# Alamo Pintado Bridge Replacement

On State Route 246 in Santa Barbara County
05-SB-246-PM 30.173-30.435
Project ID Number 0519000148
State Clearinghouse Number 2025070679

## Initial Study
## with Mitigated Negative Declaration

**Volume 1 of 2**

Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

**November 2025**

Caltrans

# General Information About This Document

Document Prepared by: Enrique Huerta, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)

The Initial Study circulated to the public for 38 days between July 16, 2025, and August 22, 2025. Comments received during this period are included in Appendix C. Elsewhere, language has been added throughout the document to indicate where a change has been made since the circulation of the draft environmental document. Minor editorial changes and clarifications have not been so indicated.

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05-SB-246-PM 30.173-30.435
Project ID Number 0519000148
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Replace the Alamo Pintado Bridge (Bridge Number 51-0130), improve connectivity to the existing bike path, and upgrade existing outdated Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps on State Route 246 from post miles 30.173 to 30.435 in Santa Barbara County

# INITIAL STUDY
# with Mitigated Negative Declaration

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation
and
Cooperating Agencies:
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Marine Fisheries Service
Responsible Agencies:
California Transportation Commission
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

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Scott Smith
Environmental Office Chief, District 5
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

10/20/2025
Date

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# Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

**State Clearinghouse Number:** 2025070679

**District-County-Route-Post Mile:** 05-SB-246-PM 30.173-30.435

**EA/Project Number:** EA 05-1M420 and Project ID Number 0519000148

## Project Description

This project, located in Santa Barbara County on State Route 246 from post miles 30.173 to 30.435, proposes to replace the Alamo Pintado Bridge (Bridge Number 51 0130), which is rated scour critical. The scope of work includes installing straight abutment walls under the bridge, placing rock slope protection to protect the abutments, road embankment, and nearby existing infrastructure, and upgrading four existing outdated Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps at the Alamo Pintado Road intersection. The proposed bridge work includes building a 14-foot-wide Class 1 Bikeway (multiuse path) with a 2-foot-wide barrier separating the path and the travel way. A retaining wall is proposed on the northeast side of the bridge, connecting the new Class 1 Bikeway to the existing one and allowing continuous travel to the Alamo Pintado Road intersection.

## Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 5. Based on this study, it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The project will have no effect on agriculture and forestry resources, energy, land use and planning, mineral resources, paleontological resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, and wildfire.

The project will have less than significant effects on aesthetics, air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, noise, tribal cultural resources, and utilities and service systems.

With the following mitigation measures incorporated, the project will have less than significant effects on biological resources:

- Caltrans proposes to restore all temporarily impacted areas to pre-project conditions, functions, and values and compensate for unavoidable permanent and degradation impacts to jurisdictional aquatic features with replacement plantings, vegetating newly installed rock slope protection along the streambank, conducting invasive species control along the Alamo Pintado Creek corridor, and other potential means of mitigation. Caltrans will restore all areas temporarily impacted for access needs on-site at a 1-to-1 ratio. Additionally, for areas treated

with buried/backfilled rock slope protection (degradation impacts), Caltrans will restore vegetation over the buried/backfilled rock slope protection. Caltrans will also restore an additional 0.5 acre of riparian vegetation for each acre of vegetated backfilled rock slope protection, resulting in a 1.5-to-1 ratio of restoration for degraded areas. Caltrans would also restore or re-establish riparian vegetation at a ratio of 3-to-1 to offset each acre of permanently impacted streambed and streambank habitats.

- Trees scoped for removal within jurisdictional areas will also be mitigated. Trees with a diameter at standard height between 6 and 12 inches will be mitigated at a 3-to-1 ratio, trees with a diameter at standard height between 12 and 24 inches will be mitigated at a 5-to-1 ratio, and trees with a diameter at standard height greater than 24 inches will be mitigated at a 10-to-1 ratio.

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Environmental Office Chief, District 5
California Department of Transportation

10/20/2025

Date

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# Chapter 1 Proposed Project

## 1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes the Alamo Pintado Bridge Replacement Project on State Route 246 in Santa Barbara County.

For the proposed project, Caltrans is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Caltrans is also the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Caltrans has determined that the project qualifies for a Categorical Exclusion under NEPA and will complete that documentation before project approval.

## 1.2 Purpose and Need

[The following section has been changed since the release of the draft environmental document. Per a comment received from the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, the Purpose and Need statement was revised to reflect the community and regional desires that sparked the local contributions and partnership with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments and the City of Solvang.

Further, the term “improved” was removed regarding traffic flow. The project intends to address deficiencies of existing facilities and will not include any operational or capacity increasing improvements.

Lastly, minor grammatical edits have been made for clarity and conciseness.]

### 1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this project is to address structural stability issues associated with the existing Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge (Bridge Number 51-0130), maintain traffic flow on State Route 246, and enhance bicycle and pedestrian access and connectivity.

### 1.2.2 Need

The existing Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge is scour critical, and during high-flow events, may not have sufficient bearing capacity which could lead to bridge closure if not replaced. Cracking has been documented in the 1972 widening portion of the structure that is indicative of Alkali-Silica Reaction (ASR). Additionally, existing outdated curb ramps within the project limits do

not meet current Americans with Disabilities Act standards, and the bridge lacks complete street elements that support multimodal access.

