



COUNTY OF LAKE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
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Item #6b
9:10 AM
November 13, 2025

STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Mireya G. Turner, Community Development Department
Mary Claybon, Senior Planner

DATE: November 13, 2025

SUBJECT: Consideration of proposed Major Use Permit PL-25-59 (UP 23-08) Wellness Ranch 3 / Luis Martinez and subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS 23-19) for approval of 107,120 sf outdoor canopy and 8,820 sf of indoor canopy located at 6751 Ridge Road, Lakeport, CA (APN 007-045-16)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Project Site Plans
2. Draft Conditions of Approval
3. Project Description
4. Property Management Plan
5. Revised Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
6. Hydrology Report and Drought Management Plan
7. Biological Assessments
8. Agency Comments
9. Tribal Comments
10. Public Comments

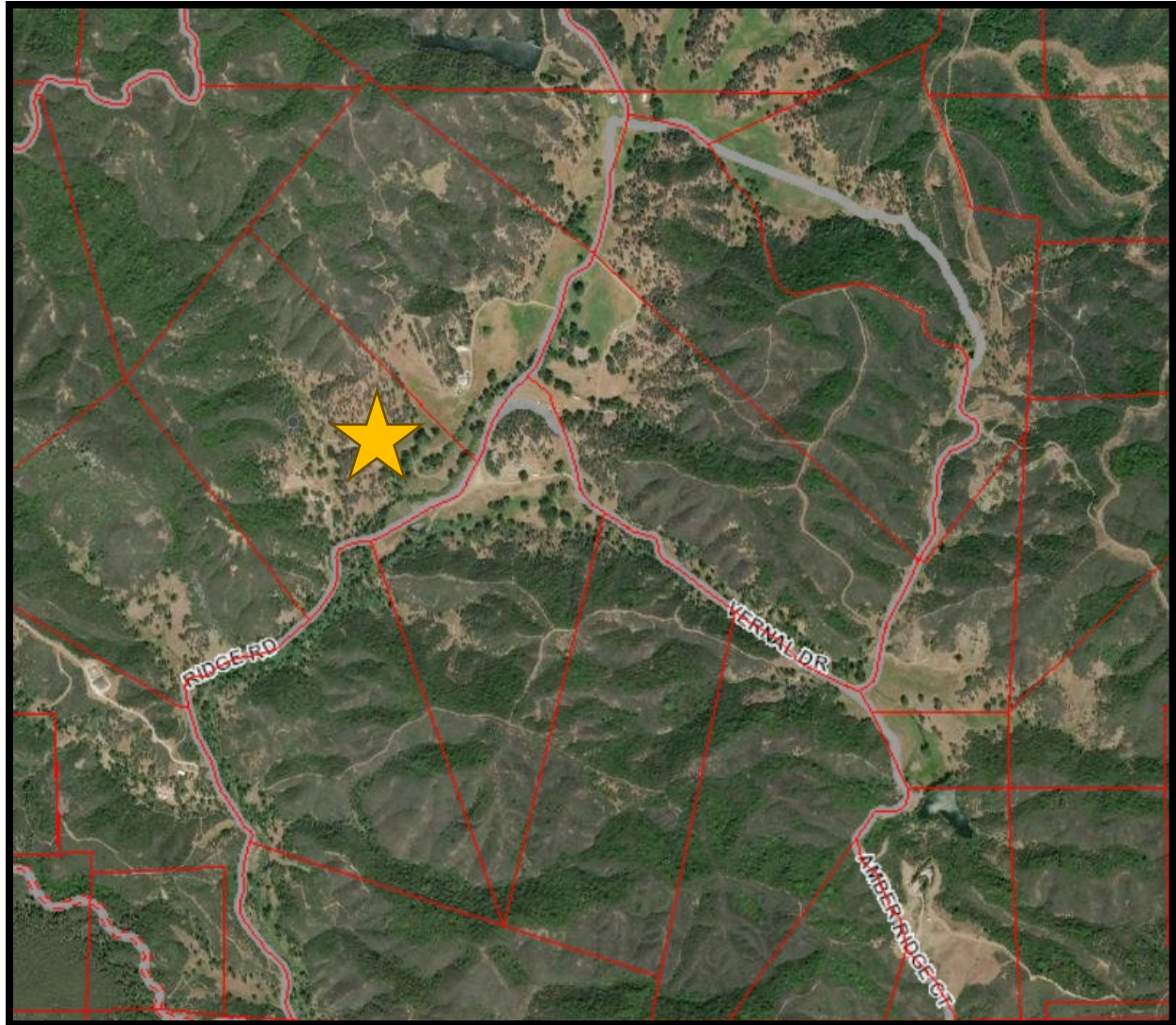
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant, Luis Martinez of Wellness Ranch, LLC is proposing an amendment to the existing cannabis cultivation operation located on a 106.47-acre parcel at 6751 Ridge Road, Lakeport (APN: 007-045-16). The County of Lake has previously issued two Minor Use Permits (MUP 19-15 and MUP 22-11) for cannabis cultivation operations. This application, Wellness Ranch 3, represents an amendment to use permit for Wellness Ranch for an expansion of cannabis canopy with facilities, and combination of the two previously issued permits. There have been several revisions to this proposed application since the submission to the Community Development Department in 2023. To date, the site has been approved for the following (as of April of 2024):

- Cultivation site 1 – existing 10,000 square foot fenced/gated outdoor garden
- Cultivation site 2 – existing 10,000 square foot fenced/gated outdoor garden
- Cultivation site 3 – existing 2,400 square foot indoor garden within barn

