

3.2.2 SPECIAL STATUS WILDLIFE

A total of 13 special status animal species were evaluated further based on the type and quality of habitat present at the project site. These species include: central California coast steelhead, California red-legged frog, San Francisco garter snake, northwestern pond turtle, Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, and seven special-status bat species. These special status species are associated with San Mateo Creek and its riparian corridor as well as large valley oak trees in the eastern portion of the project site.

FEDERAL LISTED SPECIES

San Mateo Creek is a rock-lined slow-moving creek that provides suitable breeding and migratory habitat for the federal Threatened and California species of special concern California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*) and potential habitat for the federal and California endangered San Francisco garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia*). Neither species has been documented within two miles of San Mateo Creek, though habitat for these species occurs on the shoreline of Lower Crystal Spring Reservoir (CNDDB, 2004). California red-legged frog is found in ponds, pools, streams, springs, marshes and lakes. During the breeding season (January to May), adult frogs seek waters with dense shoreline vegetation, such as cattails, that provide good cover (Fed. Reg., 1996). San Francisco garter snakes inhabit freshwater ponds and slow streams primarily in San Mateo County. These snakes forage for amphibians and use emergent and bankside vegetation for escape cover. San Francisco garter snake may aestivate in small mammal burrows during the summer if aquatic habitat is seasonal. The San Mateo Creek channel is not highly vegetated with emergent vegetation. However, portions of its banks densely vegetated with English ivy and *Vinca* sp., deep pools, and undercut banks with overhanging tree roots and provide good cover for aquatic amphibians and reptiles.

The reach of San Mateo Creek that travels through the project site provides migratory and potential spawning habitat for central California coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) of steelhead trout. Central California coast steelhead ESU is a federal threatened species and a California species of concern. This ESU includes all naturally spawned populations of steelhead in coastal basins from the Russian River to Aptos Creek, and the drainages of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays eastward to the Napa River (inclusive), excluding the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Basin. Steelhead historically spawned in San Mateo Creek and recent electrofishing surveys have identified steelhead in San Mateo Creek roughly 2,500 feet upstream of the project site near Sierra Drive (Leidy et al., 2003).

Critical habitat for the central California coast steelhead ESU and other salmonid ESUs was designated in February 2000 and included all reaches of San Mateo Creek downstream of Crystal Springs Reservoir (Federal Register, 2000). However, on April 30, 2002, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries, formerly the National Marine Fisheries Service) withdrew the critical habitat designation pending further economical impact analysis (NOAA, 2002). Thus, the critical habitat designation for this species is currently not in effect, but could be reinstated by the time construction for the proposed project commences.⁵

⁵ Critical habitat is defined as specific areas that are essential to the conservation of a federally threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection. Critical habitat is determined using the best available scientific information about the physical and biological needs of the species.

OTHER SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES

The northwestern pond turtle has the potential to occur within San Mateo Creek. The northwestern pond turtle is a federal species of concern and California species of special concern, occurs in permanent ponds, rivers, streams, and irrigation ditches that typically have rocky or muddy bottoms and are overgrown with vegetation. Basking areas such as partially submerged logs rocks are also required.

Cooper's hawk (California species of special concern), sharp-shinned hawk (California species of special concern), and other raptors protected by California Fish and Game Code Section 3503.5 may utilize the riparian corridor of San Mateo Creek for nesting. Common bird species such as bushtit and northern flicker also may breed in the riparian corridor of San Mateo Creek. All breeding birds are protected by California Fish and Game Code Section 3503.

Special status bat species such as pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), Pacific western big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii townsendii*), greater western mastiff bat (*Eumpos perotis californicus*), small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*), long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*), fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*), and long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*) may roost or breed within large trees in riparian habitat along San Mateo Creek. These bat species are federal species of concern and/or California species of special concern.

3.3 WETLANDS

The property supports San Mateo Creek within the incised banks of the riparian corridor. San Mateo Creek is a perennial stream that drains from Crystal Springs Reservoir to the San Francisco Bay. The San Francisco Water Department dammed the upstream end of the creek to retain water in the reservoir. The San Francisco Water Department controls the rate and velocity of flows in the creek when it releases flows. The bed and bank of San Mateo Creek is defined. The gravel and cobblestone bed supports ponds where vegetation has fallen and the banks have eroded.

Several types of retaining walls consisting of cobblestone, concrete and brick of various heights were built in the 1950's primarily on the southern bank of the creek in the southern portion of the property. Additionally, the bank beneath the former amphitheatre supports concrete walls on the northern bank and portions of the western bank near the administration building support a low cobblestone wall. The creek has erosion problems in two locations mainly. An erosion area occurs near the end of the brick retaining wall on the southern bank at the curve of the creek in the southeastern area of the property. The second erosion area occurs upstream from the curve of the creek on the southern bank in the area of an outfall pipe. Numerous outfall pipes discharge into San Mateo Creek from various sources. As evident by the erosion described previously, some of these structures are not supported well and/or cause bank instability.

The ordinary high water mark (OHWM) averages approximately 15 feet wide. In the past, the water level has risen about 12 to 15 feet above the bed during high storm events (and occasionally when water is released from the reservoir) as evident by algal mats and vegetation hanging in the branches of understory shrubs and trees.

San Mateo Creek is subject to the jurisdictions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) under Section 401 of

the Clean Water Act as waters of the U.S. The bed and banks of San Mateo Creek and its riparian corridor (oak-bay riparian forest and oak-bay riparian/upland woodland) are subject to the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) under Sections 1602 of the Fish and Game Code.