

4.0

LAND USE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

4.0 LAND USE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section addresses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project on land use and planning, as well as the proposed project's potential adverse environmental impacts to agricultural and forestry resources. Existing land uses on the project site and surrounding area are characterized in the context of the Placer County General Plan (1994), Martis Valley Community Plan (Placer County 2003a), Placer County Zoning Ordinance, and other adopted plans and policies.

The analysis contained in this section focuses on land use compatibility, timber-ski conflicts, loss of timberland, and General Plan consistency. Information for this section was obtained primarily from applicable land use plans, site reconnaissance, and aerial photography.

The County of Placer prepared a Notice of Preparation/Initial Study (NOP/IS) for the project on November 6, 2012. Comments received during the public review period (November 6, 2012, to December 6, 2012) for the NOP/IS are contained in **Appendix 1.0**.

4.1 EXISTING SETTING

4.1.1 REGIONAL SETTING

Martis Valley

The project site is located in the Martis Valley Community Plan area in unincorporated Placer County, approximately 96 miles northeast of Sacramento. Placer County is situated in the Sierra Nevada foothills of central California. The county is bordered by the State of Nevada to the east, Nevada County and Yuba County to the north, Sutter County to the west, and Sacramento County and El Dorado County to the south. **Figure 3-1** shows the project site's regional location, while **Figure 3-2** shows the project's location within Placer County and the Martis Valley.

The proposed project site is located in the southern portion of the Martis Valley, which is located in the northeastern portion of Placer County and extends north into Nevada County (refer to **Figure 3-1**). The Martis Valley encompasses approximately 44,800 total acres, with approximately 25,570 acres (roughly 57 percent) in Placer County and approximately 19,230 acres (roughly 43 percent) in Nevada County (Placer County 2003a, p. 3).

Land use in the region is primarily associated with leisure, tourism, and outdoor recreational activities. The region is dominated by national forests, Lake Tahoe, and several large state parks, although regional attractions also include the Town of Truckee, the Truckee River, the Truckee Tahoe Airport, Donner Lake, and several ski resorts. Ski resorts in the area, including Northstar California (Northstar), Heavenly Valley, Boreal Ridge, Squaw Valley, and Alpine Meadows, offer a variety of winter recreational activities. In addition, a wide variety of summer activities can be found in the region, including golf, water sports, hiking, fishing, and mountain biking. The region also contains numerous residential developments, a large concentration of secondary or recreational homes, public and private recreational areas and facilities, and commercial and industrial areas.

4.1.2 LOCAL SETTING

Northstar

Northstar is located in the southern portion of the Martis Valley region within the Martis Valley Community Plan area. Large-scale development projects within and immediately adjacent to Northstar include Northstar Village, Northstar Highlands, Sawmill Heights, the Northside, and Martis Camp.

The Northstar resort community provides year-round recreational activities, including skiing, snowboarding, hiking, and biking. Existing accommodations at Northstar consist of private homes and condominiums, commercial development, and undeveloped lots. Some of the existing residential units serve as rental properties. Northstar also includes an 18-hole golf course and recreational trails that connect to the regional trail system. Northstar Village consists of retail areas, commercial uses, parking and circulation, pedestrian areas, restaurants, residential uses, open space, and recreation areas. One ski lift and two gondolas from the Northstar Village site provide skiers with access to the upper mountain resort and recreation facilities.

Surrounding Land Uses

Land uses adjacent to Northstar include the Martis Creek Lake National Recreation Area and the Martis Camp development to the north/northwest. Undeveloped forestland owned by Trimont Land Company and Sierra Pacific Industries is located to the east, across State Route (SR) 267. Martis Camp is located west of Northstar.

Martis Valley Community Plan Land Use Designations

The Placer County General Plan defers to the Martis Valley Community Plan for land use designations for the project area. The Martis Valley Community Plan designates the project site with the following land uses: Forest 40–60 acre minimum, Tourist/Resort Commercial, and Public/Quasi-Public (**Figure 3-5**) (Placer County 2003b).