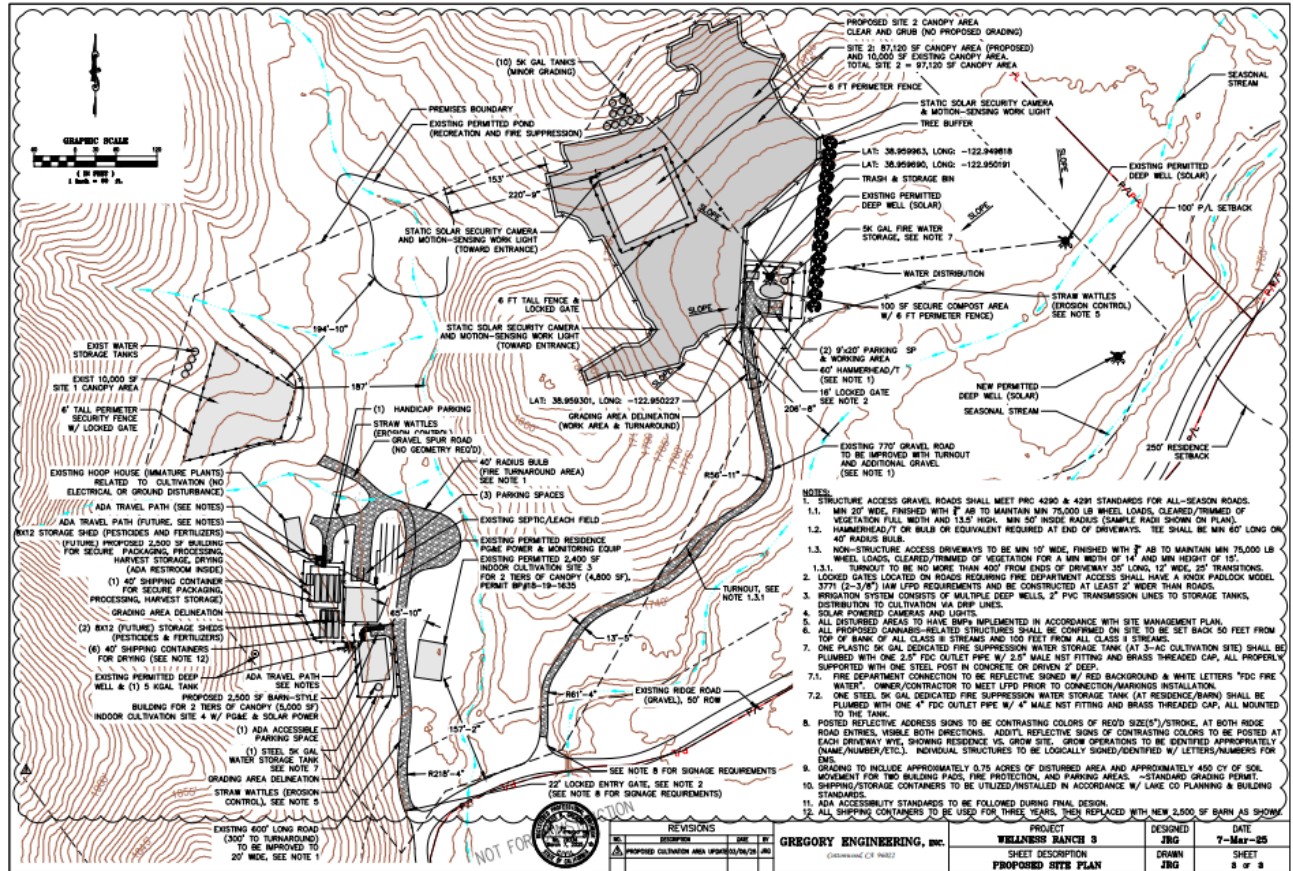
At buildout, the Wellness Ranch 3 project proposes 107,120 sf outdoor canopy (20,000 sf approved and 87,120 proposed) and 8,820 sf of indoor canopy (2,400 approved and 6,420 sf proposed). See Project Description section for more information.

FIGURE 1 – VICINITY MAP



Source: Lake County GIS

FIGURE 2 – SITE PLANS



Source: Gregory Engineering March 2025

Project Description

Project Title: Wellness Ranch 3

Permit Numbers: Major Use Permit PL-25-59 (UP 23-08)
Subsequent Initial Study (IS 23-19)

Lead Agency: County of Lake Community Development Department
255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

Applicant Name & Address: Wellness Ranch, LLC
10522 Poinsettia Lane
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670

Property Owner: Room To Grow Research Design & Consultation

Project Location: 6751 Ridge Road, Lakeport, CA

Parcel Number(s) (APN): 007-045-16

Parcel Size: 106.47 Acres

<u>General Plan Designation:</u>	Rural Lands
<u>Zoning District(s):</u>	“RL-B5-WW” Rural Lands, Special Lot Size/Density (min. 5 acres), Waterway Combining District
<u>Flood Zone:</u>	“D”; Areas in which flood hazards are undetermined, but possible

Existing Features:

- One single-family dwelling
- Septic system
- Four (4) groundwater wells
- Cultivation site 1 – existing 10,000 sf fenced/gated outdoor garden
- Cultivation site 2 – existing 10,000 sf fenced/gated outdoor garden
- Cultivation site 3 – existing 2,400 sf indoor garden within barn
- Various existing farm storage, processing, and service facilities, including water storage tanks, a hoop house for immature plants, three (3) 40 foot drying containers, one (1) 40 foot storage container, one (1) 8'x12' pesticide/fertilizer storage shed, an ADA accessible restroom, security cameras/equipment, on site vehicle circulation and parking areas, trash storage bins, green waste composting/soil storage areas.

Proposed Stage I facilities:

- Expansion of cultivation site 2 for a total of 97,120 sf outdoor cannabis canopy
- Expansion of cultivation site 3, two tiers for a total of 4,320 sf indoor cannabis canopy
- Construction of a new 2,500 sf barn with two tiers for a total of 4,500 sf indoor cannabis canopy
- Eleven (11) 5,000-gal water tanks
- Two (2) 8 ft x12 ft pesticide/fertilizer storage sheds
- A small solar-powered electrical system to power low voltage items such as security cameras, and water pumps for drawing groundwater and mixing liquid fertilizers into the irrigation systems
- Three (3) additional 40 foot-long shipping containers for temporary cannabis processing accordance with Lake County Ordinance 3135; not to exceed three years of use

Proposed Stage II facilities include:

- Construction of 25 foot-tall pre-engineered 2,500 sf ADA compliant processing facility to replace the seven shipping containers. The processing building would be equipped with roof mount solar
- One (1) additional steel, fiberglass, or concrete water tank dedicated to fire suppression in alignment with PRC 4290/4291 regulations.

Siting

The topography of the site is mountainous and consists of the upper Donavan Valley and a side canyon. The elevation ranges from approximately 1,760 feet to 2,100 feet above sea level however the cultivation area is relatively flat. Two intermittent creeks extend through the site, one running north to south through the center and the other is parallel to Ridge Road. All setbacks from waterways have been identified and the project includes avoidance by design. The land was part of a cattle grazing ranch and was largely undeveloped except for a partially built barn until

2017. A well was drilled in 2017 and the house and barn were completed in 2019. A stock pond in the center of the site was approved and constructed in 2019.

Construction

No grading and no major construction-related activities are needed for Stage I of development which includes installation of perimeter fencing around the new outdoor cultivation area. During Stage II of development to build the proposed 2,500 sf processing facility, between two to three months of construction time is anticipated Monday through Saturday. Up to three employees are proposed. The application documentation proposes that six daily trips will result from three employees for a total of approximately 432 total employee trips, in addition to up to 14 delivery trips during construction, for a total of 446 trips during construction.

Operational Details

The proposed project is anticipated to operate from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Sunday with flexibility to operate under traditional agricultural hours specific to planting and harvesting activities. The estimated maximum number of employees during peak planting and harvest season is four employees. Vehicle trips per day are expected to be up to eight trips. There will be on average up to two deliveries per week on average will occur during operations. The applicant is proposing four parking spaces including one (1) ADA parking space. Additionally, the project site is flat at the cultivation site and has ample room for additional non-designated parking. Below is the summary of existing cultivation sites and newly proposed cultivation activities:

TABLE 1, TOTAL APPROVED AND PROPOSED CULTIVATION

Garden	Approved	Proposed	Total
Cultivation Site 1, outdoor	10,000 sf	0 sf	10,000 sf
Cultivation Site 2, outdoor	10,000 sf	87,120 sf	97,120 sf
Cultivation Site 3, existing barn indoor	2,400 sf	1,920 sf	4,320 sf
Cultivation Site 4, proposed barn indoor	0 sf	4,500 sf	4,500 sf

At buildout, the Wellness Ranch 3 project includes 107,120 sf outdoor canopy (20,000 sf approved and 87,120 sf proposed) and 8,820 sf of indoor canopy (2,400 sf approved and 6,420 sf proposed). The applicant intends to apply for three A-Type 3 "medium outdoor" cultivation license, one A - Type 2A: "small indoor" license, and a Type 13 Distribution, Self Transport only license from the Department of Cannabis Control. All outdoor cultivation will be conducted in fabric bags and/or in tilled/amended native soil and the indoor cultivation will be on two tier racks, in containers, utilizing only artificial lighting.

