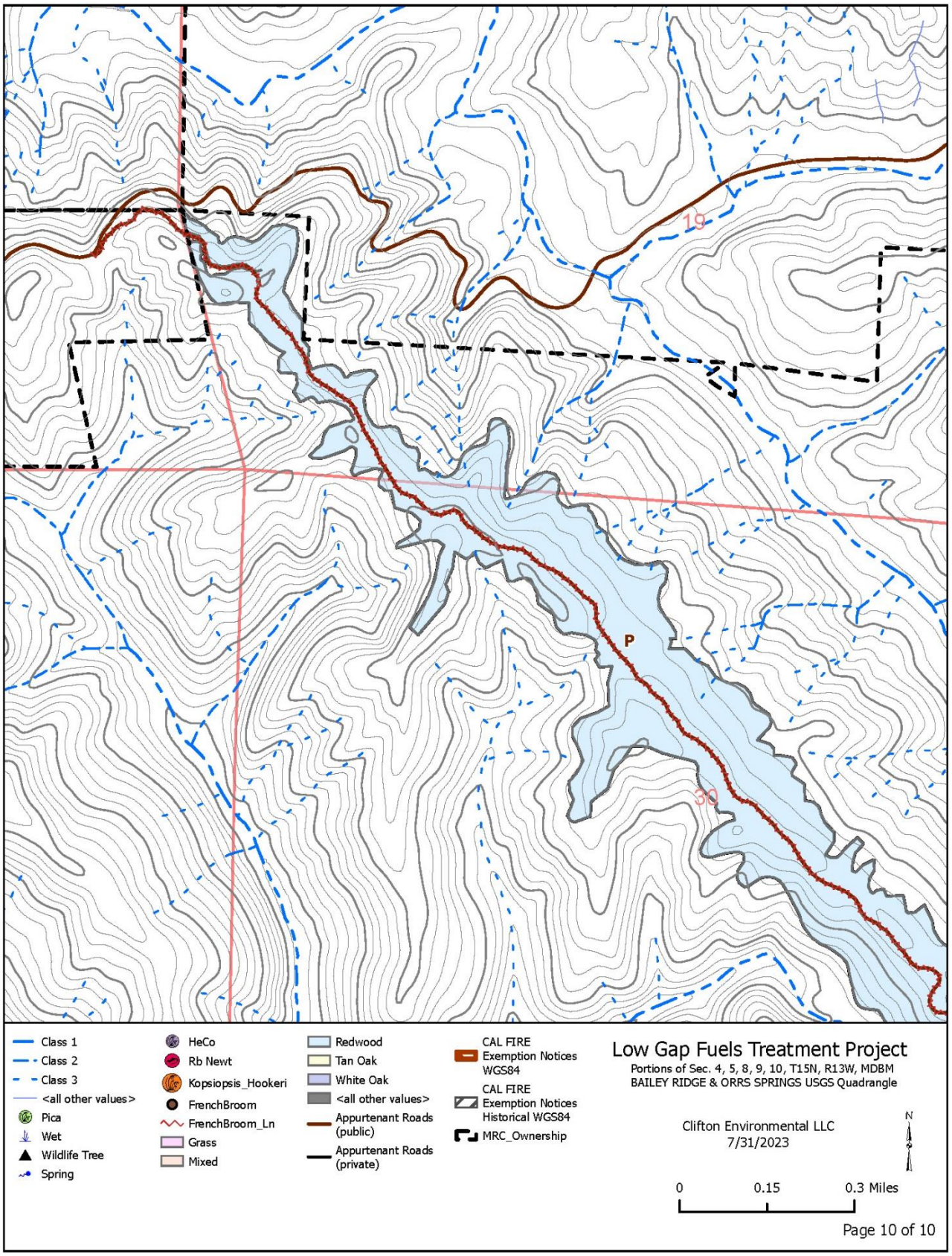
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Clifton Environmental LLC
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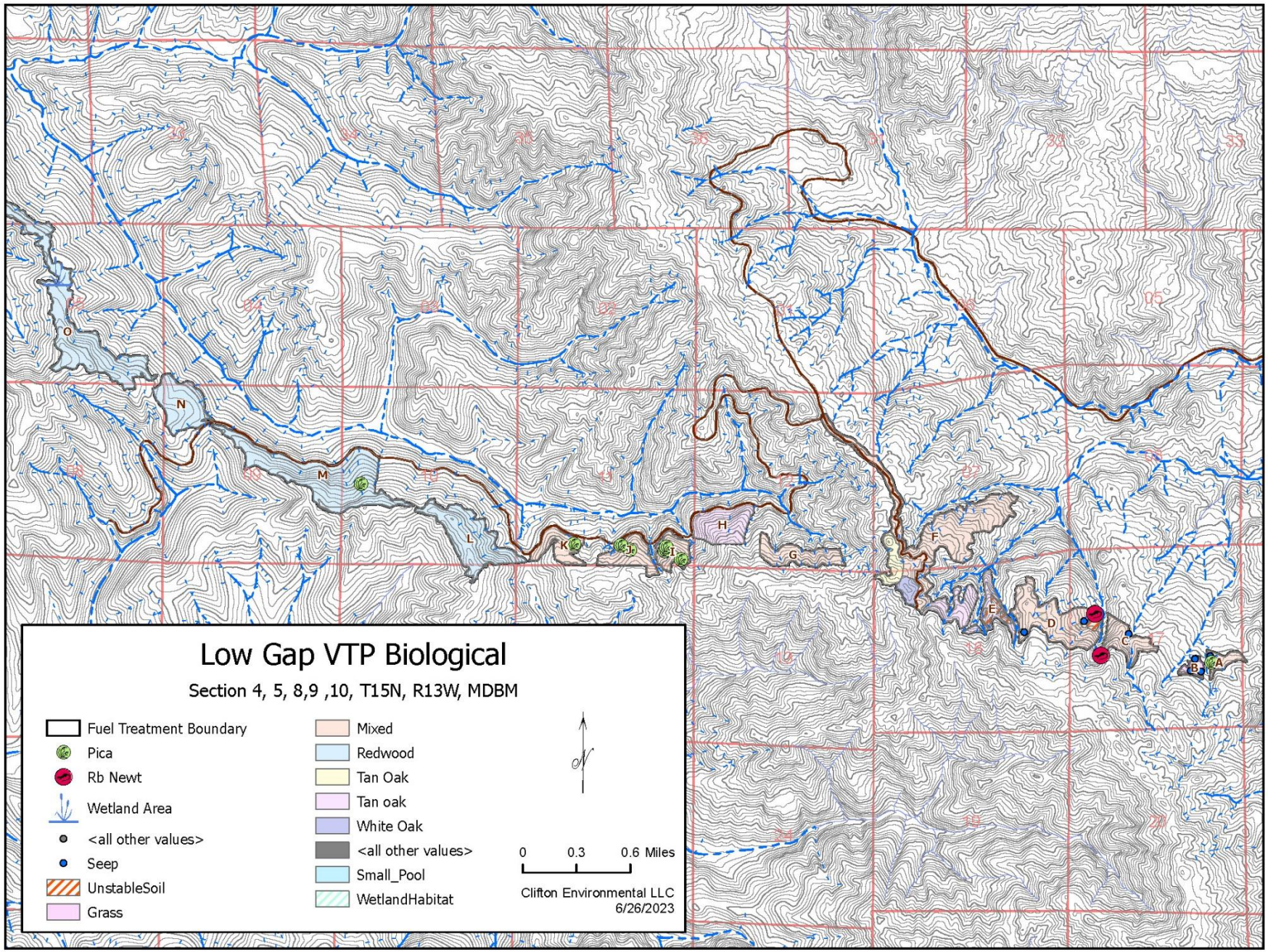
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Section 4, 5, 8,9 ,10, T15N, R13W, MDBM
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Wetland Area
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UnstableSoil
Grass
Mixed
Redwood
Tan Oak
Tan oak
White Oak
<all other values>
Small_Pool
WetlandHabitat
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Clifton Environmental LLC
6/26/2023
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Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County

