

### 2.3.3 SPECIAL STATUS PLANT SPECIES

Based on known regional occurrences and the presence of suitable habitat within the project area, six special-status plant species have the potential to occur within the project area. Three of these are threatened or endangered and are discussed in Section 2.3.5. Individual discussions of the other species are presented below. These discussions present the extent of known and potential habitat within the project area, potential impacts to these species from the development of the proposed project, recommended measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate for project related impacts, and a discussion of the cumulative effects the project would have on the continued existence of these species.

#### REGULATORY SETTING

The regulatory requirements that pertain to the proposed project alternatives are outlined in section 2.3.1 Natural Communities, and include the Federal Endangered Species Act, the California Endangered Species Act, and local General Plan policies. Full descriptions of both of these acts are included in section 2.3.1.

#### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT: DWARF DOWNINGIA

##### Survey Results

Dwarf downingia is listed by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) as rare in California but common elsewhere. This species is an annual herbaceous plant that blooms from April through June (CNPS 2003). This species requires shallow, fresh-water conditions and usually occurs in vernal pool habitat. There are several records of this species occurring within 8.0 km (5.0 miles) of the project area (CNDDB 2003). This species was not identified within the study area during focused botanical surveys conducted in May 2002 and May 2004.

#### IMPACTS

##### **No Build Alternative**

Under the No Build alternative, special status plant species would not be impacted by implementation of the project because the project would not take place.

##### **Build Alternatives (2A and 3A)**

##### Permanent Impacts

##### **Impact 2.3.3-1**

Because dwarf downingia was not identified in the project area during focused botanical surveys, no impacts to this species are anticipated at this time. Though the species was not observed within the study area, the vernal pools within the study area constitute potential, though marginal, habitat for this species. This species is dependent on the hydrology and soils associated with the vernal pools, therefore any effects to the vernal pools could affect this species.

### MITIGATION MEASURES

Compensatory mitigation recommended for impacts to wetlands and vernal pools, **MM 2.3.1-1** and **MM 2.3.2-1**, would preserve and create potential habitat for this species within the region.

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT: LEGENERE

#### Survey Results

Legenere is considered by the USFWS as a species of concern and by CNPS as rare in California and elsewhere. This species is an annual herbaceous plant that blooms from April to June (CNPS 2003). This species is found in vernal pools. There are several records of this species occurring within 8.0 km (5.0 miles) of the project area (CNDDDB 2003). This species was not identified within the study area during focused botanical surveys conducted in May 2002 and May 2004.

### IMPACTS

#### **No Build Alternative**

Under the No Build alternative, special status plant species would not be impacted by implementation of the project because the project would not take place.

#### **Build Alternatives (2A and 3A) Impacts**

##### Permanent Impacts

**Impact 2.3.3-2** Because legenere was not identified in the project area during focused botanical surveys, no impacts to this species are anticipated at this time. Though the species was not observed within the study area, the vernal pools within the study area constitute potential, though marginal, habitat for this species. This species is dependent on the hydrology and soils associated with the vernal pools; therefore any effects to the vernal pools could affect this species.

### MITIGATION MEASURES

Compensatory mitigation recommended for impacts to wetlands and vernal pools, **MM 2.3.1-1** and **MM 2.3.2-1**, would preserve and create potential habitat for this species within the region.

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT: NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BLACK WALNUT

#### Survey Results

Northern California black walnut is considered by the USFWS as a species of concern and by CNPS is rare in California and elsewhere. This species is a tree that blooms from April to May (CNPS 2003). Remaining native stands of this species are very rare but were historically

## 2.3 BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

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associated with riparian forests and riparian woodlands. The species has since become widely naturalized in cismontane California due to its cultivation as rootstock for English walnut (*Juglans regia*) (CNPS 2003). This species was identified in association with a rural residence in the southeast quadrant of the project area and along Sheldon Road west of SR 99. These stands appear to be the result of nearby cultivation of English walnut.

### IMPACTS

#### No Build Alternative

Under the No Build alternative, special status plant species would not be impacted by implementation of the project because the project would not take place.

#### Build Alternatives (2A and 3A) Impacts

##### Construction Impacts

**Impact 2.3.3-3** Although Northern California black walnut trees are located near rural residences that would not be affected by the road improvements, the species is vulnerable to impacts resulting from the project construction, including activities that result in soil compaction or grading activities within the canopies and/or root zone. These construction activities could affect the trees.

### MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation measures **MM 2.3.1-4a** and **MM 2.3.1-4b**, which outlined avoidance and minimization mitigation for native oaks in Section 2.3.1 Natural Communities, shall be applied to Northern California black walnut trees that may be impacted by construction of the proposed project.

### CEQA FINDINGS

Impacts to special status plant species may be considered significant if the project would:

- Directly impact a candidate, sensitive, or special status species identified by local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFG or USFWS
- Modify natural a natural community is such a way that it would result in a substantial adverse effect on candidate, sensitive, or special status species identified by local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFG or USFWS.
- Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting trees or other biological resources.
- Conflict with an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

Although the project would not be expected to directly impact any special status plant species, the project would impact vernal pools within the project area, which could result in impacts to special status plants that rely on these habitats for survival. These impacts are considered **potentially significant impacts** unless mitigated. Mitigation measures **MM 2.3.1-1** and **MM 2.3.2-1**, recommended for impacts to vernal pools and wetlands, would preserve and create habitat for this species within the region. **MM 2.3.1-4a** and **MM 2.3.1-4b** would mitigate impacts to trees during construction. Implementation of the proposed measures would reduce harm to special status plants to a **less than significant impact**.