Access to the project site is available via Ridge Road, an unmaintained county road. Entry to the property is facilitated through two existing driveways along Ridge Road, each approximately 13 to 15 feet wide. One driveway provides access to the residence, indoor cultivation facilities, and Cultivation Site 1, while the second driveway serves Cultivation Site 2. The roadway consists of gravel, and its width may vary along its length.

The road is capable of supporting a 75,000-pound emergency vehicle and interior driveway improvements are required as a part of the project. A steel, fiberglass, or concrete 5,000 gallon water tank is conditioned to serve the site. The security gate is proposed to be equipped with a Knox box for emergency access/entry by first responders. The driveways have a road base/gravel surface and turnouts in compliance with Public Resource Code (PRC) 4290/4291 regulations.

Biological Resources

Two Biological Resources Reports and a Technical Memorandum collectively referred to herein as the “Biological Assessments” were prepared for this project (Attachment 7). The first report by Huffman-Broadway Group, Inc was prepared June 4, 2019, with a site survey date of April 17, 2019. The second Report was prepared by Graening & Associates, LLC and dated March 5, 2020. The field survey was conducted February 10, 2020; this report was updated on October 13, 2023, to include the proposed expansion areas. A Technical Memorandum for this project was drafted by Graening & Associates, LLC on July 25, 2024, and provides clarification regarding the Project’s potential impact to wetlands.

The Biological Assessments concluded that there was potential to impact some nearby smaller ephemeral stream beds, and that Best Management Practices would reduce the risk to these seasonal channels significantly. The 2023 Biological Report recommended a minimum 50’ setback to these seasonal water channels; however Article 27.13(at) of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance requires a 100’ setback to top-of-bank of any water course, seasonal or otherwise exceeding the recommended setback by the biologist. As noted in the Technical Memorandum from the qualified biologist, due to the Project’s avoidance of these features, a formal wetland delineation is not required.

Water Demand

A Technical Memorandum was prepared by NorthPoint Consulting Group, Inc. dated March 5, 2025, in addition to the report. The purpose of the Memorandum is to provide an update to the Hydrology Report analysis for the change in scope for the canopy areas. Records of water use (provided by the applicant) were recorded during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 cultivation seasons. These records were used to estimate the water demand for the proposed cultivation activities. Actual demand at Wellness Ranch, averaging over the three years of record, averages to 0.072 gpd/ sf or 3,137 gpd per acre of canopy. The total revised projected annual demand, including residential demand, is approximately 1,498,572 gallons or 4.6 acre-feet annually. Using a recharge value of 7.4 AFY to represent a drought year and 33.5 AFY to represent an average year, over the 106.4-acre parcel area, the Hydrology Report (Attachment 6) determined there is sufficient recharge to meet the project’s irrigation and domestic use, even during drought years. The Report then evaluates the demand from other wells in the vicinity and concludes that this project will not adversely affect the neighboring wells that compete for the same underground water source as seen in Figure 3 below.

FIGURE 3 – ESTIMATED RADIUS OF INFLUENCE



Source: Northpoint Consulting, April 2024

To plan and prepare for drought conditions, the project will follow recommendations for monitoring, planning, and preparedness including water metering, and reporting, during times of drought emergencies or water scarcity as seen within the project's Drought Management Plan (Attachment 6)

According to the Wellness Ranch 3 Energy Report contained within the Property Management Plan (Attachment 4), the total energy demand of a cannabis operation depends on the type of cultivation, location of the project, and the types of equipment required. Outdoor cultivation involves minimal equipment and has relatively low energy demands, while indoor cultivation involves more equipment that tends to have higher energy demands. Energy used in indoor grow operations include high-intensity lighting. The applicant uses and will continue to use on-grid power supplemented with solar photovoltaic facilities.

The site presently has a 200-amp service serving the on-site dwelling. The proposed Wellness Ranch indoor cultivation facilities will involve two barns. The indoor cultivation facilities will use a combination of power supplied by PG&E and on site solar-powered electrical systems. The proposed 2,500 sf barn-style building will likely require one additional 200-amp service that would use on-grid power. An alternative energy source such as a small solar-powered electrical system will be installed to power low voltage items such as security cameras, and water pumps for drawing groundwater and mixing liquid fertilizers into the irrigation systems at the outdoor cultivation gardens.

Prior to commencing construction, building permits for the structures will be obtained and electrical load calculations will be reviewed, as outlined in the Building Safety Division's Agency Comments (Attachment 8). Subsequently, electrical upgrade applications will be submitted to ensure compliance with California Building Code requirements.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Change in Project Scope

A Major Use Permit application PL-25-59 (UP 23-08) for the purpose of expanding the cannabis cultivation area/facilities and combining the existing, approved sites under one Major Use Permit was submitted in October of 2023 (application materials updated in April and October of 2024 and March of 2025). Agency comments provided early in the planning process from Lakeport Fire Protection District required a revision to the project's Site Plans (Attachment 1) and Property Management Plan (Attachment 4) for implementation of Public Resource Code (PRC) 4290 Road Standards including adding a turnaround at the project site. A draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared and circulated for public comment from January 21, 2025, through February 19, 2025.

During the circulation period, staff was informed by the applicant that they had met with concerned neighbors/community members and were considering reducing the scope of the project. The applicant submitted documentation for the modified project scope including a reduction of the proposed outdoor canopy by an acre and increase the indoor canopy from 2,400 square feet (sf) to 8,820 sf. A subsequent draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (Attachment 4) was prepared and circulated for public review from July 23, 2025, through August 25, 2025. Public Comment is included in Attachment 10.

Canopy Tiering

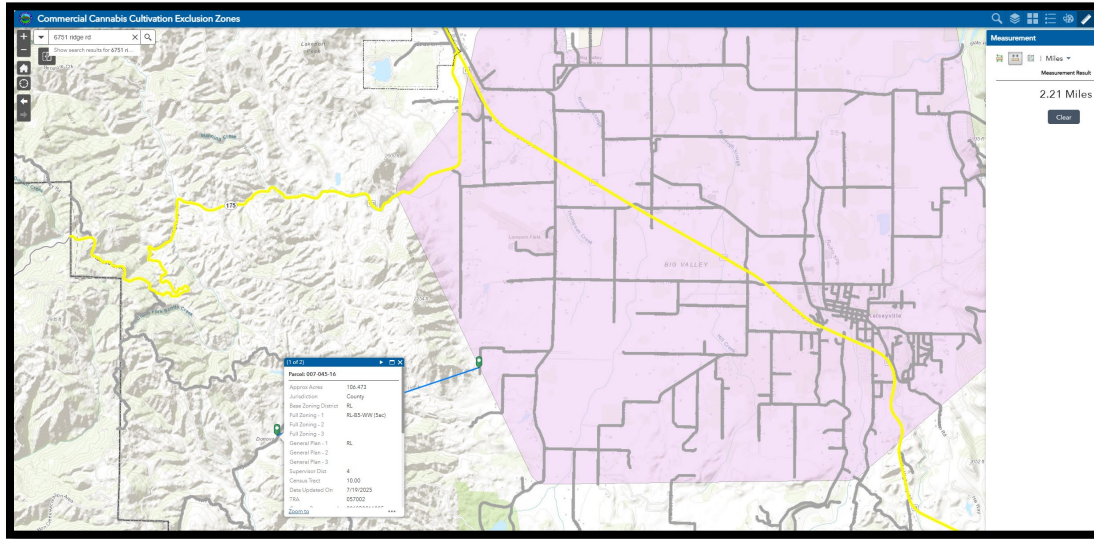
Proposed Stage I facilities involve the construction of a new 2,500 square foot barn featuring two levels of vertical growing racks, providing a total indoor cannabis canopy area of 4,500 square feet. The canopy area for each level is included in the overall calculation of the total indoor cannabis cultivation space within the facility.