Each of the land use designations is defined below.

Forest

This designation is applied to mountainous areas of the plan area where the primary land uses relate to the growing and harvesting of timber and other forest products, together with limited, low-intensity public and commercial recreational uses. The Forest land use designation comprises 17,065 acres or approximately 67 percent of the total Martis Valley Community Plan area.

Typical land uses allowed include commercial timber production operations and facilities; recreation uses such as skiing and skier services including parking, incidental camping, private, institutional and commercial campgrounds (but not recreational vehicle parks); and necessary public utility and safety facilities.

Tourist/Resort Commercial

This designation provides for specialized commercial uses serving tourism and the traveling public. This designation is applied along major transportation corridors and at major recreational

destinations such as ski areas and other types of resorts. The Tourist/Resort Commercial land use designation comprises 49 acres or less than 1 percent of the Martis Valley Community Plan area.

Typical land uses allowed include overnight lodging facilities of all types, retail services, food services, motorist and vehicle services, medical facilities, parks, churches, libraries and museums, necessary public utility and safety facilities, and similar and compatible uses. Project site areas to which the Tourist/Resort Commercial designation applies include the mid-mountain area and small isolated areas on the ski mountain intended to accommodate skiers.

Public/Quasi-Public

This designation provides for government or special district owned and operated facilities, including quasi-public facilities that may be found in a variety of urban and rural settings. The designation is applied to areas with existing public or quasi-public facilities and land uses, or to publicly owned (or proposed) lands intended for development with public facilities. Typical land uses allowed include government offices, service centers, schools, necessary public utility and safety facilities, and similar or compatible uses. The only residential use allowed in this designation is caretaker/employee housing.

Lands to the north are designated Open Space and Forest Residential, to the south Forest, and to the east and west Forest and Open Space (**Figure 3-5**).

Placer County Zoning District Descriptions

The project site contains the following zoning designations: Forestry and Timberland Production Zone (**Figure 3-6**).

Forestry

The Forestry zone is intended to designate portions of the mountainous areas of Placer County where the primary land uses will relate to the growing and harvesting of timber and other forest products, together with public and commercial recreational uses. Subject to approval of a conditional use permit, uses such as ski lift facilities and ski runs (including the related commercial facilities) are allowed in the Forestry zone.

Timberland Production Zone

It is the purpose of the Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) to encourage prudent and responsible forest resource management and the continued use of timberlands for the production of timber products and compatible uses. When the Board of Supervisors adopts a rezoning of property from TPZ to another zone district, the TPZ zoning will remain in effect and applicable to the subject property for a minimum of 10 years from the date of adoption of the ordinance rezoning the property.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Plan Area Statement 15 – North Star

The existing Summit Deck and Grille, existing ski trails, and proposed snowmaking facilities at Mt. Pluto are located in the Lake Tahoe Basin, which is under the jurisdiction of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) (**Figure 3-8**). This area is within Plan Area Statement 15 (North Star), which designates the area as Recreation and allows skiing facilities as a special use.

4.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

4.2.1 FEDERAL

There are no federal standards and regulations applicable to the project site.

4.2.2 STATE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

The California Forest Practice Act was adopted in 1973, resulting in a comprehensive forest regulation process. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) oversees enforcement of California's forest practice regulations. Under the Forest Practice Act, Timber Harvesting Plans (THPs) are submitted to Cal Fire for commercial timber harvesting on all non-federal timberlands. The plans are reviewed for compliance with the Forest Practice Act and rules adopted by the state Board of Forestry and Fire Protection as well as other state and federal laws that protect watersheds and wildlife. Cal Fire foresters also conduct on-site inspections of proposed logging sites. Cal Fire has jurisdiction over all timber and forestlands, regardless of whether the land is zoned TPZ.