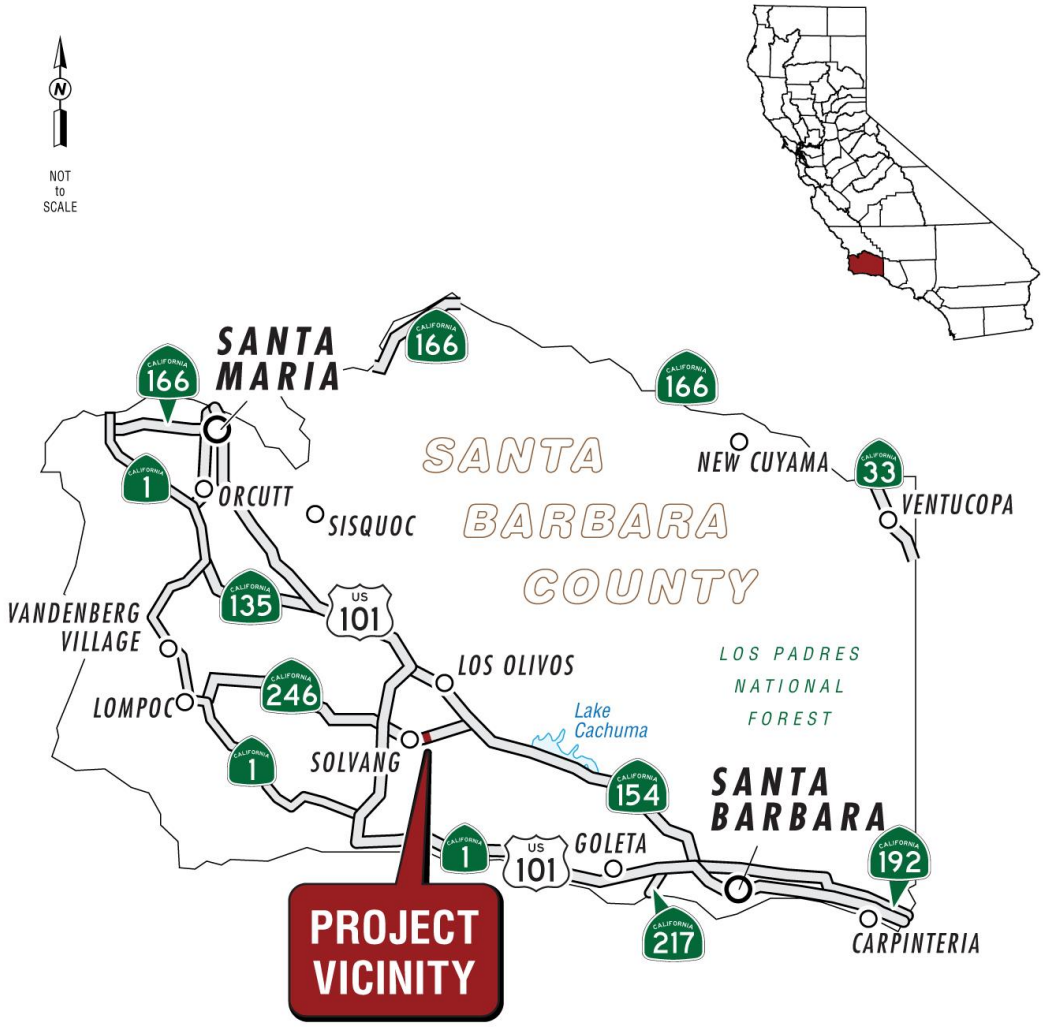
Extending bicycle and pedestrian facilities from the existing class I bikeway to Alamo Pintado Road intersection has been identified as a need by the City of Solvang, County of Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, with a shared focus on improving safety and mobility for all users.

## 1.3 Project Description

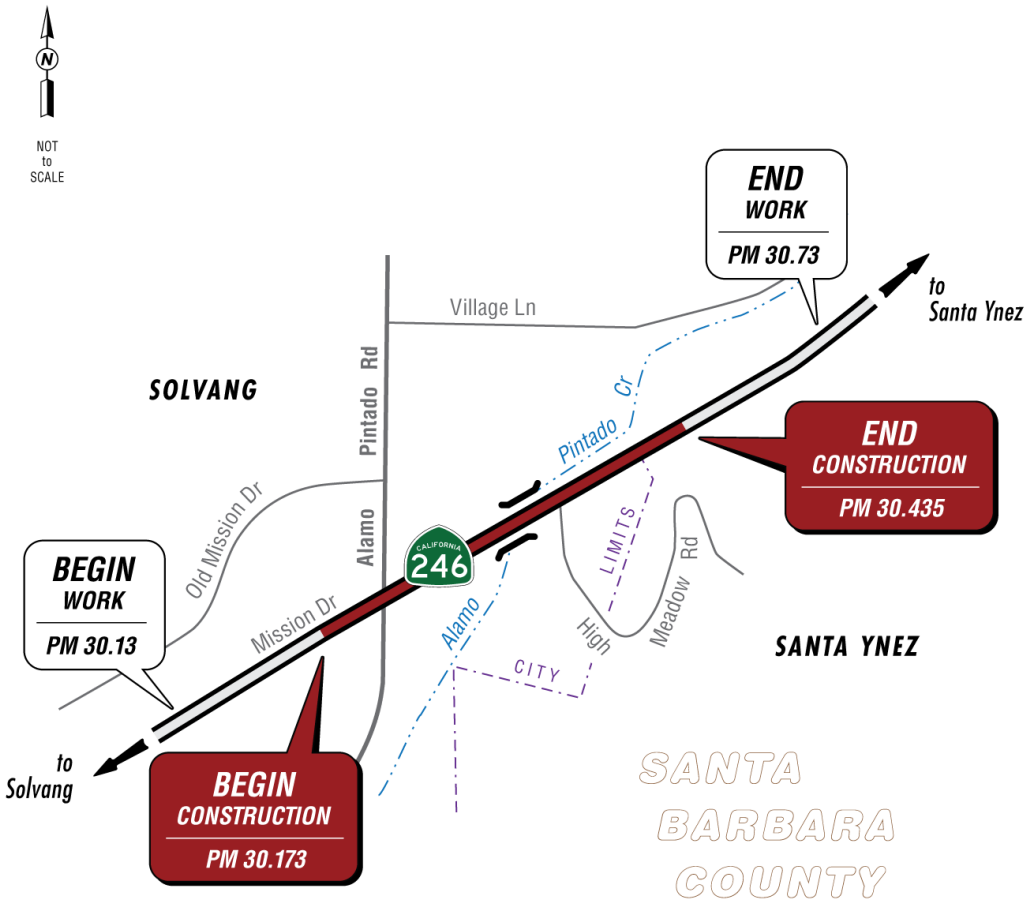
This project, located in Santa Barbara County on State Route 246 from post miles 30.173 to 30.435, proposes to replace the Alamo Pintado Bridge (Bridge Number 51-0130), which is rated scour critical. The scope of work includes installing straight abutment walls under the bridge, placing rock slope protection to protect the abutments, road embankment, and nearby existing infrastructure, and upgrading four existing outdated Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps at the Alamo Pintado Road intersection. The proposed bridge work includes building a 14-foot-wide Class 1 Bikeway (multiuse path) with a 2-foot-wide barrier separating the path and the travel way. A retaining wall is proposed on the northeast side of the bridge, connecting the new Class 1 Bikeway to the existing one and allowing continuous travel to the Alamo Pintado Road intersection.

Figure 1-1 shows the project vicinity map for the project, and Figure 1-2 shows the project location map for the project.

**Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map**



## Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



## 1.4 Project Alternatives

The project development team has analyzed two alternatives: the Build Alternative and the No-Build (No-Action) Alternative.

### 1.4.1 Build Alternatives

This project contains several standardized project measures that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project. These measures are listed later in this chapter under “Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives.”

See Figures 1-3 and 1-4 for the Build Alternative’s Bridge Profile and Typical Cross Section, respectively. See Figure 1-5 for the Build Alternative’s Area of Potential Impact.