707.462.3664
410 Jones St., Suite C-3
Ukiah, CA 95482
www.mcrcd.org

June 8, 2023

Mr. Cary Japp
Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor
California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Northern Region
601 Locust Street
Redding, CA 96001
C.japp@wildlife.ca.gov

Subject: **NSO consultation request for CalVTP project 2023-04 ("Low Gap Road Forest Resilience Project")**

Dear Mr. Japp,

This letter is to request a consultation regarding proposed protections for the federally- and state-threatened species Northern Spotted Owl (NSO; *Strix occidentalis caurina*) in the context of a forest fuels reduction project. The state-funded (CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant program) project will be tiered under the California Vegetation Treatment Program's Programmatic EIR (CalVTP PEIR) to meet California's environmental compliance requirements under CEQA. As the Project Proponent for the project specific analysis (PSA), our agency wishes to consult with CDFW to ensure that the Mendocino Redwood Company's (MRC's) proposed protection measures for NSO are sufficient as per CDFW guidelines.

Standard Project Requirement (SPR) BIO-1[1] in the Cal VTP PEIR requires a project-specific review of biological resources in the project area, resulting in one of two determinations characterizing sensitive biological resources in the project area: 1) suitable habitat is present but adverse effects can clearly be avoided (either spatially or seasonally), or 2) suitable habitat is present and adverse effects cannot be avoided.

Based on our review of MRC's project documentation and proposed protection measures, we find that suitable habitat is present but adverse effects can be avoided; however, we are seeking review by CDFW of this determination specifically with regards to NSO to confirm our findings. In the following sections of this letter, we provide a project description, NSO territory history and habitat information, and an outline of MRC's proposed protection measures.

Project Description

The project, "Low Gap Road Forest Resilience Project" is located in Mendocino County, along a ridgeline between the Big River, Navarro River, and Upper Russian River basins. The treatment units are adjacent to an unpaved county-controlled road that connects the city of Ukiah to a paved county road. Twelve of the road's 18 miles are on Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) property, on which the project is located. The treatments will result in a shaded fuel break that will help slow wildfire spread and in which wildfire response and alternative egress/ingress routes can be staged.

[1] Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Final Program EIR for the California Vegetation Treatment Program, pp. 2-38 to 2-29.

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Ukiah, CA 95482
www.mcrcd.org

The project comprises approximately 1000 acres of ridge-top vegetation (primarily forested) that will be treated with mechanical or manual thinning, depending on slope. No trees larger than 10 inches will be removed. A small prescribed burn is also proposed within the project area, but within grassland habitat, not suitable NSO habitat. Current NSO habitat typing will be unchanged post-treatment.

NSO Territories and Habitat

There are five NSO territories with activity centers located within ½ mile (2,640 feet) of the project area (see attached map): MEN0080, MEN0138, MEN0566, MEN0616, and MEN0625.

NSO TERRITORY ID	DISTANCE FROM ACTIVITY CENTER TO PROJECT BOUNDARY
MEN0616	570 feet
MEN0138	900 feet
MEN0566	1,970 feet
MEN0080	2,030 feet
MEN0625	2,200 feet

MRC has a robust NSO survey and territory monitoring history, providing high accuracy activity center locations. Please see attached summary of activity center status for each territory.

Treatment areas were designed to avoid all currently established northern spotted owl 100-acre core areas. The core areas have been developed for each territory to include current and historic activity centers and to maximize contiguous suitable habitat. The plan area contains approximately 688 acres Douglas-fir – tanoak forest, 172 acres Douglas-fir forest, 54 acres redwood forest, 43 acres tanoak forest, 20 acres white oak forest and 8 acres black oak forest. Another 19 acres contain either grassy or brushy openings. No old growth stands or individual trees have been identified in the treatment area.

On managed timberlands in our region, spotted owls select redwood trees with platform nests (debris accumulations, stick nests,) disproportionately to their availability; and while residual old growth trees account for less than 1% of the trees on the landscape, they comprise 20-30% of the actual nest trees. Nesting habitat on MRC consists of trees averaging > 11 inches in diameter (dbh) that also includes trees with suitable nesting structures.