Farmland of Local Importance

State of California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program(FMMP) identifies soils qualifying for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. According to the FMMP, the project location was designated as Farmland of Local Importance.

Land of importance to local agricultural economy is determined by the Board of Supervisors. The areas in which the Board determined were Farmland of Local Importance were evaluated as the Farmland Protection Zone, also listed as a commercial cannabis exclusion zone (for outdoor cultivation). In these designated areas, commercial cannabis can only be grown indoors or in permanent greenhouse structures equipped with odor filtration systems. While this site is listed as local importance on the State of California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, it has not been designated as Farmland of Local Importance within Farmland Protection Zone (FPZ) by the County of Lake Board of Supervisors. The closest boundary to the FPZ is 2.31 miles from the project parcel's closest lot line.

FIGURE 4 – Closest Farmland Protection Zone Boundary



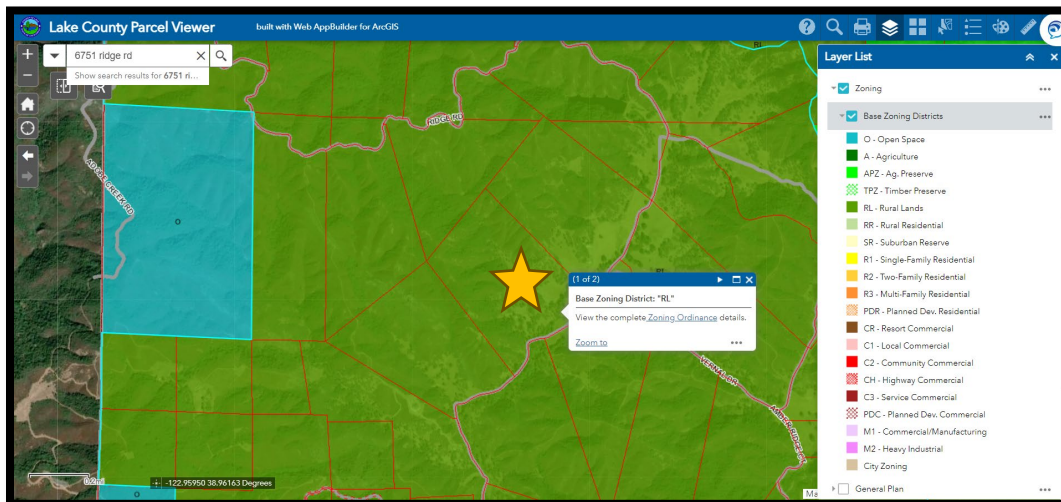
Source: Lake County GIS portal

Project Setting

Surrounding Zoning and Uses

- North: Rural Lands “RL”, residential use
- East: Rural Lands “RL”, residential uses and vacant land
- South: Rural Lands “RL”, vacant land
- West: Rural Lands “RL”, vacant land

FIGURE 5 – ZONING MAP



Source: Lake County GIS Mapping, 2023

Project Analysis

General Plan Conformity

The General Plan designation for the subject site is Rural Land. In reference to the Lake County General Plan (2008), Chapter 3 – Land Use, rural lands provide for rural development in areas that are primarily in their natural state, although some agricultural production, especially vineyards, can occur on these lands. This category is appropriate for areas that are remote or characterized by steep topography, fire hazards, and limited access. The following policies from the General Plan can be applied to the proposed project:

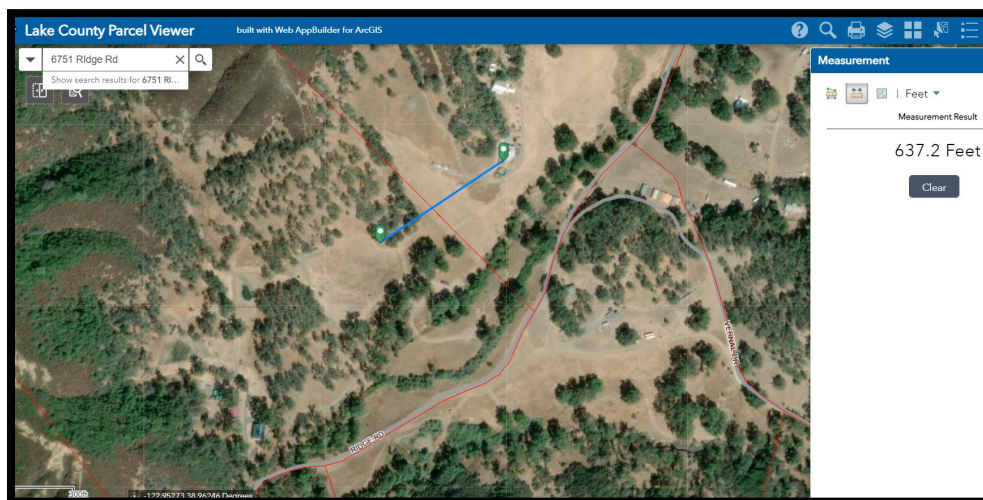
Chapter 3 Land Use

Goal LU-1: Encourage the overall economic and social growth of the County while maintaining its quality-of-life standards.

- **Policy LU-1.3: Prevent Incompatible Uses.** The County shall prevent the intrusion of new incompatible land uses into existing community areas.

Pursuant to Article 27, Sec. 21-27.10, Sec. 27.11 Table B of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance, the cultivation of cannabis is an allowable use within the “RL” Rural Lands upon securing a Minor/Major Use Permit. The County has previously issued two Minor Use Permits (MUP 19-15 and MUP 22-11) for cannabis cultivation operations. This application represents an amendment to use permit for Wellness Ranch for an expansion of cannabis canopy with facilities, and combination of the two previously issued permits. The proposed project would not be an intrusion of a new incompatible land use within the existing zoning and general plan designation of this area; as the project proposal is an allowable use. The project Parcel is surrounded by large parcels. The closest offsite residence is situated more than 600 feet from the nearest point of the proposed canopy area. The closest Community Growth Boundary is approximately 5.4 miles East of the project parcel.

FIGURE 6 –OUTDOOR CANOPY PROXIMITY TO CLOSEST OFFSITE DWELLING



Source: Lake County GIS portal

Goal LU-6: *“To maintain a healthy and diverse local economy that meets the present and future employment, shopping, recreational, and service needs of Lake County residents”.*

- Policy LU 6.1: *“The County shall actively promote the development of a diversified economic base by continuing to promote agriculture, recreation services and commerce and by expanding its efforts to encourage industrial and non-industrial corporate developments, and the developments of geothermal resources”.*

The amendment application for the expansion of the commercial cannabis operation, once approved, would expand upon its existing diversified agricultural and commerce uses; as guided by this policy.