Section 4621 of the Public Resources Code requires that a timberland conversion permit be sought for any property that would be taken out of timber production or is defined as timberland (non-federal land that is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of any commercial species used to produce lumber). Timberland conversion of property that does not have a Timber Production Zone designation includes transforming timberland to a non-timber growing use through timber operations where:

1. Future timber harvests will be prevented or will be infeasible because of land occupancy and activities thereon; or
2. Stocking requirements of the applicable district forest practice rules will not be met within five years after completion of timber operations; or
3. There is a clear intent to divide timberland into ownerships of less than 3 acres (California Forest Practice Rules, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 4).

In these cases, a timberland conversion permit is required. A timberland conversion permit also requires the property owner to submit to Cal Fire a completion report and a Timber Harvesting Plan for a conversion. Any mitigation required by Cal Fire must be included in both the conversion permit and the Timber Harvesting Plan.

4.2.3 LOCAL

Placer County General Plan

The Placer County General Plan Policy Document was adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors in 1994. **Table 4-1** lists the General Plan policies that relate to land use/forestry resources and the proposed project and provides an analysis of the project's consistency with these policies. While this Draft EIR analyzes the project's consistency with the Placer County General Plan pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the determination of the project's consistency with this General Plan rests with the Placer County Board of Supervisors.

4.0 Land Use and Forestry Resources

Any environmental impacts associated with any inconsistency with General Plan policies are addressed under the impact discussions of this EIR.

**TABLE 4-1
PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS –
LAND USE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES**

Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
Section 1: Land Use		
Policy 1.A.2: The County shall permit only low-intensity forms of development in areas with sensitive environmental resources or where natural or human-caused hazards are likely to pose a significant threat to health, safety, or property.	Consistent	The proposed Northstar Mountain Master Plan (NMMP) improvements would occupy portions of Northstar that currently contain recreational uses and would not be considered high-intensity development. The Northstar Habitat Management Plan has been used to guide the design and location of the proposed improvements.
Policy 1.E.1: The County shall support the expansion of existing winter ski and snow play areas where anticipated circulation and transportation system capacity can accommodate such expansions and where environmental impacts, including visual impacts, can be adequately mitigated, recognizing that the construction of ski runs can create visual impacts.	Consistent	The proposed NMMP would expand existing winter ski and recreation opportunities at Northstar. Northstar implements a Traffic and Parking Management Plan that is used facilitate parking and traffic during the wintertime (Appendix 3.2). Potential project impacts to visual resources are recognized and addressed in Section 8.0, Visual Resources. The visual effect of tree removal necessary to accommodate new facilities and ski runs would be softened through the ski under trail on aerial lifts (i.e., retention of islands with the lift line trail) and with irregular tree thinning and clearing at the limits of the lift line for a surface lift.
Policy 1.E.2: The County shall strive to have new recreation areas located and designed to encourage and accommodate non-automobile access.	Consistent	The proposed NMMP includes the Castle Peak Parking Lot transport gondola, which would provide skier transport from the Castle Peak parking area to the Village, assisting with a reduction in vehicle trips on Northstar Drive, and would provide more convenient and redundant Village access. The NMMP also includes an increased mix of recreational activities, including campsites that would be accessed by vans.
Policy 1.F.1: The County shall encourage the sustained productive use of forestland as a means of providing open space, maintaining the quality of scenic vistas, and to conserve other natural resources.	Consistent	The project site is surrounded by forestland. Several of the proposed NMMP improvements would occur within the existing developed ski terrain areas of Northstar. While some tree removal would be necessary to support the proposed improvements, these improvements are consistent with the continued use of the surrounding areas as open space and have been designed to minimize visual impacts to views. In addition, the Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes provisions for enhancing forest habitat conditions in the western portion of Northstar near Sawtooth Ridge (Appendix 3.3).
Policy 1.F.3: The County shall discourage development that conflicts with timberland management.	Consistent	While the proposed NMMP would place limited improvements in areas used for timberland production, these uses would be an expansion of existing uses in