NSO habitat typing based on MRC timber inventory data indicates that the plan area contains approximately 92 nesting/roosting habitat and 725 acres foraging habitat. The suitability of these acres is tempered by the ridgetop location of the project area. Ridgetops provide less shelter from wind and heat than is typically preferred by NSO for nesting and roosting.

Proposed Protection Measures

No direct impacts are anticipated to result from proposed vegetation treatment activities (manual and mechanical thinning that removes trees no larger than 10 inches diameter at breast height). Though NSO territories are present within ½ mile of the project boundaries, none occur within the treatment units. Furthermore, treatment units exclude current NSO core areas, and no reduction of suitable NSO habitat will result from proposed vegetation treatment. Adverse effects to NSO could nonetheless be caused by noise disturbance during the breeding season.

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Mendocino County

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Ukiah, CA 95482
www.mcrcd.org

MRC proposes to avoid adverse direct and indirect effects on NSO with the following measures:

- No vegetation treatment activities will occur within 500 feet of known NSO activity centers.
- Vegetation treatment activities will not occur within NSO core areas.
- Proposed vegetation treatment activities will not result in alteration of pre-treatment NSO habitat type.
- When feasible, vegetation treatment activities will be conducted outside of the sensitive NSO breeding season (February 1 – August 31).
- When seasonal avoidance is not feasible (i.e., to complete the project within the required timeframe) vegetation treatment activities occurring within the sensitive NSO breeding season (February 1 – August 31) will be conducted outside of the following disturbance buffers:
    - ½ mile for known NSO territories for which current-year status is unknown
    - ¼ mile for known NSO territories for which current-year status is known.

Please advise at your earliest convenience if CDFW concurs with these proposed protection measures, and if the department would like to provide any additional information that should be considered.

Sincerely,

Doug Turk

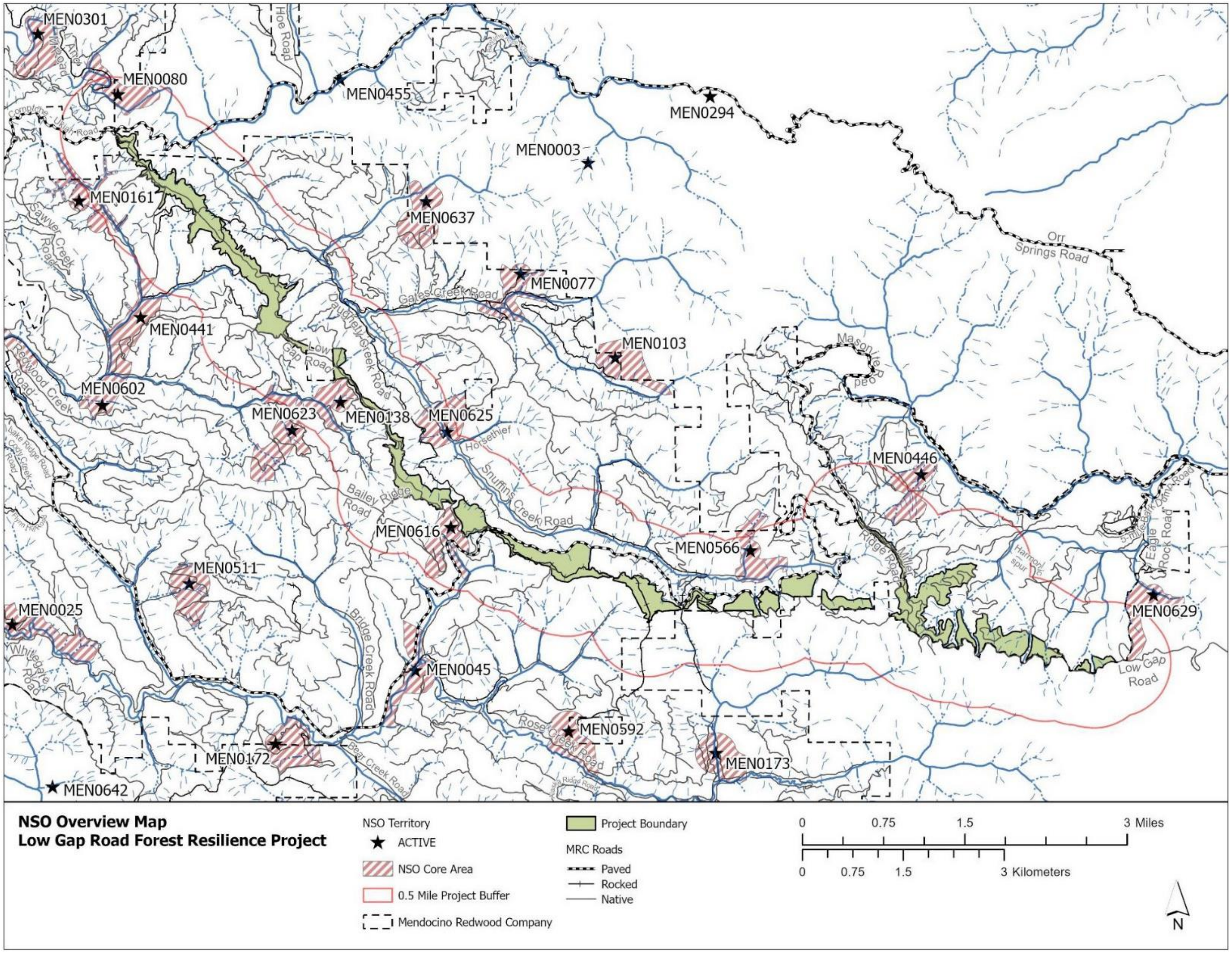
Doug Turk
Forestry Program Manager
Mendocino County Resource Conservation District

Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County
Conserving Wild and Working Landscapes Since 1945

Attachments:

1. Project overview map
2. NSO habitat detail map 1 of 2
3. NSO habitat detail map 2 of 2
4. NSO territory history

ATTACHMENTS



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MEN0080
MEN0455
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MEN0003
MEN0161
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MEN0625
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MEN0616
MEN0566
MEN0511
MEN0025
MEN0629
MEN0045
MEN0592
MEN0172
MEN0173
MEN0642
Hoe Road
Orr Springs Road
Gates Creek Road
Low Gap Road
Daughtery Creek Road
Sawyer Creek Road
Redwood Creek Road
Bailey Ridge Road
Snuffins Creek Road
Bridge Creek Road
Bear Creek Road
Rose Creek Road
Eagle Rock Road
NSO Overview Map
Low Gap Road Forest Resilience Project
NSO Territory
ACTIVE
NSO Core Area
0.5 Mile Project Buffer
Mendocino Redwood Company
Project Boundary
MRC Roads
Paved
Rocked
Native
0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles
0 0.75 1.5 3 Kilometers
N

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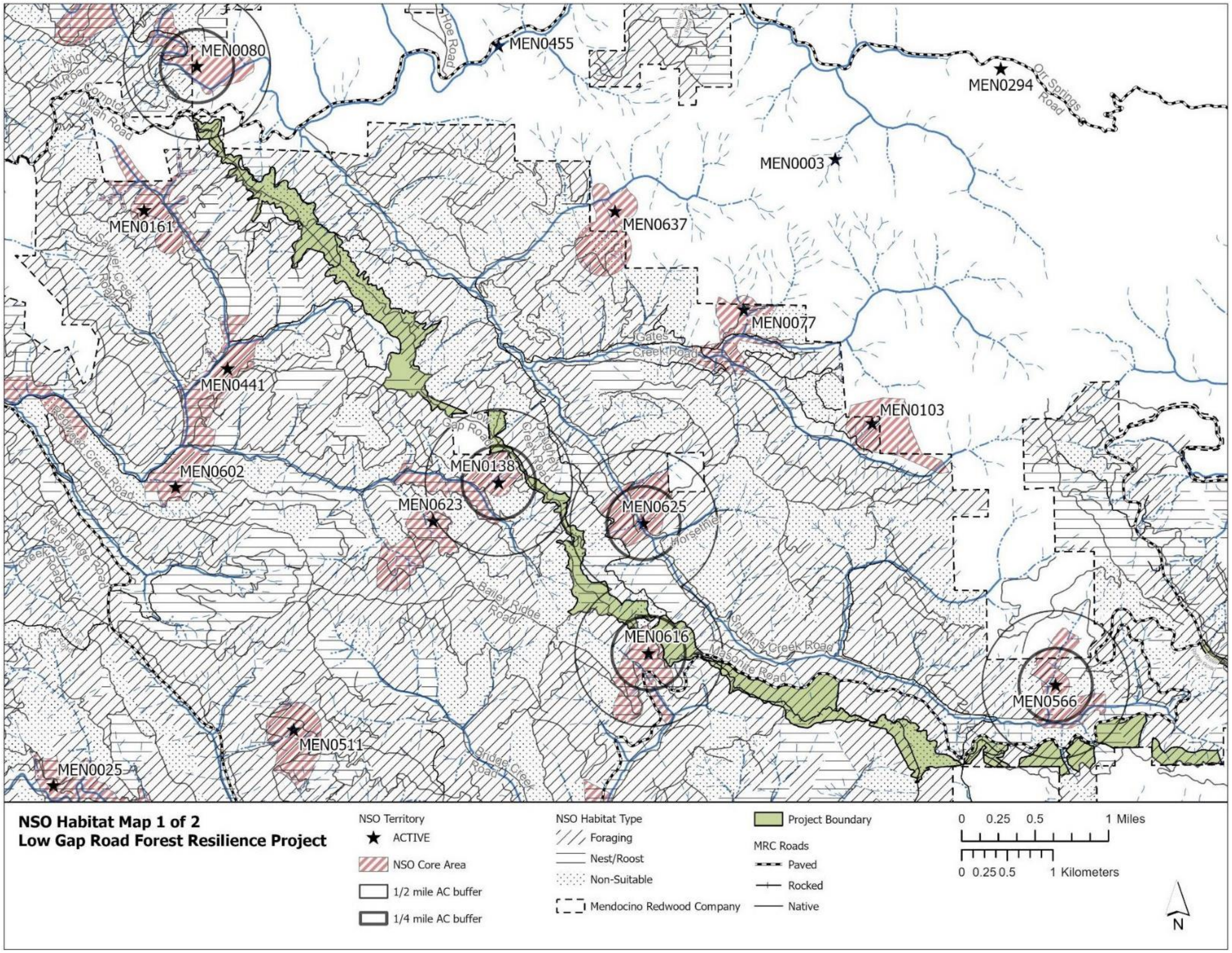
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Gates Creek Road
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MEN0103
Gap Road
MEN0602
MEN0138
MEN0623
MEN0625
Horsethief
Bailey Ridge Road
MEN0616
Mill Creek Road
MEN0566
MEN0511
Bridge Creek Road
MEN0025
NSO Habitat Map 1 of 2
Low Gap Road Forest Resilience Project
NSO Territory
ACTIVE
NSO Core Area
1/2 mile AC buffer
1/4 mile AC buffer
NSO Habitat Type
Foraging
Nest/Roost
Non-Suitable