Chapter 7 – Health and Safety

Goal HS-1: To ensure the County is protected from injury and damage resulting from natural catastrophes, man-made events, and hazardous conditions.

- Policy HS-1.3: Building and Fire Codes: The County shall ensure all buildings for human habitation are designed in compliance with the Uniform Building Code and other requirements based on risk (e.g., seismic hazards, flooding), type of occupancy, and location (e.g., floodplain, fault).

The applicant proposes to implement Public Resource Code 4290, 4291 emergency road standards for commercial operations to allow adequate access for wildfire suppression vehicles and EMT access. Furthermore, the project will require one of the 5,000-gallon water tanks to be available for fire suppression and made of steel, fiberglass, or concrete.

Goal HS-5: To protect residents, visitors, and property from hazardous materials through their safe use, transport, and disposal.

- Policy HS-5.6 Contamination Prevention: The County shall review new development proposals to ensure that soils, surface water and groundwater are protected from contamination.

The applicant will also maintain a hazardous material storage area with the use of secondary containment as required for all commercial cannabis activities. The proposed project also meets the required 100-foot setback from any spring, top of bank of any creek or seasonal stream (Class II watercourse), edge of lake, delineated wetland or vernal pool, the project also meets the State required 50-foot setback of Class III ephemeral watercourses.

Goal HS-7: To minimize the possibility of the loss of life, injury, or damage to property as a result of urban and wildland fire hazards.

- Policy HS-7.6 Development Guidelines: Developers and/or subsequent owners must assume responsibility for ongoing fire prevention maintenance activities for the project, including: abatement of fuel buildup, fire break maintenance, access provision, and provision of adequate water supply to meet fire flow.

A steel, fiberglass, or concrete 5,000 gallon water tank is conditioned to serve the site as water storage dedicated to fire suppression. Water tank(s) dedicated to fire suppression are required to be equipped with a Fire District utility connection. The security gate is proposed to be equipped with a Knox box for emergency access/entry by first responders. The driveways have a road base/gravel surface and turnouts in compliance with Public Resource Code (PRC) 4290/4291 regulations. 100- feet of defensible space of fire fuels from commercial structures is required.

Chapter 8 -- Noise

Goal N-1: To protect County residents from the harmful exposure of excessive noise and prevent incompatible land uses from encroaching upon existing and planned land uses.

- Policy N-1.4 Site Planning to Reduce Noise Impacts: The County should encourage proper site planning, architectural layout, and use of building materials as methods of noise attenuation. The following techniques should be considered to reduce noise impacts: Increase the distance between noise source and receiver through the use of building setbacks and/or dedication of noise easement.

The project is situated in a remote location with adequate setbacks from sensitive receptors so as not to create a nuisance for the community. This project will have some noise related to site preparation construction. Hours of construction are limited through standards described in the Noise section of the revised Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration/Initial Study (Attachment 5) and Draft Conditions of Approval (Attachment 2). Although the property size and location will help to reduce any noise detectable on the property line, the mitigation measures will be implemented to further limit the potential sources of noise.

Chapter 11-- Water Resources

Goal WR-1: Provide for the current and long-range water needs of the County and for the protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater resources.

- Policy WR-1.2: Sustainable Groundwater Withdrawal. The County shall manage groundwater resources within its jurisdiction through ordinances, project approvals, and agreements to ensure an adequate, safe, sustainable, and economically viable groundwater supply for existing and future use within the County, to maintain and enhance the natural environment, protect existing groundwater users, the overall economy of the County, and groundwater and surface water quality and quantity in a manner consistent with existing law and with a doctrine of safe yield within the groundwater basins of the County.

Records of water use (provided by the applicant) were recorded during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 cultivation seasons. These records were used to estimate the water demand for the proposed cultivation activities. Actual demand at Wellness Ranch, averaging over the three years of record, averages to 0.072 gpd/ sf or 3,137 gpd per acre of canopy. The total revised projected annual demand, including residential demand, is approximately 1,498,572 gallons or 4.6 acre-feet annually. Using a recharge value of 7.4 AFY to represent a drought year and 33.5 AFY to represent an average year, over the 106.4-acre

parcel area, the Hydrological Report (Attachment 6) determined there is sufficient recharge to meet the project's irrigation and domestic use, even during drought years.

To plan and prepare for drought conditions, the project will follow recommendations for monitoring, planning, and preparedness including water metering, and reporting, during times of drought emergencies or water scarcity as seen within the project's Drought Management Plan (Attachment 6).

Kelseyville Area Plan Conformity

The subject site is within the Kelseyville Planning Area boundary. The Plan contains the following policies applicable to the project:

- 3.2c: Development should be focused in areas of low to moderate erosion potential where feasible.
- 3.3b: New development should be designed to conserve water usage through the use of drought resistant vegetation, water flow restrictors and other conservation measures.
- 3.5f: The County should provide assistance to the local agricultural community in identifying ways to increase supplies of and implement conservation techniques for quality irrigation water in the Kelseyville Planning Area.
- 3.9a: Archaeological studies shall be required in accordance with state law whenever new development could potentially impact unique or significant cultural resources.

The proposed project is consistent with the policies of the Kelseyville Area Plan, including the policies cited above. The applicant has provided a Hydrology Report and Drought Management Plan (Attachment 6) and is required to adhere to the State Water Resources Control Board Cannabis Cultivation Policy, which requires all runoff be retained on-site, mitigating off-site downstream drainage impacts.

A Cultural Resources Assessment with intensive pedestrian surveys of the project site was prepared by Natural Investigations, Inc., and dated March 2020. No items of significance were identified under CEQA. Based on the findings of the assessment, there is no indication that the project will impact any historical resources as defined under CEQA Section 15064.5, unique archaeological resources as defined under CEQA Section 21083.2(g), or tribal cultural resources as defined under Public Resources Code Section 21074. However, mitigation measures are proposed in the event of an unanticipated discovery.

Zoning Ordinance Conformity

Article 7 – Rural Lands (RL): In reference to Article 7 of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance, this designation is to provide for resource related and residential uses of the County's undeveloped lands. Typical uses permitted by right include, but are not limited to, Agricultural uses, including crop and tree farming, livestock grazing, animal husbandry, agricultural and residential accessory uses and accessory structures, agricultural processing such as fruit dehydrators and packing sheds not exceeding a use area of two thousand (2,000) square feet.

Under Article 27, Sec. 21-27.10, Sec. 27.11 Table B of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance, commercial cannabis cultivation is a permitted use within the Rural Lands zoning district.

Article 27 – Uses Permitted: Pursuant to Article 27 of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance, outdoor commercial cannabis cultivation is permitted in the Rural Lands zoning district with the issuance of a Major Use Permit. Agricultural processing such as fruit dehydrators, packing plants, canneries, polishing and packaging plants exceeding a use area of ten thousand (10,000) square feet are permitted in the Rural Lands zoning district with the issuance of a Major Use Permit.

Section 27.11(at) of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance outlines several general requirements for cannabis cultivation. These include, but are not limited to, obtaining a valid State License, completing necessary background checks, securing property owner approval, and adhering to specified hours of operation and delivery protocols. This application complies with the Development Standards, General Requirements, and Restrictions outlined in Article 27, subsection (at) of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance, as well as the Conditions of Approval (Attachment 2) associated with the project, ensuring all relevant zoning and agency requirements are met.