The Build Alternative proposes the following asset improvements:

1. *Bridge Replacement*

The Alamo Pintado Bridge (Bridge Number 51-0130) at post mile 30.23 will be replaced with a 3-span concrete deck bridge. The new structure will be 120 feet 8 inches long and 59 feet wide with a 1-foot 3-inch structure depth and a 50-degree skew angle. The proposed bridge accommodates a 14-foot-wide Class 1 Bikeway with 2-foot-wide barriers (ST-75) between the path and the travel way. The bridge will have 2-foot outside railings (ST-75) along the south side of the bridge and 1-foot outside railings along the north side of the bridge, two 8-foot-wide shoulders, and two 12-foot-wide lanes.

The proximity of the bridge to the Alamo Pintado intersection is a constraint, and design options for raising the bridge are limited. The proposed bridge aims to replace the existing structure in-kind and maintain the current profile while incorporating a permeable ST-75 barrier to ensure that the 100-year flood event surface water elevation is achieved. The project includes straight abutment walls under the bridge, a retaining wall along State Route 246 east of the bridge, and rock slope protection to protect the road embankment and nearby existing infrastructure.

To connect the existing Class 1 Bikeway to the Alamo Pintado Road intersection, the new bridge will be widened to accommodate a new Class 1 Bikeway, alongside two 12-foot-wide travel lanes and two 8-foot-wide shoulders, along with modifications to meet the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s 100-year flood elevation requirements. These improvements will not only ensure safer biking conditions but also help facilitate better traffic flow.

Various aesthetic treatments will be included in the project design to meet the project's purpose and need, as well as the community goals, recommendations, and expectations outlined in the City of Solvang's Streetscape Plan. Locations, quantities, and types of aesthetic treatments will be coordinated with the city of Solvang, other local partners, and the community during community engagement and as part of maintenance agreement discussions.

2. *Americans with Disabilities Act Curb Ramps*

The four existing curb ramps at the State Route 246 and Alamo Pintado Road intersection will be replaced to meet the new Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramp standards. The northwest corner of the intersection will be modified to accommodate the Class 1 Bikeway (described below).

3. *Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure*

Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements include the construction of a new Class 1 shared-use path along the north side of the bridge, with the existing Class 1 Bikeway phasing east of the bridge to accommodate bicycle movements through the intersection of the Alamo Pintado Road at the terminus of the Class 1 path. New signs for bicyclists and pedestrians for the new 14-foot-wide Class 1 Bikeway will be added. Extension of the trail to the intersection will include a separation barrier between the shoulder and the Class 1 Bikeway. Two secondary driveways may be consolidated into one driveway located between the bridge and a gas station to improve operations along State Route 246.

Currently, two design variations for the shared-use path are being reviewed by the project development team. In both instances, the Class 1 shared-use path will be 14 feet wide from the existing path to the bridge. Each variation will accommodate the following on the westbound roadway: a left-turn lane, a through lane, a right-turn lane, a 2-foot shoulder, a 1.5-foot buffer, and the Class 1 path.

Design Variation 1 proposes the remaining Class 1 shared-use path will be between 9 and 14 feet wide from the bridge to the intersection at Alamo Pintado Road.

Design Variation 2 proposes the remaining Class 1 shared-use path will be between 12 and 14 feet wide from the bridge to the intersection at Alamo Pintado Road. A slight shift in striping along existing State Route 246 will be required to accommodate this width.

Both design variations will stay within the existing Caltrans right-of-way and will not result in any differing environmental impacts. The project development team will determine the best option in the design phase and will consider input received from the public circulation of the draft environmental document.

Sidewalk improvements to improve connectivity to an existing bus stop along the eastbound corner of State Route 246 and Alamo Pintado Road are currently being analyzed by the project development team; however, these improvements are not programmed (funded) into this project. Nevertheless, these sidewalk improvements may be added to the project and constructed as future funding becomes available. This will be determined during the project's design phase.

4. *Earth Retaining Systems*

A 307.75-foot-long retaining wall is proposed along the edge of the Class 1 Bikeway on the north side of State Route 246, beginning from the eastern abutment. This proposed retaining wall from the Caltrans Standard Type 1 Wall will be built to minimize slope encroachment and reduce impacts on the creek.

5. *Erosion Control*

Temporary and permanent erosion control measures and Best Management Practices will be implemented during construction to provide erosion control and to control stormwater discharges in all areas that have been disturbed by the proposed work.

Disturbed areas must be treated with permanent erosion control. Erosion control materials will be selected to best address the various conditions within the project site. Areas that are steep and exposed to concentrated flows will require aggressive erosion control techniques that may include bioengineering at creek banks, application of duff (chipped vegetation), netting, fiber rolls, compost berms and socks, and hydroseeding to control erosion and establish vegetation for long-term protection. Incorporation of erosion control materials and/or decompaction of compacted soils to promote better vegetation establishment may be required.

Duff and/or topsoil must be collected before grading work and stockpiled for use later during revegetation. To promote the establishment of native vegetation, compacted areas will be decompacted and receive compost incorporation and hydroseeding.

Existing vegetation in the river/creek that is required to be cleared for equipment access must be cut at the base, leaving the root ball in place, and if needed, temporarily covered with fill. This will facilitate resprouting of the cut vegetation and allow the existing root systems to protect the channel from erosion.

Energy dissipation systems will be defined during the project design phase to ensure concentrated stormwater flows do not accelerate erosion on the embankments.

6. *Construction Activities*

It has been determined that approximately 23 native trees will need to be removed and/or pruned for construction access and bridge work. Planting restoration with native vegetation is intended to mitigate for biological impacts to the creek system as described in Sections 2.1.1 Aesthetics and 2.1.4 Biological Resources. Tree species include arroyo willow, coast live oak, cottonwood, red willow, sycamore, and valley oak. Some restoration may take place at off-site locations within the same watershed if sufficient on-site planting is not feasible.

During the project design phase, boring investigations will be completed to gather data necessary for project design decisions. These investigations are needed to determine the site conditions by drilling vertical soil borings to perform in-situ soil testing (Standard Penetration Tests), collecting soil samples for laboratory testing and classification, and developing a subsurface soil profile. The subsurface investigation is also needed to assess the potential for liquefaction and lateral spreading. A total of five borings are proposed: four for the bridge (one at each of the two abutments and one at each of the two piers) and one along the retaining wall layout line. [The following section has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Each boring will be drilled at the approximate location of each bridge support, with a truck mounted drill rig utilizing the punch core and rotary wash drilling methods as previously discussed. Rotary wash drilling is a drilling method that allows for in situ soil testing and sampling of soil below the groundwater table, while maintaining a closed system. The borehole is advanced with the use of a drill pipe, drilling fluid (consisting of a slurry of either powdered bentonite or polymer and water), and a bit. As the bit rotates, producing cuttings at the bottom of the borehole, the drill pipe pumps drilling fluid to the bottom of the borehole, collecting cuttings as the fluid flows up through the annular space, and finally returning the cuttings to the surface and onto a tank.