Mendocino Redwood Company
Project Boundary
MRC Roads
Paved
Rocked
Native
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
0 0.25 0.5 1 Kilometers
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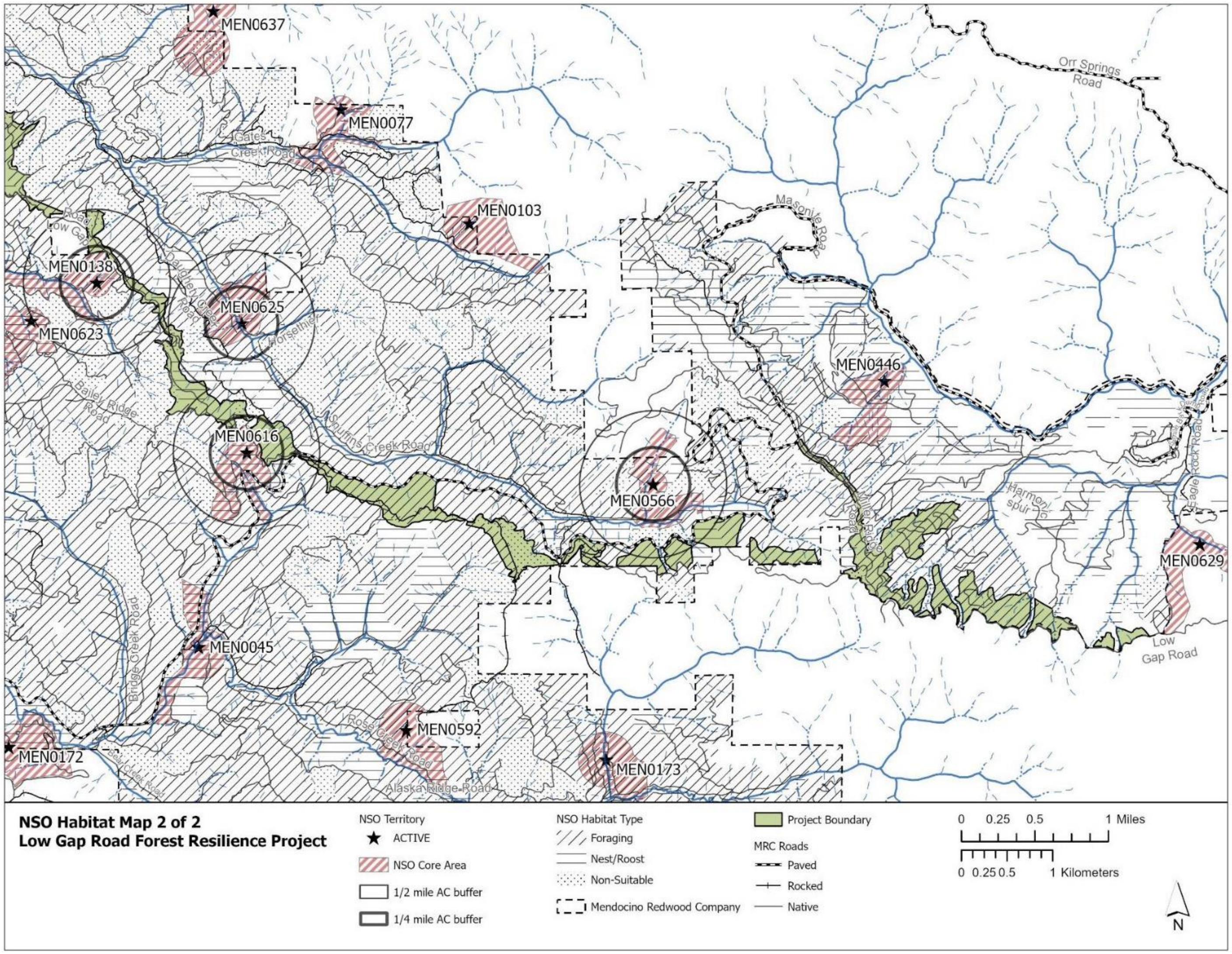
Page 6 of 9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MEN0566
MEN0446
MEN0629
MEN0045
MEN0592
MEN0172
MEN0173
Orr Springs Road
Masonite Road
Low Gap Road
Bailey Ridge Road
Bridge Creek Road
Alaska Ridge Road
Harmonic spur
NSO Habitat Map 2 of 2
Low Gap Road Forest Resilience Project
NSO Territory
ACTIVE
NSO Core Area
1/2 mile AC buffer
1/4 mile AC buffer
NSO Habitat Type
Foraging
Nest/Roost
Non-Suitable
Mendocino Redwood Company
Project Boundary
MRC Roads
Paved
Rocked
Native
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
0 0.25 0.5 1 Kilometers
N