Article 33 Waterway Combining District

To preserve, protect and restore significant riparian systems, streams and their riparian, aquatic and woodland habitats; protect water quality; control erosion, sedimentation and runoff; and protect the public health and safety by minimizing dangers due to floods and earth slides.

The project was designed with avoidance of water features on site. The Biological Assessments concluded that there was potential to impact some nearby smaller ephemeral stream beds, and that Best Management Practices would reduce the risk to these seasonal channels significantly. The 2023 Biological Report recommended a minimum 50' setback to these seasonal water channels, however Article 27.13(at) of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance requires a 100' setback to top-of-bank of any water course, seasonal or otherwise exceeding the recommended setback by the biologist.

Agency Comments

Agency Review was sent on November 30, 2023, and June 7, 2024. The following agencies submitted comments (Attachment 8) on this project:

- Lake County Assessor
- Lake County Building Department
- Lake County Environmental Health
- Lakeport Fire Protection District
- CDD Resource Planning
- North West Information Center (Sonoma State University)
- PG&E
- Lake County Special Districts
- Lake County Surveyor
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Of the agency comments submitted in response to the November 30, 2023, and June 7, 2024, Request for Review, the following comments are of note:

- Building Safety Division (PRC 4290, 4291 compliance, accessibility, means of egress)
- Environmental Health (new septic may be required)
- Lake County Fire Protection District (turnaround required)

Tribal Comments

Notification of the project and offering consultation under AB-52 was sent to Big Valley Rancheria, Cortina Rancheria, Elem Colony, Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, Koi Nation, Mishewal-Wappo, Middletown Rancheria, Redwood Valley Rancheria, Robinson Rancheria, Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake Tribe, and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation on December 1, 2023, and June 7, 2024, by the County of Lake. Tribal Comments were received from Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake Tribe and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. Both Tribes deferred to Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians (Attachment 9). Tribal consultation was not requested.

Environmental Review

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires agencies to evaluate the environmental implications of land use actions. A subsequent Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared and circulated for public review from July 23, 2025, through August 25, 2025. Public Comment is Attachment 10 to the staff report. The Initial Study found that the project could cause potentially significant impacts to the following:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology/Soils
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Noise
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities
- Wildfire

With implementation of the following mitigation measures, all impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level.

Aesthetics Impacts relating to Aesthetics have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure AES-1 through AES-3:

AES-1: All outdoor lighting shall be directed downward onto the project site and not onto adjacent properties. All lighting equipment shall comply with the recommendations of www.darksky.org.

AES-2: All indoor lighting shall be fully contained within structures or otherwise shielded to fully contain any light or glare.

AES-3: Security lighting shall be motion activated and all outdoor lighting shall be shielded and downcast or otherwise positioned in a manner that will not shine light or allow light glare to exceed the boundaries of the lot of record upon which they are placed.

Air Quality Impacts relating to (AQ) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure AQ-1 through AQ-7:

AQ-1: Prior to obtaining the necessary permits and/or approvals for any phase, applicant shall contact the Lake County Air Quality Management District (LCAQMD) and obtain an Authority to Construct (A/C) permit for all operations and for any diesel-powered equipment and/or other equipment with potential for air emissions.

AQ-2: All mobile diesel equipment used must be in compliance with state registration requirements. Portable and stationary diesel-powered equipment must meet all federal, state, and local requirements, including the requirements of the State Air Toxic Control Measures for compression ignition engines. Additionally, all engines must notify LCAQMD prior to beginning construction activities and prior to any diesel engine use.

AQ-3: The applicant shall maintain records of all hazardous or toxic materials used, including a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for all volatile organic compounds utilized, including cleaning materials. Said information shall be made available upon request and/or the ability to provide the LCAQMD such information in order to complete an updated Air Toxic emission Inventory.

AQ-4: All vegetation removed during site development shall be chipped and spread for ground cover and/or erosion control. The burning of vegetation, construction debris, including waste material is prohibited.

AQ-5: The applicant shall have the primary access and parking areas surfaced with chip seal, asphalt, or an equivalent all weather surfacing to reduce fugitive dust generation. The use of white rock as a road base or surface material for travel routes and/or parking areas is prohibited.

AQ-6: All areas subject to infrequent use of driveways, overflow parking, etc., shall be surfaced with gravel, chip seal, asphalt, or an equivalent all weather surfacing. Applicant shall regularly use and/or maintain graveled area to reduce fugitive dust generations.

AQ-7: All buildings containing mature cannabis plants shall be equipped with carbon or similar air filtration systems prior to cultivation.

Biological Resources Impacts relating to (BIO) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure BIO-1, and GEO-1 through GEO-4:

BIO-1: Nesting Bird Survey. If grading or vegetation clearing is performed in the oak woodland habitat, riparian habitat or chaparral habitat, a pre-construction special-status species survey shall be performed by a qualified biologist. Trees and vegetation shall be inspected for the presence of active bird nests before tree felling or ground clearing. If active nests are present in the project area during construction of the project, CDFW shall be consulted to develop measures to avoid “take” of active nests prior to the initiation of any construction activities. Avoidance measures may include establishment of a buffer zone using construction fencing or the postponement of vegetation removal until after the nesting season (usually February 15 through September 1), or until after a qualified biologist has determined the young have fledged and are independent of the nest site.

Cultural Resources Impacts relating to (CUL) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure CUL-1 and CUL-2:

CUL-1: All employees shall be trained in recognizing potentially significant archaeological, paleontological, or cultural materials artifacts that may be discovered during ground disturbance. Prior to ground disturbing activities, the Permittee shall submit a Cultural Resources Plan, identifying methods of sensitivity training for site workers, procedures in the event of an accidental discovery, and documentation and reporting procedures. Prior to ground disturbing activities, the Permittee shall submit verification that all site workers have reviewed the Cultural Resources Plan and received sensitivity training.

Should any archaeological, paleontological, or cultural materials be discovered during site development, all activity shall be halted in the vicinity of within 100 feet of the find(s). , the Permittee shall notify the culturally affiliated Tribe(s), and a professional archaeologist certified by the Registry of Professional Archeologists (RPA) shall be notified and qualified archaeologist shall to evaluate the find(s) and recommend mitigation procedures, if necessary. The findings and mitigation measures shall be reviewed and subject to the approval of the Lake County Community Development Director prior to commencing work.

CUL-2: Should any human remains be encountered, the Permittee shall halt all work within 100 feet, notify the Sheriff's Department, the culturally affiliated Tribe(s), and a qualified archaeologist for proper internment and Tribal rituals per Public Resources Code Section 5097.98 and Health and Safety Code 7050.5.

Geology and Soils Impacts relating to (GEO) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure GEO-1 through GEO-5:

GEO-1: All grading, including excavation, filling, vegetation clearing, or other disturbance of the soil related activities, shall be in accordance with the County's Grading Ordinance (Chapter 30 of the Lake County Municipal Code). Grading shall not occur between October 15 and April 15 unless authorized by the Community Development Department Director, as specified in the Grading Ordinance.

GEO-2: The permit holder shall monitor the site during the rainy season (October 15 – May 15), including post-installation, application of BMPs, erosion control maintenance, and other improvements as needed.