One truck mounted rotary wash drill rig will be required to conduct the drilling which will be accompanied with a support vehicle. A typical drill crew of three to four field personnel will be on site, along with one representative and vehicle from this office. No overnight storage of supplies or equipment will occur on site. All field work will occur during daytime hours between 8:00 am and 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday of the work week, as lane and shoulder closures may be necessary for site safety. The anticipated duration of work is 10 to 15 days of access to the site to complete drilling and backfilling operations for each boring. This may be completed within three to four weeks depending upon the variabilities of the work. Boreholes are typically backfilled with a grout and water mixture, that is then allowed to cure overnight. If this initial batch of grout settles overnight, the remaining void is capped off with more grout, sealing the borehole.

Separate biology permits will be obtained prior to the geotechnical drilling operation. Specified biology avoidance and minimization measures (listed in Section 2.1.4 Biological Resources) will be implemented for the geotechnical drilling operation.

Temporary dewatering and diversion may be required in Alamo Pintado Creek to allow for bridge replacement work to be completed.

**Figure 1-3 Bridge Profile**

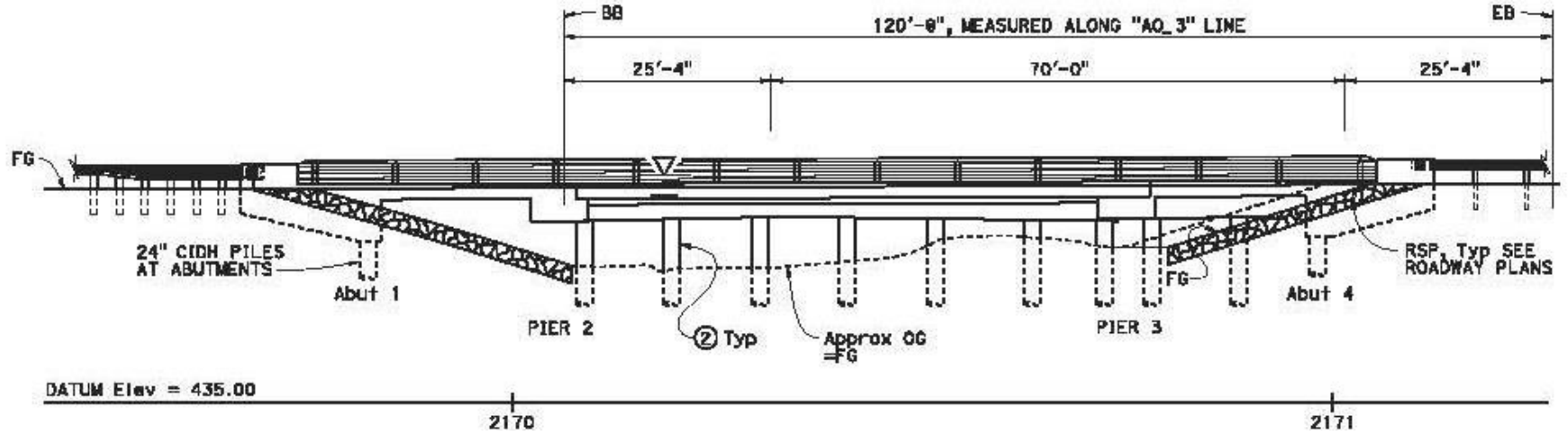
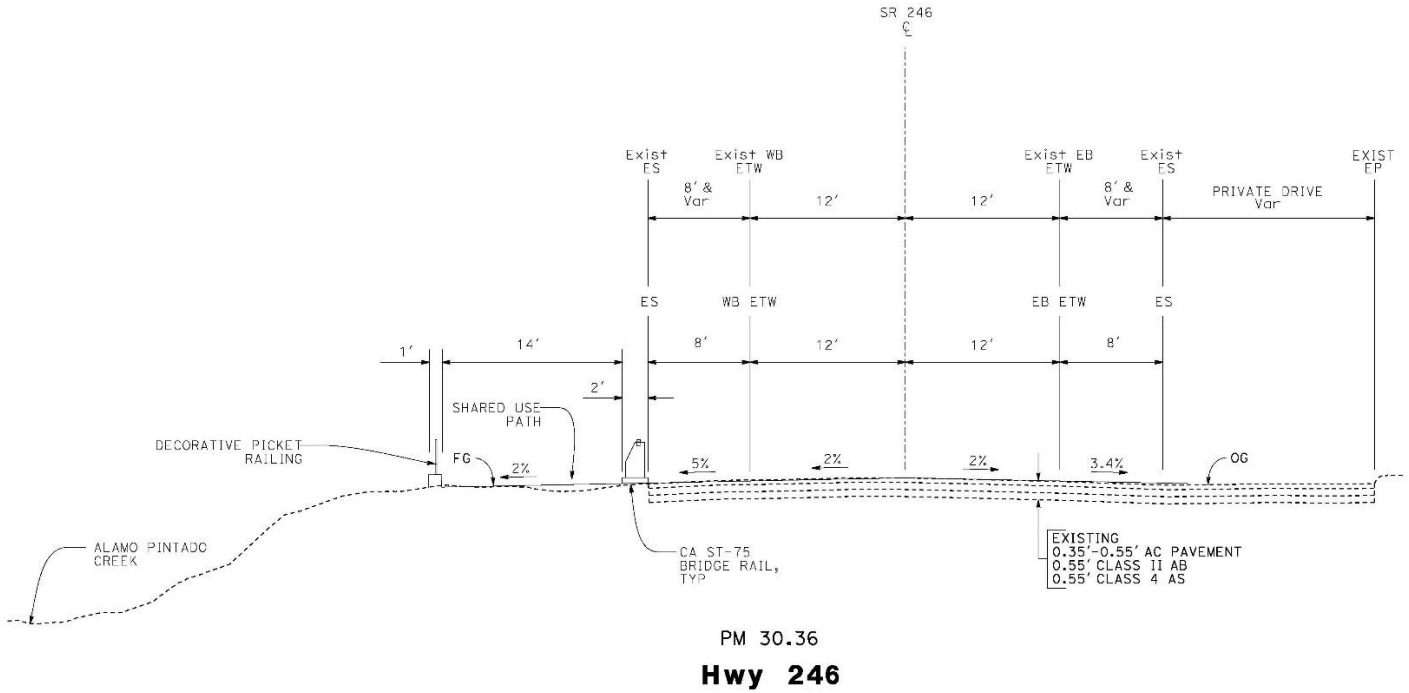


**Figure 1-4 Typical Cross Section**



## Figure 1-5 Area of Potential Impact

### 1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would not meet the purpose and need. It would not improve the bridge or bicycle and pedestrian facilities or provide improvements compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The roadway would continue to deteriorate, and the bridge would continue to scour. Routine maintenance throughout the project limits would continue.

