

MEMORANDUM

To: The Stewardship Council Board

From: The Watershed Planning Committee

Date: January 18, 2017, Amended September 20, 2017

Re: Recommendation for a Finding of No Significant Public Interest Value – 12.7 acre area at Auberry Service Center Planning Unit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Watershed Planning Committee (Planning Committee) recommends the board approve a finding of no significant public interest value (NSPIV) for approximately 12.7 acres at the Auberry Service Center planning unit, located in Fresno County. After considering the characteristics of this parcel area, the Planning Committee has concluded that the property has no significant public interest value.

BACKGROUND

The Auberry Service Center planning unit, located in Fresno County, consists of one legal parcel, comprising approximately 41 acres of Watershed Lands. The western portion of Parcel 1061, totaling approximately 12.7 acres in size and containing PG&E's Auberry Service Center, was initially designated for a NSPIV finding in September of 2015, during a staff and board field tour of the parcel. The remaining lands in Parcel 1061 (approximately 29 acres) will be encumbered by a conservation easement which the Stewardship Council has recommended be held by the Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC). SFC's Lands Committee voted to exclude the 12.7 acres underlying PG&E's service center from the conservation easement that will be established on the remainder of lands at the Auberry Service Center planning unit. Stewardship Council staff formally evaluated the subject acres following the board approved process that is described in the attachment to this memo and presented the results of its evaluation to the Planning Committee on December 8, 2016. At that meeting, the committee conditionally endorsed a NSPIV finding for the 12.7 acre area. After the committee meeting, the proposed NSPIV finding was released for a 30 day public review and comment period. Notice of the comment period for the proposed NSPIV finding was sent to a wide variety of stakeholders, including landowners within a mile radius of the site, local water agencies, the Fresno County board of supervisors, and Native American tribes, including tribes located in the vicinity of the site and those identified by the Native American Heritage Commission, and was noticed in the local paper. The 30 day comment period commenced on December 11, 2016. No comments have been received. There is also an opportunity for stakeholders to comment in advance of the January 25th board meeting as well as at the public session of the board meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE

The Planning Committee recommends the board endorse a NSPIV finding for the approximately 12.7 acre service center area of the Auberry Service Center planning unit. This recommendation is based on the considerations and rationale described below:

The 12.7 acre service center portion of Parcel 1061 is almost entirely encumbered by the PG&E service center. The majority of the 12.7 acre area is paved and does not contain, nor does it have the potential for significant plant or wildlife habitat, forestry resources, or open space value. No significant biological or cultural resources were identified on the subject acres by a state database search. The parcel is used as a staging area for off-site maintenance operations and as a storage facility for equipment and construction materials for PG&E and contains several equipment and work sheds, a heliport, laydown areas, and storage for heavy machinery.

Because the service center is fenced and consists of buildings and facilities used by PG&E employees only, there is no potential for public access or recreation. While it is easy to access the parcel, there are no beneficial public values for an easement holder to monitor.

The 12.7 acre service center area is already developed. The remaining acres in parcel 1061 will be protected by the Auberry Service Center conservation easement to be held by SFC.

During the 30 day noticing period for the service center area, no comments were received to indicate public interest in conserving the parcel.