GEO-3: A Grading Permit shall be required as part of this project. The project design shall incorporate Best Management Practices (BMPs) to the maximum extent practicable to prevent or reduce the discharge of all construction or post-construction pollutants into the County storm drainage system. BMPs typically include scheduling of activities, erosion and sediment control, operation and maintenance procedures, and other measures in accordance with Chapters 29 and 30 of the Lake County Code.

GEO- 4: All work shall incorporate erosion control measures consistent with the State Water Resources Control Board Order No. WQ 2019-001-DWQ.

GEO-5: If paleontological resources are encountered during implementation of the project, ground disturbing activities will be temporarily redirected from the vicinity of the find. A qualified paleontologist shall be retained by the developer to make an evaluation of the find. If a significant paleontological resource(s) is discovered on the property, the qualified paleontologist / archaeologist shall develop a plan of mitigation which shall include salvage excavation and removal of the find, removal of sediment from around the specimen (in the laboratory), research to identify

and categorize the find, curation in the find a local qualified repository, and preparation of a report summarizing the find.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials Impacts relating to (HAZ) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 through HAZ 7:

HAZ-1: All equipment shall be maintained and operated to minimize spillage or leakage of hazardous materials. All equipment shall be refueled in locations more than 100 feet from surface water bodies. Servicing of equipment shall occur on an impermeable surface. In the event of a spill or leak, the contaminated soil shall be stored, transported, and disposed of consistent with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

HAZ-2: With the storage of hazardous materials equal to or greater than 55 gallons of a liquid, 500 pounds of a solid, or 200 cubic feet of compressed gas, a Hazardous Materials Inventory Disclosure Statement and Business Plan shall be submitted and maintained in compliance with requirements of Lake County Environmental Health Division. Industrial waste shall not be disposed of on site without review or permit from Lake County Environmental Health Division or the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. The permit holder shall comply with petroleum fuel storage tank regulations if fuel is to be stored on site.

HAZ-3: Prior to operation, the applicant shall schedule an inspection with the Lake County Code Enforcement Division within the Community Development Department to verify adherence to all requirements of Chapter 13 of the Lake County Code, including but not limited to adherence with the Hazardous Vegetation requirements.

HAZ-4: Prior to operation, all employees shall have access to restrooms and hand-wash stations. The restrooms and hand wash stations shall meet all accessibility requirements.

HAZ-5: The proper storage of equipment, removal of litter and waste, and cutting of weeds or grass shall not constitute an attractant, breeding place, or harborage for pests.

HAZ-6: All food scraps, wrappers, food containers, cans, bottles, and other trash from the project area should be deposited in trash containers with an adequate lid or cover to contain trash. All food waste should be placed in a securely covered bin and removed from the site weekly to avoid attracting animals.

HAZ-7: The applicant shall maintain records of all hazardous or toxic materials used, including a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for all volatile organic compounds utilized, including cleaning materials. Said information shall be made available upon request and/or the ability to provide the Lake County Air Quality Management District with such information to complete an updated Air Toxic Emission Inventory.

Hydrology and Water Quality Impacts relating to (HYD) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure GEO-1 through GEO-4, HYD-1 and HYD-2:

HYD-1: A Water Monitoring Program, including seasonal static water level monitoring and water level monitoring during extraction, shall be followed as described in the Hydrology Report prepared by NorthPoint Consulting Group, Inc. in April of 2023. The applicant shall maintain a record of all data collected and shall provide a report of the data collected to the County annually and/or upon made upon request.

HYD-2: The applicant shall adhere to the measures described in the Drought Management Plan during periods of a declared drought emergency.

Noise Impacts relating to (NOI) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure NOI-1 and NOI-2:

NOI-1: All construction activities including engine warm-up shall be limited Monday through Friday, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. to minimize noise impacts on nearby residents. Back-up beepers shall be adjusted to the lowest allowable levels. This mitigation does not apply to night work.

NOI-2: Maximum non-construction related sounds levels shall not exceed levels of 55 dBA between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and 45 dBA between the hours of 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. within residential areas as specified within Zoning Ordinance Section 21-41.11 (Table 11.1) at the property lines.

Tribal Cultural Resources Impacts relating to (TCR) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure CUL-1, CUL-2, TCR -1 and TCR-2:

TCR-1: All on-site personnel of the project shall receive Tribal Cultural Resource Sensitivity Training prior to initiation of ground disturbance activities on the project. The training must be according to the standards of the NAHC or the culturally affiliated Tribe(s). Training shall address the potential for exposing subsurface resources and procedures if a potential resource is identified. The training shall also provide a process for notification of discoveries to culturally affiliated Tribes, protection, treatment, care and handling of tribal cultural resources discovered or disturbed during ground disturbance activities of the Project. Confirmation of training shall be sent to the Community Development Department prior to commencement of cultivation activities.

TCR-2: If previously unidentified Tribal Cultural Resources are encountered during the project altering the materials and their stratigraphic context shall be avoided, and work shall halt immediately. Project personnel shall not collect, move, or disturb cultural resources. A representative from a locally affiliated Tribe(s) shall be contacted to evaluate the resource and prepare a Tribal Cultural Resources plan to allow for identification and further evaluation in determining the Tribal Cultural Resource significance and appropriate treatment or disposition.

Utilities Impacts relating to (UTL) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measure HYD-1 through HYD-2:

Wildfire Impacts relating to (WDF) have been reduced to Less than Significant with mitigation incorporated as described by Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-4, and WDF-1 through WDF-3:

WDF-1: Prior to cultivation, the applicant shall schedule a site visit with the Building Official or designee to verify that the roads, gates, and sites are PRC 4290 compliant.

WDF-2: The applicant shall maintain 100' of defensible space around all buildings associated with the cannabis project for the life of the project. Tree removal is not required; however, trees shall be limbed up to a height of 8' to prevent ladder combustion in the event of a wildfire.

WDF-3: Any vegetation removal or manipulation shall take place in the early morning hours before relative humidity drops below 30 percent.

Project Approvals

Within a one-mile radius of the proposed project, there are no pending projects and four approved projects, with two permits approved at this location. Within a three-mile radius, there are no pending projects and six approved projects, including two permits that have been approved at this site.

MAJOR USE PERMIT FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL

The Review Authority shall only approve or conditionally approve a Major Use Permit (LCZO Section 51.4, Major Use Permits) if all of the following findings are made:

1. *That the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the use applied for will not under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use or be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the County.*

The proposed use of commercial cannabis cultivation operation is a permitted use in the “RL” Rural Lands zoning upon issuance of a Major Use Permit pursuant to Article 27, Sec. 21-27, Sec. 27.11 Table B of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance. The project scope complies with the minimum regulatory requirements set by the local ordinances to address the health, safety, morals, comforts, and general welfare of those working or residing near the proposed use. The project meets or exceeds all required setbacks for this type of use, including distance to nearby sensitive receptors. Prior to the applicant constructing any type of structure(s), the applicant shall obtain the necessary permits and licenses from the appropriate federal, state, and/or local government agencies. Additionally, the Community Development Department would conduct annual compliance monitoring inspections during the cultivation season to ensure compliance with the County’s ordinances, the approved Property Management Plan, mitigation measures, and Conditions of Approval.