## 1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative

[The following section has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

The project development team selected the Build Alternative as the preferred alternative. The Build Alternative was chosen because it will address the purpose and need of the project. With the Build Alternative, structural stability issues associated with the existing Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge will be addressed.

## 1.6 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives

The project will include Caltrans standard measures that are typically used on all Caltrans projects. Caltrans standard measures are considered features of the project and are evaluated as part of the project. Caltrans standard measures are not implemented to address any specific effects, impacts, or circumstances associated with the project but are instead implemented as part of the project's design to address common issues encountered on projects. The measures listed below are related to environmental resources and are applicable to the project. These measures can be found in the Caltrans 2024 Standard Specifications document.

- 7-1 Legal Relations and Responsibilities to the Public
- 10-4 Water Usage
- 10-5 Dust Control
- 10-6 Watering
- 12-1 Temporary Traffic Control
- 12-3 Temporary Traffic Control Devices
- 12-4 Traffic Control Systems

- 13-1 Water Pollution Control
- 13-2 Water Pollution Control Program
- 13-4 Job Site Management
- 13-6 Temporary Sediment Control
- 13-7 Temporary Tracking Control
- 13-10 Temporary Linear Sediment Barriers
- 14-1 Environmental Stewardship
- 14-2 Cultural Resources
- 14-6 Biological Resources
- 14-7 Paleontological Resources
- 14-8 Noise and Vibration
- 14-9 Air Quality
- 14-10 Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling
- 14-11 Hazardous Waste and Contamination
- 14-12 Other Agency Regulatory Requirements
- 17-2 Clearing and Grubbing
- 18-1 Dust Palliatives
- 20-1 Landscape
- 20-2 Irrigation
- 20-3 Planting

Additional standard measures will be added to the project as necessary or appropriate.

## 1.7 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

This document contains information regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other state laws and regulations. Separate environmental documentation, supporting a Categorical Exclusion

determination, has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. When needed for clarity, or as required by CEQA, this document may contain references to federal laws and/or regulations (CEQA, for example, requires consideration of adverse effects on species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—that is, species protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act).

## 1.8 Permits and Approvals Needed

The following permits, licenses, agreements, and certifications are required for project construction:

| Agency | Permit/Approval | Status |
|---|---|---|
| California Transportation Commission | Project Funding for Future Phases | To be obtained before the beginning of the project's design phase. |
| U.S. Army Corps of Engineers | Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit | To be obtained before construction starts. |
| Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board | Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification | To be obtained before construction starts. |
| California Department of Fish and Wildlife | California Fish and Game Code Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement | To be obtained before construction starts. |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Programmatic Biological Opinion for California red-legged frog; Letter of Concurrence for least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher | Obtained. |
| National Marine Fisheries Service | Letter of Concurrence for Southern California steelhead | To be obtained before construction starts. |

# Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

## 2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated, Less Than Significant Impact, and No Impact. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with a project will indicate that there are no impacts to a particular resource. A "No Impact" answer reflects this determination. The questions in this checklist are intended to encourage the thoughtful assessment of impacts and do not represent thresholds of significance.

Project features, which can include both design elements of the project and standardized measures that are applied to all or most Caltrans projects, such as Best Management Practices and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions, are considered to be an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

"No Impact" determinations in each section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project as well as the appropriate technical report (bound separately in Volume 2), and no further discussion is included in this document.

### 2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information in the Visual Impact Assessment dated March 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics |
|---|---|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics |
|---|---|
| c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area? | **No Impact** |

### *Affected Environment*

State Route 246 within the project limits is not within the Designated Scenic Highway limits and is not eligible for inclusion in the State Scenic Highway Program. Throughout the project limits, State Route 246 traverses several communities, including the cities of Buellton and Solvang. Land use includes low-density residential, light service commercial, recreational, open space, and agricultural. The overall topography is generally flat to gently rolling with scattered oak trees and riparian corridors, including the Alamo Pintado Creek. The Santa Ynez Valley is a popular tourist destination, and recreational activities, such as bicycling, walking, jogging, and equestrian activities, are commonly seen throughout the area. State Route 246 serves as the “Main Street” for the city of Solvang.

A Class 1 Bikeway parallels the corridor and, in addition to the roadway itself, is a dominant built feature on the eastern portion of the project limits. Oak woodland is the predominant habitat type, intermixed with low-density residential and commercial buildings. As the corridor traverses west, riparian habitat flanks both sides of the Alamo Pintado Bridge while transitioning into low-rise commercial land use.

Previously quite lush, the habitat along Alamo Pintado was heavily impacted by the 2023 winter storms. Water topped the bridge structure, flooded nearby businesses, and uprooted trees along the creek. Downed trees, loss of understory vegetation, and soil disturbance from repair work are evident at the time of this analysis.

### *Environmental Consequences*

Scenic vistas throughout the project area primarily include close-up to medium views of hillsides and riparian areas with native vegetative patterns.

The most noticeable aspect of the project will be the widened bridge to accommodate bike and pedestrian facilities. The bridge barrier and pedestrian railing will be slightly taller than the existing ones. Depending on the height of the driver's viewing position, views from the roadway to the riparian areas will be affected to some degree by the taller bridge rails. However, barriers will be an open style to preserve views.

Based on the preliminary permit search information and field review observation, there are existing utility joint poles with electric and telecom overhead lines and underground pipes within the project limits. Gas lines and sewer lines run along the northeast side of State Route 246. Additionally, there is a 3-inch gas line that is located on the bridge. Workarounds and utility encroachment exceptions will be considered before relocation of any utility is proposed. If a conflict is discovered, Caltrans Environmental staff will review the proposed relocation, and the project development team will work with the utility owner to ensure the utility is moved before project construction starts. It is preferable to underground or mount relocated overhead facilities; however, if not feasible, overhead utilities would still have a backdrop of vegetation so that the change would be largely unnoticed by the casual observer. If overhead utilities are relocated to within the bridge structure, the scenic vistas of surrounding vegetation would be improved.

The proposed retaining wall will be parallel to and lower than the elevation of the highway and will therefore not impact the scenic vista. While the new bridge railing will be slightly taller than the existing one, the effect on the scenic vista will be minimal. The proposed removal of riparian vegetation may increase views of the surrounding hills, and the proposed multiuse path will increase viewing opportunities of the riparian habitat for non-motorist users.

The existing scenic quality of State Route 246 is based, to a large degree, on its well-established oak woodlands and riparian habitat. Existing buildings, parking, and urban infrastructure visible from the project site slightly lower the overall visual quality within the project limits. Proposed project elements, such as the widened shoulders, metal guardrail and transitions, tie-back wall, and new bridge rails, will be readily visible from the roadway. By themselves, these types of elements are not uncommon and will not be seen as unexpected visual elements in a highway setting. The new guardrail and bridge rails will be slightly taller than the existing guardrail and bridge rails, which, combined with multiuse paths flanking the structure, will increase the visual scale and engineered appearance of the highway.