Northstar Mountain Master Plan EIR

Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
		the area, are considered to be consistent with such operations, and would not result in significant conflicts with timberland management. In addition, the Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes provisions for enhancing forest habitat conditions in the western portion of Northstar near Sawtooth Ridge (Appendix 3.3).
<p>Policy 1.F.4: The County shall review development plans for all lands adjoining USFS lands for compatibility with the long-term maintenance and use of the forestlands.</p>	Consistent	Several of the proposed project components would be located adjacent to US Forest Service (USFS) land along the southern boundary of the project area, including a skier service site and expansion of the existing Summit Deck and Grille. These improvements would be an expansion of similar existing uses and would not create any new conflicts with the maintenance of forestland or the operation of related uses. Refer to discussion under Policy 1.F.3.
<p>Policy 1.F.5: The County shall work closely and coordinate with agencies involved in the regulation of timber harvest operations to ensure that County conservation goals are achieved.</p>	Consistent	The proposed project would involve some tree removal. Northstar manages its forests pursuant to Cal Fire regulation and oversight to ensure forest health, fuels management, and habitat protection. Tree removal activities associated with the proposed project would be governed and mitigated per California Timber Harvest Practices regulation and a timber conversion permit. Prior to tree removal, sensitive resources would be identified and flagged for construction avoidance. Merchantable trees, given market conditions, would be logged and hauled, with the soil profile left undisturbed. In addition, the Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes provisions for enhancing forest habitat conditions in the western portion of Northstar near Sawtooth Ridge (Appendix 3.3).
<p>Policy 1.F.6: The County shall support the continued use of Timberland Production zoning and its related tax benefits as a means of encouraging ongoing private forest resource production efforts and management plans. The County shall also consider approval of all reasonable compatible uses of such lands as long as they meet the intent of maintaining such areas for the long-term production of timber. (It is acknowledged that 705 acres of TPZ lands are designated for residential purposes with single-family residential-planned development reserve zoning, with such zoning fully effective after the removal of the TPZ designation.)</p>	Consistent	<p>The NMMP would not rezone any portion of the project site from TPZ but proposes a Zoning Text Amendment to allow ski lifts, trails, and related facilities on lands zoned TPZ within the boundaries of an existing ski resort as of March 15, 2012. Northstar is the only ski resort in Placer County that has TPZ zoned land within its boundaries. Therefore, the proposed amendment would not change the allowable uses on any other land zoned TPZ.</p> <p>Further, the proposed improvements are considered to be compatible with forestland and timber production and would not interfere significantly with timber production operations.</p>
<p>Policy 1.H.1: The County shall identify and encourage the development of recreation facilities compatible with the Plan area's seasonal vacation home, rural lifestyle, and natural environment.</p>	Consistent	The NMMP is compatible with the existing uses developed at Northstar California and would provide additional recreational options for residents and visitors.

Placer County Zoning Ordinance

The County Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 17 of the Placer County Code, was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in July 1995 (Edition #1). The Zoning Ordinance, Eighth Edition, was revised in August 2003. The Zoning Ordinance, which is consistent with the County General Plan and applicable community plans, regulates the use of land, buildings, and structures, and establishes minimum regulations and standards for the development of land in Placer County. Placer County zoning designations for the project within the Martis Valley are regulated by the Martis Valley Community Plan zoning map (see discussion below).

Placer County Local Agency Formation Commission

The Placer County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) is charged with the responsibility to:

- 1) Define and adopt a “plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area” of each local agency (known as a sphere of influence).
- 2) Conduct studies relating to service provision and government organization.
- 3) Consider the requests of local agencies to enter into a contract with private individuals or organizations to provide services outside their boundaries.

The proposed project would require annexation for sewer service into the Truckee Sanitary District and Northstar Community Service District as well as for fire protection and water services. This will involve submitting an application to LAFCo. After an application is received, a period of information gathering and analysis follows. Thereafter, LAFCo will hold a public hearing to consider the request. These hearings are advertised, and the public is encouraged to participate.

Martis Valley Community Plan

Table 4-2 lists the Martis Valley Community Plan policies that relate to land use/forestry resources and the proposed project and provides an analysis of the project’s consistency with these policies. While this Draft EIR analyzes the project’s consistency with the Martis Valley Community Plan pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the determination of the project’s consistency with the Community Plan rests with the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Any environmental impacts associated with inconsistency with Community Plan policies are addressed under the impact discussions of this DEIR.