2. *That the site for the project is adequate in size, shape, location, and physical characteristics to accommodate the type of use and level of development proposed.*

The location and size of the project site comply with the local ordinance requirements for use and setbacks. The site is large enough to meet the standards and criteria for commercial cannabis licenses applied for as found in Article 27.11. The Lake County Zoning Ordinance allows Types 1, 2, 3, and 4 cultivation operations within “RL” Rural Lands zoning districts, and the subject site is 106.47 acres in size, large enough to enable the canopy area, as proposed.

3. *That the streets, highways and pedestrian facilities are reasonably adequate to safely accommodate the specific proposed use.*

Access to the project site is available via Ridge Road, an unmaintained county road. Ridge Road runs directly adjacent to the project parcel and is designated as the emergency evacuation route. Entry to the property is facilitated through two existing driveways along Ridge Road, each approximately 13 to 15 feet wide. One driveway provides access to the residence, indoor cultivation facilities, and Cultivation Site 1, while the second driveway serves Cultivation Site 2. The roadway consists of gravel and its width may vary along its length.

The road is capable of supporting a 75,000-pound emergency vehicle and interior driveway upgrades are required as a part of the project. A steel, fiberglass, or concrete 5,000 gallon water tank to serve the site is required as a condition of approval. The security gate is proposed to be equipped with a Knox box for emergency access/entry by first responders. The driveways have a road base/gravel surface and turnouts in compliance with Public Resource Code (PRC) 4290/4291 regulations.

4. *That there are adequate public or private services, including but not limited to fire protection, water supply, sewage disposal, and police protection to serve the project.*

Water for the proposed cultivation operation would primarily come from four existing onsite groundwater wells. Ground water will be pumped into twelve 5,000-gallon water tanks above Cultivation site 2, one 5,000-gallon water tank at the house and four 2,500-gallon water tanks at Cultivation site 1. Drip irrigation systems will be used to water plants. A fertilizer mixing tank will be set up at each garden site to deliver liquid fertilizer such as compost tea to the plants. One steel/fiberglass or concrete water storage tank is dedicated to fire suppression. All water tanks for fire suppression shall have connectors that are configured for use by Fire Protection Districts. Additionally, the project parcel has adequate emergency service protection through the Lake County Sheriff's Office, and the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, (CAL FIRE). The applicant is required to adhere to all applicable local, state, and federal regulations, mitigation measures, and conditions of approval. This application was routed to all the affected public and private service providers (including Public Works, Special Districts, Environmental Health, PG&E), and there are adequate public utilities and services available to the site.

5. *That the project is in conformance with the applicable provisions and policies of this Code, the General Plan and any approved zoning or land use plan.*

The cultivation of commercial cannabis is a permitted use within the Rural Lands zoning district upon securing a Major Use Permit according to Article 27.13 of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, although the Lake County General Plan does not have any provisions specifically for commercial cannabis, both the General Plan and the Kelseyville Area Plan have provisions for water resources and agricultural resources land use compatibility. The subject property complies with the minimum setbacks and development standards. The project is in conformance with the provisions of the Kelseyville Area Plan Policy 3.4.1: Promote a mixed land use pattern with adequate acreage that provides for the orderly and efficient development of the community areas, thereby reducing development pressure on prime agricultural areas.

6. *That no violation of Chapters 5, 17, 21, 23 or 26 of the Lake County Code currently exists on the property, unless the purpose of the permit is to correct the violation, or the permit relates to a portion of the property which is sufficiently separate and apart from the portion of the property in violation so as not to be affected by the violation from a public health, safety or general welfare basis.*

There are no violations of Chapters 5, 17, 21, 23, or 26 of the Lake County Code on this property.

7. *The proposed use complies with all development standards described in Chapter 21, Article 27, Section 1.i.*

This application meets the following Development Standards, General Requirements and Restrictions as specified within Article 27.11(at) of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance.

8. *The applicant is qualified to make the application described in Chapter 21, Article 27, Section 1.ii.(g).*

The applicant has passed 'live scan' background check and is qualified to apply for this permit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the Planning Commission take the following actions:

- A. Adopt Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS 23-19) for Major Use Permit PL-25-59 (UP 23-08) with the following findings:
1. Potential environmental impacts related to Aesthetics can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures AES-1 through AES-3.
 2. Potential environmental impacts related to Air Quality can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures AQ-1 through AQ-7.
 3. Potential environmental impacts related to Biological Resources can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures BIO-1.
 4. Potential environmental impacts related to Cultural Resources can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures CUL-1 and CUL-2.
 5. Potential environmental impacts related to Geology and Soils can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures GEO-1 through GEO-5.
 6. Potential environmental impacts related to Hazards and Hazardous Material can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures HAZ-1 through HAZ-7.
 7. Potential environmental impacts related to Hydrology and Water Quality can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures GEO-1 through GEO-4 and HYD-1 through HYD-2.
 8. Potential environmental impacts related to Noise can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures NOI-1 through NOI-2.
 9. Potential environmental impacts related to Tribal Cultural Resources can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures CUL-1 and CUL-2, TCR-1 and TCR-2.
 10. Potential environmental impacts related to Utilities can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures HYD-1 and HYD-2.

11. Potential environmental impacts related to Wildfire can be mitigated to less than significant levels with the inclusion of mitigation measures GEO-1 through GEO-4 and WDF-1 through WDF-4

B. Approve Major Use Permit PL-25-59 (UP 23-08) with the following findings:

1. That the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the use applied for will not under the circumstances, be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use or be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the County.
2. The site is adequate in size, shape, locations, and physical characteristics to accommodate the type of use and level of development proposed.
3. The streets, highways and pedestrian facilities are reasonably adequate to safely accommodate the proposed use.
4. There are adequate services to serve the project.
5. This project is consistent with the Lake County General Plan, Kelseyville Area Plan, and Lake County Zoning Ordinance.
6. No violation of Chapter 5, 17, 21, 23 or 26 of the Lake County Code currently exists on this property, with a condition of approval implemented.
7. The proposed use complies with all development standards described in Chapter 21, Article 27, Section 1.i.
8. The applicant is qualified to make the application described in Chapter 21, Article 27, Section 1.ii.(g).
9. The application complies with the qualifications for a permit described in Chapter 21, Article 27, Section 1.ii.(i).

Sample Motions:

Mitigated Negative Declaration

I move that the Planning Commission find that potential impacts associated with Major Use Permit PL-25-59 (UP 23-08) applied for by Wellness Ranch, LLC (Luis Martinez) for the property located at 6751 Ridge Road, Lakeport (APN 007-045-16) can be mitigated to 'less than significant' through the implementation of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS 23-19) , and that the Planning Commission adopt Initial Study (IS 23-19) with the findings listed in the staff report dated November 13, 2025.

Major Use Permit PL-25-59 (UP 23-08)

I move that the Planning Commission find that the Major Use Permit PL-25-59 (UP 23-09) applied for by Wellness Ranch, LLC (Luis Martinez) for the property located at 6751 Ridge Road, Lakeport (APN: 007-045-16) does meet the requirements of Section 51.4 and Article 27 of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance and that the Major Use Permit be granted based on the findings and subject to the conditions included in the staff report dated November 13, 2025

***NOTE:** The applicant or any interested person is reminded that the Zoning Ordinance provides for a seven (7) calendar day appeal period. If there is a disagreement with the Planning Commission, an appeal to the Board of Supervisors may be filed. The appropriate forms and applicable fee must be submitted prior to 5:00 p.m. on or before the seventh day following the Planning Commission's decision on this matter.*