Various design alternatives for pedestrian railing include Caltrans standard chain link, metal picket, or tension cables. Chain-link fencing will contribute to the urbanizing look of the rural area and potentially degrade the visual character and quality of the site, given that the existing bridge conditions consist of low, open-style barrier railing. A railing that is more in character with community aesthetic goals and is consistent with a gateway to a world-

renowned tourist location could improve the visual character and quality of the project.

The addition of all these elements together, including a newer, taller bridge railing, pedestrian railing, and wider shoulders, will create a slightly more engineered-looking highway facility and will add a degree of visual clutter to the setting. These visual changes will result in a minor reduction of rural character and visual quality in the immediate project area from the roadway.

The new wider bridge structure, retaining wall, and bridge elements will be visible from the public path, sidewalks, and commercial areas. However, they are not out of character with existing conditions or surrounding development. While the new bridge structure will be replaced in kind and maintain the existing profile, the bridge barrier and railing will be slightly taller by several inches. However, the modifications will not obstruct scenic views. Engineered elements will not be out of character with the built environment because the rock slope protection, concrete debris, and other built features currently exist in the project area. Although existing riparian trees and other plants will be removed by the project, vegetation removal will be replaced and established. As a result, the riparian areas will, over time, be fully revegetated and result in a somewhat natural-appearing visual condition. Final restoration results may improve overall damage caused by the 2023 atmospheric river events. Construction access roads and areas of demolition, if restored to natural-appearing landforms, will reduce the noticeability of disturbance and engineered alterations.

It is expected that following project construction and revegetation, the project will be generally unnoticed by the casual observer on State Route 246. Pedestrian railing design selection will affect the visual character and quality of the project. However, the pedestrian railing, regardless of style, will be modified with color treatment to be more consistent with the setting. In addition, scenic vistas of riparian areas will remain intact as seen from State Route 246 and may improve with proposed revegetation given baseline conditions. New active transportation facilities allow more users to experience scenic riparian vistas.

Views from public areas to the new bridge, retaining wall, and project elements will be slightly modified by the larger structure and removal of vegetation. However, the proposed aesthetic treatments for the wall texture and bridge railing, along with the proposed creek revegetation, will minimize this impact. Architectural treatments will ensure consistency with nearby development and local character. The overall visual impact will be low.

The project proposes no new sources of lighting and, therefore, will not result in any visual impacts related to lighting or glare.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

Implementation of the following minimization measures will ensure that the project's visual effects are consistent with local scenic values along State Route 246.

**VIS-1:** Following construction, regrade and recontour any new construction access roads, staging and storage areas, and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding natural topography along State Route 246; avoid unnatural-appearing remnant landforms where possible.

**VIS-2**: Preserve existing vegetation to the maximum extent feasible.

**VIS-3**: Bridge rails shall be an open style to preserve views and be approved by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-4**: Bridge rail shall be aesthetically treated to visually recede or appear consistent with the architectural character and community setting. The aesthetic treatment shall be developed and approved by Caltrans District 5 Structure Design in conjunction with District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-5:** Bicycle and pedestrian railing shall be selected or treated to reduce glare and minimize contrast and noticeability. Style and color should be consistent with local character and aesthetic goals, as well as be compatible with the vehicular railing. Railing type and treatment will be developed and approved by District 5 Structure Design in conjunction with District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-6**: Depending on the final design, some metal elements, such as bridge railing, pedestrian railing, guardrail, posts, transitions, and end treatments attached to the proposed bridge, may require staining or darkening. The color or treatment, if any, shall be determined and approved by District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-7**: The retaining wall shall be textured or treated to reduce potential graffiti and the urbanizing effect. Proposed tie-back wall aesthetics should blend with the area's architectural character in style and color. Wall aesthetics shall be selected by District 5 Landscape Architecture staff to complement community architecture guidelines in harmony with the natural environment.

**VIS-8**: Rock slope protection shall be backfilled with soil and revegetated. If this is not feasible, rock slope protection shall be stained to reduce glare and be more visually compatible with the landscape.

**VIS-9**: If feasible, all existing overhead utilities next to the new bridge shall be placed in the bridge structure. If it is not technically possible to locate conduit within the structure, surface-mounted conduits shall be painted to match the bridge structure as determined by District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-10**: Replacement planting shall include aesthetic considerations and inherent biological goals. Revegetation shall include native trees and plants as determined by a Caltrans District 5 biologist and landscape architect. Revegetation shall occur to the maximum extent horticulturally feasible. Planting should be maintained until established.

### 2.1.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment Project; and the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

The project is located near prime farmland, unique farmland, and farmland of statewide importance. While additional right-of-way is needed for this project, the project will not convert any farmland under these designations to nonagricultural use or conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forestry Resources |
|---|---|
| a) 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 non-agricultural use? | **No Impact** |
| b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract? | **No Impact** |

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forestry Resources |
|---|---|
| c) Conflict with existing zoning, or cause rezoning of, forest land (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))? | **No Impact** |
| d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? | **No Impact** |
| e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? | **No Impact** |

### 2.1.3 Air Quality

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Considering the information in the Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Noise Technical Memorandum dated February 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality |
|---|---|
| a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan? | **No Impact** |
| b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard? | **No Impact** |
| c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people? | **No Impact** |

### *Affected Environment*

The proposed project is in the South Central Coast Air Basin. This basin consists of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District regulates air quality in Santa Barbara County. The county is non-attainment for the state ambient air quality standards for airborne particulate less than 10 microns in diameter (Particulate Matter 10). The county is in attainment for the state ozone, airborne particulate less than 2.5 microns in diameter (Particulate Matter 2.5), and carbon monoxide standards. Lastly, the county is in attainment for all federal air quality standards.

### *Environmental Consequences*

Since no additional lanes or capacity are being added to the highway, there will be no difference in long-term air emissions with or without the proposed project. However, there will be a temporary increase in air emissions and fugitive dust during the construction period. The use of equipment during project construction can generate fugitive dust that may have substantial temporary impacts on local air quality if large amounts of excavation, soil transport, and subsequent fill operations are necessary. Minor earthwork will be required for the demolition of the existing bridge structure, so minimal dust generation will be expected from the earthwork component of this project.

Due to the scope of work and location, this project presents minimal potential to subject surrounding sensitive receptors to inhalable construction emissions that would be considered significant. With the use of standard construction dust and emission minimization practices and procedures, it is anticipated that the project emissions of particulate matter (dust) and equipment emissions will be well within the daily thresholds of the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District. Construction emissions are further calculated and discussed in the greenhouse gas section (Section 2.1.8).