**TABLE 4-2
MARTIS VALLEY COMMUNITY PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS –
LAND USE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES**

Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
General Land Use Policies		
Policy 1.A.1: The County will promote the efficient use of land and natural resources.	Consistent	The proposed NMMP would expand existing recreational facilities at Northstar. The project includes expansions of existing facilities as well as development of new amenities, all within the existing boundaries of Northstar.
Policy 9.E.11: The County shall encourage the continued use of commercially viable timberlands for timber production and other multiple use functions which can include ski-related uses within the Plan area. Conversion of such lands to other uses is discouraged.	Consistent	The NMMP would not rezone any portion of the project site from TPZ but proposes a Zoning Text Amendment to allow ski lifts, trails, and related facilities on lands zoned TPZ within the boundaries of an existing ski resort as of March 15, 2012, outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Northstar is the only ski resort in Placer County that has TPZ zoned land within its boundaries. Therefore, the proposed amendment would not change the allowable uses on any other land zoned TPZ. Further, the proposed improvements are considered to be compatible with forestland and timber production and would not interfere significantly with timber production operations.
Recreation Land Use Element Policies		
Policy 1.G.1: The County will support the expansion of existing winter ski and snow play areas and development of new areas where circulation and transportation system capacity can accommodate such expansions or new uses and where environmental impacts can be adequately mitigated.	Consistent	The proposed NMMP would expand existing winter ski and recreational opportunities at Northstar. Northstar implements a Traffic and Parking Management Plan that is used facilitate parking and traffic during the wintertime (Appendix 3.2).
Policy 1.G.2: The County shall strive to have new recreation areas located and designed to encourage and accommodate non-automobile access.	Consistent	The proposed NMMP includes the Castle Peak Parking Lot transport gondola, which would provide skier transport from the Castle Peak parking area to the Village, assisting with a reduction in vehicle trips on Northstar Drive, and would provide more convenient and redundant Village access. The NMMP also includes an increased mix of recreational activities, including campsites that would be accessed by vans.

Martis Valley Community Plan Zoning Map

The Martis Valley Community Plan Zoning Map was adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors in December 2003. The Zoning Map, which is consistent with the Martis Valley Community Plan (2003), regulates the use of land, buildings, and structures, and establishes minimum regulations and standards for the development of land in the Placer County portion of the Martis Valley. Zoning districts referenced on the Martis Valley Community Plan Zoning Map are consistent with the Placer County Zoning Ordinance.

Northstar-at-Tahoe Master Plan

The 1971 Northstar-at-Tahoe Master Plan and associated use permit established residential uses consisting of 585 single-family lots, 1,763 condominium townhome units, 622 condominium lodge units, and 730 condominium motel units (for a total of 3,700 units, excluding employee housing and commercial development); a village center (known as Northstar Village) and highway service commercial uses; recreational facilities consisting of a 1,340-acre ski area, golf course, and stables; 695 acres of common open space; and public service facilities consisting of a fire station, water and wastewater treatment plants, distribution tanks, and sewage pump station.

The 1971 use permit has been superseded by the land uses set forth in the Master Plan are reflected in the Martis Valley Community Plan. Development at Northstar California is guided by the Placer County General Plan, Placer County Zoning Ordinance, Martis Valley Community Plan, and Martis Valley Community Plan Zoning Map.

4.3 IMPACTS

4.3.1 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and on Placer County standards, a project would have significant land use and agricultural resource impacts if it would:

- 1) Physically divide an established community.
- 2) Conflict with General Plan/Community Plan/Specific Plan designations or zoning, or plan policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.
- 3) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan or other County policies, plans, or regulations adopted for purposes of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects.
- 4) Result in the development of incompatible uses and/or the creation of land use conflicts.
- 5) Affect agricultural and timber resources or operations (i.e., impacts to soils or farmlands and timber harvest plans, or impacts from incompatible land uses).
- 6) Disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community (including a low-income or minority community).
- 7) Result in a substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area.
- 8) Cause economic or social changes that would result in significant adverse physical changes to the environment such as urban decay or deterioration.
- 9) 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 nonagricultural use.
- 10) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

- 11) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestland (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g)).
- 12) Result in the loss of forestland or conversion of forestland to non-forest use.
- 13) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to nonagricultural use or conversion of forestland to non-forest use.

