

Santa Cruz Wildlife Crossing & Drainage Improvement Project

Santa Cruz County - Highway 1 - Post Mile R1.8/8.7 | Project 05-1M530 | Updated October 2025



Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to improve and restore several drainage systems that contain deteriorated elements, and to ensure long-term efficiency and serviceability of the roadway, which will reduce the potential hazard of embankment failure. The wildlife passage will provide safe crossing for the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (SCLTS) that will benefit the species by re-connecting two subpopulations currently divided by State Route 1.



Description

This project is a long lead drainage restoration project located on State Route 1 in Santa Cruz County. It proposes to improve and/or upgrade drainage systems which have deteriorated elements at 9 locations. A multi-use wildlife passageway is planned at PM R5.11 to restore habitat connectivity for a suite of native wildlife, including the endangered SCLTS.

The wildlife passage project is a collaborative effort between the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCDSCC), the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (LTSCC), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

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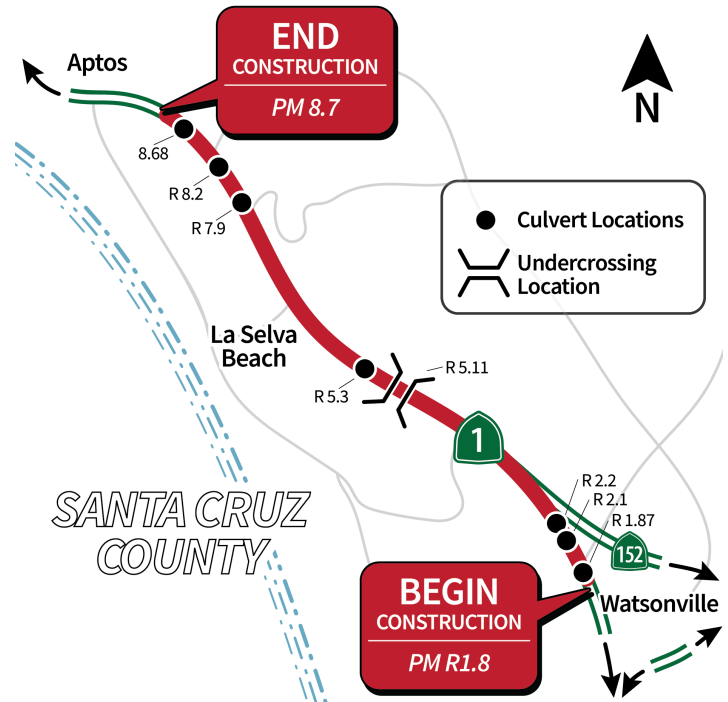
info-d5@dot.ca.gov



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Location

In Santa Cruz County from the junction of State Route 1/152 to the northbound onramp from Larkin Valley Rd.



Funding

Fund Source	SHOPP
Construction Capital Estimate	\$9,382,000
Right of Way Capital Estimate	\$235,000

Current Schedule

Approve Project Initiation Document	Complete
Approve Project Report & Environmental Document	Fall 2028
100% Design Completion	Summer 2031
Begin Construction	Winter 2031
End Construction	Winter 2033



Santa Cruz Wildlife Crossing & Drainage Improvement Project - Post Miles 5.11

Purpose

The purpose of the wildlife crossing is to provide safe passage to native habitat for the endangered Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum*) and other local wildlife such as mountain lions, black bears, and coyotes.



Mountain lion and Coyote (Images provided by J. Rich)

Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (SCLTS) populations are currently separated by barriers, such as State Route 1, leading to genetic isolation. The project will benefit wildlife by restoring safe movement across the landscape to suitable habitat.



Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (Image provided by RCDSCC)

Design Considerations

The wildlife crossing will provide natural light and air flow. These conditions will enhance function of the crossing for wildlife. It will also have a natural bottom and mimic natural weather conditions during salamander dispersal events.

The wildlife crossing will hold moisture but not be completely inundated. Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders move on land and may not use the crossing during dispersal if they encounter pooled water or high velocity flows in the crossing.

Construction activities will include replacement of an existing culvert with a larger structure suitable for a variety of species, replacement planting, and installation of directional fencing to guide animals to the crossing.

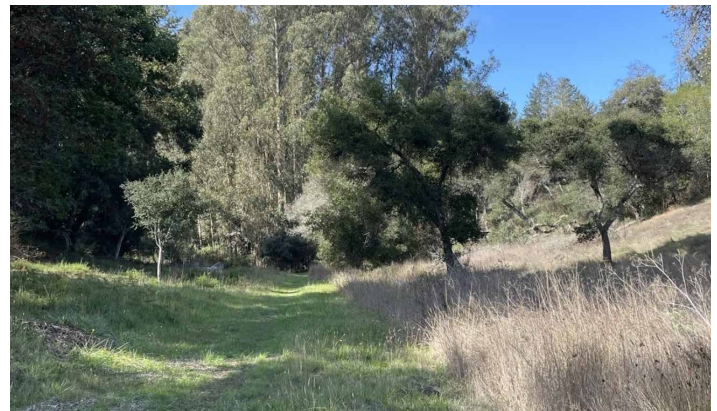


PM R 5.11 undercrossing location

District 5 & Wildlife Connectivity

Caltrans District 5 has experience developing and building projects on various highways in the District that enhance wildlife habitat connectivity for a variety of native species. These projects have been undertaken in cooperation and partnership with federal, state, and local agencies as well as universities and non-governmental organizations.

This wildlife passage will connect important habitat on either side of State Route 1 to support the long-term persistence of local wildlife populations including the endangered Santa Cruz long-toed salamander.



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