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

The following minimization measure will avoid or minimize impacts on air quality:

**AIR-1:** To minimize dust emissions from the project, Section 14-9.02 (Air Pollution Control) of the 2023 Standard Specifications states that the contractor is responsible for complying with all local air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes that apply to work performed under the contract, including those provided in Government Code Section 11017 (Public Contract Code Section 10231). Additionally, the project-level Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will address water pollution control measures that cross-correlate with standard dust emission minimization measures such as covering soil stockpiles, watering haul roads, watering excavation and grading areas, and so on. By incorporating appropriate engineering design and

stormwater Best Management Practices during construction, minimal short-term air quality impacts are anticipated.

### 2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study and Jurisdictional Delineation Report, dated March 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources |
|---|---|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries? | **Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated** |
| b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? | **Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated** |
| c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means? | **No Impact** |
| d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance? | **Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated** |
| f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |

### *Affected Environment*

The Area of Potential Impact, identified by the Caltrans design engineer, consists of potential disturbance areas for both permanent and temporary direct impacts and assumes the maximum amount of disturbance and/or impact associated with project construction, including cut and fill, staging, and access. The Biological Study Area is defined as the area that may be directly, indirectly, temporarily, or permanently impacted by construction and construction-related activities and has a buffer to encompass all indirect effects on surrounding natural areas.

The Biological Study Area contains a diversity of land use and habitat types, including a reach of Alamo Pintado Creek; portions of State Route 246, Alamo Pintado Road, Village Lane, and Hill Haven Road; a commercial center next to the north bank of the creek that includes parking lots, a service station, two banks, a veterinarian hospital, and a grocery market; commercial centers west of Alamo Pintado Road; and residences. Residences in the Biological Study Area are present on large lots south of the creek along its east side, and historical resources, such as grist and fulling mills associated with the mission era, are present next to the south end of the Biological Study Area along the east bank of Alamo Pintado Creek. Some undeveloped areas are still present, supporting willow riparian forest, coast live oak woodland, and ruderal and annual grasslands next to State Route 246.

Much of the Biological Study Area occurs on relatively level terrain, some of which has been modified for commercial, residential, and transportation uses. The elevational range of the Biological Study Area is 450 feet to 590 feet. The flow in the creek is nearly perennial, due in part to the runoff from the surrounding development. Multiple culverts contribute water to the creek, including culverts draining parking lots and road areas. Existing rock slope protection occurs along the left bank, and an existing revetment fence occurs along the right bank throughout much of the Biological Study Area upstream of the bridge and immediately downstream of the bridge. Slope paving is present under the existing bridge on both banks.

The reach of Alamo Pintado Creek within the Biological Study Area appears to have been modified in the past and continues to be modified. Alamo Pintado Creek is included in the Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District's Annual Routine Maintenance Plans. Recent annual plans indicate that the county regularly implements maintenance activities to maintain approximately 12-foot-wide bank-full channels by removing obstructions. Activities documented in the most recent routine maintenance plans include brushing, trimming back vegetation overhanging the active channel, removing downed trees and debris (or cutting downed wood into small sections), and removing sediment and debris plugs. During a site visit in August 2024, Caltrans noted that county staff were implementing vegetation trimming in the channel bed and lower banks throughout the Biological Study Area reach. Removal of debris and sediment also occurs

during emergencies when warranted, such as during the 2023 atmospheric river event that resulted in water overtopping the bridge and local flooding.

The biological resources that could be affected by the project are discussed in more detail below. See Table 2.1 for a breakdown of the area (acreage) of each community within the Biological Study Area.

*Natural Communities and Habitats of Concern*

Willow Riparian: This natural community occurs along Alamo Pintado Creek immediately downstream of the bridge and upstream from the commercial complex that borders the north creek bank upstream of the bridge. Red willow appears to be the dominant species in the overstory, with western sycamore and Fremont cottonwood as associates in the overstory. California black walnut and white alder are also present in the overstory. The understory consists primarily of arroyo willow, California blackberry, poison oak, and coyote brush. In much of the Biological Study Area, existing rock slope protection is present in conjunction with willow riparian along the left bank facing downstream. Additionally, existing pipe and wire fence revetments are present along much of the right bank facing downstream within this community.

Based on species composition and relative abundance of the trees present, this vegetation community most closely aligns with the Goodding's Willow-Red Willow Riparian Woodland and Forest Alliance, which has a state rank of S3 and is considered a special-status natural community. This community encompasses elements of two special-status natural communities within the vicinity: southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest and southern willow scrub. Both of these natural communities are documented at several locations along the Santa Ynez River. The riparian forest in the Biological Study Area includes more sycamore trees and fewer cottonwoods and lacks sandbar willows compared to these two special-status communities.

Oak woodland: The sole tree species in this community is the coast live oak. Oak woodland occurs on hillslopes next to but outside the stream corridor. The oak woodland in the Biological Study Area is mostly closed-canopy stands with an occasional solitary oak, primarily on the south side of State Route 246 east of the bridge and in patches along the existing bike path. Where canopy cover is high, there is little to no understory; where the canopy is more open, there may be a sparse shrub layer consisting mostly of poison oak and coyote bush. There are also a few individual oaks within landscaped areas and margins of development. This vegetation community most closely aligns with the Coast Live Oak Forest and Woodland Alliance. This community has a state rank of S4 and is not considered a special-status natural community.

Annual Non-Native Grassland: Most vegetated open areas within the Biological Study Area that are not dominated by trees or shrubs and not

considered riverine habitat are predominantly vegetated with non-native annual grasses and herbs. Where annual grasses are dominant, most of these areas fall within the wild oats and annual brome grasslands Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance. This community is found along the southeast corner of State Route 246 and High Meadow Drive. Species dominance varies throughout the Biological Study Area but typically includes slender wild oat, ripgut brome, ryegrass, and wall barley. Short-pod mustard, wild radish, and redstem filaree are common forbs in this community. Despite the abundance of non-native species, these communities also support some natives, such as California poppy and California everlasting.

Ruderal/Disturbed: In addition to areas dominated by annual grasses, portions of the Biological Study Area support invasive non-native herbs. The term ruderal is used to describe non-native vegetation dominated by non-native forbs (that is, herbaceous plants that are not grasses). Ruderal vegetation is abundant throughout the Biological Study Area, growing on disturbed road shoulders, along the existing bike path, and on the outer edges of the riparian area south of the bridge. The vegetation includes small to extensive patches, often monocultures, of poison hemlock, short-pod mustard, Italian thistle, smooth cat's ear, English plantain, and wild radish. Some of these areas are consistent with recognized semi-natural alliances, including the Poison Hemlock or Fennel Patches Semi-Natural Alliance and the Upland Mustard or Star Thistle Semi-Natural Alliance. However, within the Biological Study Area, these areas are discontinuous and patchy. Existing rock slope protection is present in conjunction with ruderal habitat directly upstream and downstream of the bridge.