The Initial Study checklist determined that the proposed project would have no impact on several of the above items. These include physically disrupting or dividing an established community (including a low-income or minority community), causing economic or social changes resulting in urban decay or deterioration, or converting Farmland. First, the proposed project will not physically divide an established community, as the proposed improvements would accommodate the recreational demands internal to the Northstar California community. The improvements would relocate some existing facilities, but this would not involve disruption to housing, including low-income housing or minorities. No impact would occur in this regard. Second, the project would not cause economic or social changes that would result in significant adverse physical changes to the environment such as urban decay or deterioration. The proposed improvements would accommodate the recreational demands internal to the Northstar California community. These improvements are consistent with the zoning and the existing land uses in the area. Third, the proposed project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to a nonagricultural use. No portions of the project site are listed on the maps as having Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance. Since no impact would occur with regard to these issues, they will not be discussed further in this analysis.

4.3.2 METHODOLOGY

The following evaluation of potential land use and planning impacts analyzes the proposed project's consistency with applicable land use planning documents as well as the project's consistency with the types and intensities of existing and planned land uses on and surrounding the project site, including surrounding forestry uses. Potential land use conflicts or incompatibilities include timber operations-ski conflicts and ski trail access of surrounding residential uses. Potential land use conflicts resulting from the effects of project construction and operation are summarized here. The reader is also referred to other DEIR sections (Noise, Visual Resources, Traffic and Circulation, Air Quality, etc.) for more detailed discussions of other relevant environmental effects.

Evaluation of potential land use and forestry resource impacts associated with the proposed project was based on review of applicable land use planning documents, including the Placer County General Plan (1994) and Zoning Ordinance and the Martis Valley Community Plan (Placer County 2003a) and Martis Valley Community Plan Certified Draft EIR (Placer County 2003b), as well as consultation with appropriate agencies and field review of the project site and surrounding area.

The analysis below evaluates both project- and program-level components identified in Section 3.0, Project Description, as well as the proposed amendments to the Martis Valley Community Plan and Placer County Zoning Ordinance.

4.3.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

IMPACT 4.1: Conflict with General Plan/Community Plan, Zoning, or Plan Policies

The proposed project site is located within the Martis Valley Community Plan area. The project site is currently surrounded by forest lands, ski terrain and facilities (lifts, restaurants, warming huts), and existing resort development (Northstar Village, Northstar Highlands, Sawmill Heights, the Northside, and Martis Camp). The Martis Valley Community Plan designates the project site as Forest 40–60 acre minimum, Tourist/Resort Commercial, and Public/Quasi-Public. These land use designations allow for the project- and program-level improvements proposed as part of the NMMP. In addition, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Plan Area Statement 15 (North Star) allows recreational facilities in the project area.

However, expansion of ski trails and other recreation facilities that are zoned Timberland Production Zone (TPZ), would require a Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA). Activities within the TPZ are limited to the growing and harvesting of timber, though recreational uses are also allowed. In order to accommodate ski facilities in areas of the project site that currently have this designation, the project proposes a limited countywide Zoning Text Amendment to allow ski lifts, trails, and related facilities in areas currently designated TPZ and located within the boundaries of land owned and/or operated by existing ski resorts as of March 15, 2012. This ZTA would not apply to TPZ land that is located within the Lake Tahoe Basin boundary. Following the Zoning Text Amendment, both project- and program-level components would be allowed within the TPZ and would be consistent with zoning requirements. This Zoning Text Amendment would be limited to Northstar, as no other existing ski resort in Placer County contains TPZ lands within its boundaries. Therefore, the proposed text amendment would in effect be limited to the project site as no other TPZ land within the county would be affected as a result.