Page 7 of 9

NSO ACTIVITY CENTER SUMMARIES

MEN0080:

YEAR	OCCUPANCY	NESTING	REPRODUCTION	MRC PROPERTY	AC RATIONALE
1989	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1990	Pair	Non-Nesting	Non-Reproductive	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1991	Pair	Non-Nesting	Non-Reproductive	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1992	Pair	Nesting	2 Fledges	NO W/1000	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1993	Pair Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2000	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2002	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2005	Male	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2006	Male	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2010	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2011	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Daytime Observation
2014	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Daytime Observation
2015	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det Near Previous Site
2019	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det Near Previous Site

MEN0138:

YEAR	OCCUPANCY	NESTING	REPRODUCTION	MRC PROPERTY	AC RATIONALE
1989	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1990	Pair	Nest Failed	0 Fledges	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1991	Pair	Non-Nesting	Non-Reproductive	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1992	Pair	Nesting	1 Fledge	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1993	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1994	Pair	Nesting	2 Fledges	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1995	Pair	Non-Nesting	Non-Reproductive	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1996	Pair	Nesting	1 Fledge	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1996	Pair	Nesting	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
1997	Pair	Nesting	1 Fledge	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2000	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2007	Pair Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2008	Pair Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2011	Pair Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det, No Previous Site Nearby
2012	Unknown Sex Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det, No Previous Site Nearby
2013	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Daytime Observation
2014	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Daytime Observation

MEN0566:

YEAR	OCCUPANCY	NESTING	REPRODUCTION	MRC PROPERTY	AC RATIONALE
2000	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2001	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat

2002	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2004	Pair Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2005	Pair	Nest Failed	0 Fledges	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2006	Unknown Sex Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2007	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2008	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2009	Unknown Sex Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2010	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2012	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Daytime Observation
2013	Female Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det, No Previous Site Nearby
2014	Pair Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det Near Previous Site
2015	Female Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det Near Previous Site
2018	Female Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det Near Previous Site

MEN0616:

YEAR	OCCUPANCY	NESTING	REPRODUCTION	MRC PROPERTY	AC RATIONALE
2004	Pair	Nest Inferred	2 Fledges	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2005	Pair	Nesting	1 Fledge	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2006	Pair	Nest Failed	0 Fledges	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2007	Pair	Non-Nesting	Non-Reproductive	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2010	Pair	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat

MEN0625:

YEAR	OCCUPANCY	NESTING	REPRODUCTION	MRC PROPERTY	AC RATIONALE
2010	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Best Fit Of Detections And Habitat
2012	Male Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det Near Previous Site
2014	Female Audible	Nesting Unknown	Outcome Unknown	YES	Noc Det Near Previous Site

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State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Northern Region
601 Locust Street
Redding, CA 96001
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director

June 20, 2023

Doug Turk
Forestry Program Manager
Mendocino County Resource Conservation District
410 Jones St., Suite C-3
Ukiah, CA 95482

Subject: Low Gap Road Forest Resilience Project Northern Spotted Owl Consultation – CalVTP Project 2023-04

Dear Doug Turk,

Thank you for the opportunity to consult regarding potential effects to the state and federally threatened Northern Spotted Owl (NSO; *Strix occidentalis caurina*) as a result of the Low Gap Road Forest Resilience Project (project) proposed by the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District.

The project is located in Mendocino County along a ridgeline between the Big River, Navarro River, and Upper Russian River basins, and includes approximately 1000 acres of ridge-top vegetation (primarily forested) mechanical or manual thinning treatments, depending on slope. No trees larger than 10 inches DBH will be removed. A small prescribed burn is also proposed within the project area within grassland habitat. Current NSO habitat typing will be unchanged post-treatment.

The avoidance and minimization measures included in your memo dated June 8, 2023, are consistent with the CalVTP EIR, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) concurs these measures will avoid adverse direct and indirect effects on NSO.

Thank you for consulting CDFW regarding this project. If you would like additional assistance, please contact our office.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Cary Japp
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Cary Japp
Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor

Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870

ec: Mendocino County Resource Conservation District
Doug Turk
doug@mcrcd.org

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Cary Japp, Jamie Galos

References: Consultation Memo June 8, 2023