The TPZ lands within Northstar located in Northstar Habitat Management Plan (HMP) Management Zones D and E are planned to be managed to retain, improve, and enlarge these forested areas that would improve this TPZ area from existing conditions (**Appendix 3.3**, Tables 4-6 and 4-7). The HMP identifies that the forests in Zone C (which includes a TPZ zoned area adjacent to State Route 267) are to be managed for the protection of human safety and forest health, and to maintain and enhance natural resources to the extent practicable (without compromising human safety or forest health). Management practices conform to all applicable California Forest Practice Rules and to the specific terms and conditions of Timber Harvest Plans for timber operations in this zone. These Timber Harvesting Plans contain numerous measures to sustain forest productivity and to avoid and/or minimize adverse effects on habitats, including measures that address harvesting practices and erosion control, watercourse protection, and wildlife protection.

The technical sections of this DEIR evaluate the physical environmental impacts of allowing the development and operation of ski and recreational facilities within zoned TPZ areas. Thus, the Zoning Text Amendment would have a **less than significant** impact.

The proposed NMMP also includes the relocation of the Tourist/Resort Commercial land use designation from its current location on the west side of Northstar to the proposed relocated cross-country center/skier service site/campsite area at the bottom of the proposed C lift (**Figure 3-5**) as well as rezoning to Forestry. The reason for this shift is that the existing Tourist/Resort Commercial land use designation at the proposed Backside campsite is not necessary for the installation of the campsite, and the campsite would be more consistent with the surrounding Forestry land use designation. Conversely, the bottom of the proposed C lift, which is currently

designated Forestry, is planned to be developed at the program level with a commercial use (skier service site), would require a Tourist/Resort Commercial land use designation, and would be located in an area where skier-supportive facilities would not conflict with existing land uses. It is important to note that the applicant proposes only the relocation of an existing land use designation and not the creation of a new Tourist/Resort Commercial land use area within the Martis Valley Community Plan. Thus, **no impact** from this land use designation change would occur.

IMPACT 4.2: Conflict with Existing Zoning/Loss of Timberland

The proposed Northstar Mountain Master Plan includes the ski and campsite facility improvements within areas zoned TPZ:

Project-Level Components

- C lift and associated trail improvements
- W lift and associated trail improvements
- Z lift and associated trail improvements

Program-Level Components

- Q lift and associated trail improvements
- Relocated cross-country center/skier service/campsite area at bottom of C lift
- Backside campsite area

The TPZ zoning district is intended to be an exclusive area for the growing and harvesting of timber and uses that are an integral part of a timber management operation. In contrast, the Forestry zoning district is used for portions of mountainous areas for the growing and harvesting of timber and other forest products, together with public and commercial recreational uses, including ski lift facilities and ski runs. Tree removal would be necessary to accommodate construction of proposed NMMP improvements within the Timberland Production Zone areas.

In addition to the Zoning Text Amendment identified in Impact 4.1, Cal Fire requires a permit to convert timberland to a different use. Prior to issuance of a “permit to convert,” a Timber Harvesting Plan must be approved by Cal Fire because the trees would be removed and sold. A Timber Harvesting Plan must be prepared consistent with the rules and regulations of the state Board of Forestry and Fire Protection pursuant to the provisions of the Z’Berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973. The project applicant would prepare a Timber Harvesting Plan and acquire a timberland conversion permit from Cal Fire prior to project implementation.

The TPZ lands within Northstar located within HMP Management Zones D and E are planned to be managed to retain, improve, and enlarge these forested areas that would improve this TPZ area from existing conditions (**Appendix 3.3**, Tables 4-6 and 4-7). The HMP identifies that the forests in Zone C (which includes a TPZ zoned area adjacent to State Route 267) are to be managed for the protection of human safety and forest health, and to maintain and enhance natural resources to the extent practicable (without compromising human safety or forest health). Management practices conform to all applicable California Forest Practice Rules and to the specific terms and

conditions of Timber Harvesting Plans for timber operations in this zone. These Timber Harvesting Plans contain numerous measures to sustain forest productivity and to avoid and/or minimize adverse effects on habitats, including measures that address harvesting practices and erosion control, watercourse protection, and wildlife protection.

Thus, no substantial loss of timberland or future timber operations is expected. In addition, implementation of the Northstar HMP and mitigation measure 6-9 would provide for forest preservation and enhancement. This would be a **less than significant** impact.

IMPACT 4.3: Conflict with Any Applicable Habitat Conservation Plan

The County has not adopted a habitat conservation plan or a natural community conservation plan. However, a specific habitat management plan has been prepared that covers all of Northstar California. The Northstar Habitat Management Plan (HMP) was completed in 2009 and has been instrumental in guiding the location and design of the proposed program-level mountain improvements (EDAW/AECOM 2009). The HMP provides specific resource management guidance for land use and development of the Northstar property. Additionally, the HMP serves as a planning tool to implement local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources. The proposed project- and program-level improvements have been designed in accordance with the HMP (see Section 6.0, Biological Resources). Therefore, conflicts with an applicable habitat conservation plan are considered **less than significant**.

IMPACT 4.4: Result in Incompatible Uses and/or the Creation of Land Use Conflicts

In the short term, construction of the proposed NMMP improvements could cause conflicts for visitors and residents enjoying on-site amenities and could result in the disruption of roadways for Northstar residents. Specific project components that could result in temporary construction conflicts with existing residential uses in Northstar include the following:

Project-Level Components

- J lift and associated trail improvements
- Skier Bridge 5 and associated trail improvements

Program-Level Components

- Castle Peak Parking Lot Transport Gondola

Most of the construction activities would occur immediately adjacent to existing trails and ski runs. Excavation, tree removal, and other construction activities could result in some disruption of the spring/summer recreational uses such as hiking and mountain biking. During construction, areas adjacent to and in the vicinity of construction would be subject to noise and dust impacts associated with heavy equipment, worker vehicle trips, and materials movement. Thus, the proposed project would result in temporary land use conflicts, which could affect visitors and residents during construction. Each of the specific physical impacts related to dust, noise, health hazards, and traffic is discussed in the appropriate section of this DEIR.

In the long term, implementation of the proposed project would alter existing land use conditions in the areas affected by the proposed NMMP components by placing recreational uses adjacent to areas developed with residential uses as well as in areas used for timber production. However, the

proposed NMMP improvements would expand upon existing similar uses within the resort and would not be expected to result in any new long-term, ongoing land use conflicts.

MITIGATION MEASURE 4-4 Implement Construction Control Measures

Prior to Improvement Plan approval and/or during any construction, demolition, or tree removal activities requiring complete or partial closure of existing roadways, the project applicant shall perform the following tasks to the satisfaction of the Placer County Public Works Department:

- Provide written notice to property owners along affected roadways and the Northstar Fire District 1 week before roadway closures.
- Ensure public safety by clearly marking and securing roadway construction areas.
- Place steel plates over open trenches at the end of each workday (or other appropriate measures) to restore vehicle access to all residents.
- Ensure access and parking for users and residents of buildings to remain on the project site.
- Obtain written approval from the County Director of Public Works for any proposed temporary road closures or detour routes.
- Obtain written approval from the Northstar Fire Department and Cal Fire for any proposed temporary road closures or detour routes.
- Post notice of planned closure on affected roadways two weeks prior to roadway closures.

During demolition, tree removal, and construction activities, the project applicant shall limit the amount of daily construction equipment traffic by staging heavy construction equipment and vehicles on the project site at the end of each workday rather than removing them.

Clear demarcation of construction areas, including fencing, temporary walls, signage, protective barriers, and security provisions for public safety, shall be noted in the improvement plans for project components. These public safety protection features for persons using the trails system shall be in place prior to the onset of construction.

SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Implementation of the above mitigation measure and mitigation measures identified in Sections 10.0, Air Quality, and 11.0, Noise, would reduce the temporary impact of construction activities on adjacent land uses to a **less than significant** level.