Landscaped: Landscaped areas are generally vegetated with a variety of ornamental trees, ornamental shrubs, herbs, and perennial grasses, and the plantings tend to be interspersed with ruderal herbs and non-native grasses. Use of native plants in landscapes is increasingly common in California, and several of the species present in landscaped areas on-site are species native to California. Though some of the plants in this community are native species, they are planted in an ornamental fashion with visible irrigation systems, evidence of mulch, and routine care such as pruning, rather than growing there naturally. This community occurs immediately upstream of the bridge near the parking lot of the commercial area, on both sides of the stream north of State Route 246, along Alamo Pintado Road, along the parking lot of another commercial area, and south of State Route 246 on High Meadow Road. Species in this community within the Biological Study Area include valley oak, Peruvian pepper tree, coast redwood, queen palm, deer grass, Coulter's Matilija poppy, and rosemary. Some sycamore and coast live oak are also present at the margins of this community. Existing rock slope protection is present in conjunction with landscaped habitat along the left bank facing downstream. Additionally, existing pipe and wire fence revetments are present along much of the right bank facing downstream within this community.

Developed: Developed areas are locations that have been constructed or otherwise physically altered to an extent that native vegetation is no longer supported. Developed land is characterized by permanent or semipermanent structures and pavement or hardscape. Areas where no natural land is present due to frequent use that prevents vegetation from growing, or areas that have materials such as gravel placed upon them, may also be considered developed. This includes State Route 246 and its existing shoulders, Alamo Pintado Road and its existing shoulders, residential development, roads and driveways, the commercial areas, and the existing multiuse path.

Streambed: The bed of Alamo Pintado Creek within the Biological Study Area is flat and low gradient, without well-defined riffles and pools. Vegetation in the channel is seasonal and mostly present during the dry season, when herbs, such as watercress, spearmint, and brooklime, can recruit into the bed of the channel without being scoured away. During winter months, when flows are higher, herbaceous vegetation tends to scour out. The channel bed is a mixture of sand, gravel, and cobble. As noted above, the banks adjoining the channel are armored or partially armored throughout much of the project area by either pipe and wire revetment, rock slope protection, and vegetated rock slope protection, or concrete. Multiple culverts contribute water to the creek, including culverts draining parking lots and road areas. Routine maintenance is conducted in the stream on an annual basis by the county. The bankfull width is consistent throughout most of the Biological Study Area, averaging between 15 and 20 feet, but is wider at the approach to the bridge and under the structure, averaging 30 to 35 feet, compared with areas farther upstream and downstream of the bridge. Mapping before the 2023 atmospheric river events indicated a narrower bankfull width, and photos from 2022 show more vegetation in the channel bed, so the emergency response to flooding in 2023 may have resulted in temporary widening of the bankfull cross section near the bridge due to removal of vegetation and debris that would normally anchor substrates. No other streams, wetlands, or other aquatic features were found in the Biological Study Area.

**Table 2.1 Vegetation Communities Within the Biological Study Area**

| Vegetation Community | Areas Within the Biological Study Area (Acres) |
|---|---|
| Willow Riparian | 6.7 |
| Oak Woodland | 4.5 |
| Annual Grassland | 0.7 |
| Ruderal | 4.2 |
| Landscaped | 1.74 |
| Developed | 5.0 |
| Streambed | 1.39 |

*Wetlands, Other Waters, and Riparian Areas*

No wetlands are present within the Biological Study Area. Jurisdictional U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' other waters are areas within the Ordinary High-Water Mark of drainages and ponded areas with connectivity to jurisdictional waters but lacking one or more of the three wetland parameters (hydric soil, hydrophytic vegetation, and wetland hydrology). These are typically delineated as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' other waters. The Regional Water Quality Control Board also has jurisdiction over wetlands and other waters. Additionally, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board interprets Waters of the State as including riparian areas and streambanks above the Ordinary High-Water Mark. California Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdiction encompasses rivers, streams, and lakes extending from the lowest bed elevation to the top of the surrounding banks and/or outer edge of nearby riparian vegetation, whichever is greater.

One aquatic resource was identified in the Biological Study Area: Alamo Pintado Creek. No other wetlands, lakes, ponds, streams, or ditches were observed. Alamo Pintado Creek is an intermittent perennial stream within the Biological Study Area. Flows in the dry season are extremely low, but a small amount of surface water has been observed at all times of year during studies.

The creek was mapped and separated into three reaches to reflect differences in vegetation and bank armoring as well as differences in average Ordinary High-Water Mark and bank-full width:

- The upstream-most reach has banks that have existing armoring in the form of rock slope protection and vegetated rock slope protection along the left bank and intermittent pipe and wire revetment on the right bank

(facing downstream). Despite the armoring, mature willow riparian forest is present in this reach.

- The middle reach extends from 450 feet upstream of the bridge to approximately 35 feet downstream of the bridge. In this section, most of the banks are also armored, with a continuation of the rock slope protection along the left bank, as well as some short sections of concrete retaining wall and slope paving under the bridge. The right bank has several sections of pipe and wire revetment and additional concrete sections, as well as slope paving under the bridge. Vegetation along the stream in this section is a mixture of landscape trees and native trees with a landscaped understory. Vegetation shows signs of regular trimming and disturbance. The Ordinary High-Water Mark is wider in this section, and this reach was significantly disturbed during flooding in 2023.

- The third reach extends from the middle section downstream to the end of the Biological Study Area. In this section, short sections of rock slope protection were noted where they were exposed following the 2023 atmospheric river events. However, bank armoring was far less evident, and no pipe/wire revetment was noted. In all reaches, the streambed characteristics are relatively uniform with very little development of pools and riffles. The Ordinary High-Water Mark and bankfull width in this section are narrower than in the middle reach, and vegetation consists of willow riparian forest.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jurisdiction: Alamo Pintado Creek in the Biological Study Area is not known to be traditionally navigable and lacks a known interstate or foreign commerce use. However, it has a direct, relatively permanent connection to the Santa Ynez River, which flows directly into the Pacific Ocean, a traditionally navigable water. Although recent changes to the Corps' implementation of the Clean Water Act have resulted in differing interpretations of the extent of federal jurisdiction in non-navigable tributaries, Caltrans anticipates that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction over Alamo Pintado Creek as a tributary to a traditional navigable water. Caltrans has assumed that all waters meeting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' criteria (with an Ordinary High-Water Mark) will be subject to federal regulation for this project.

Regional Water Quality Control Board Waters of the State: Other waters subject to Clean Water Act Section 404 are regulated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board under Clean Water Act Section 401 and are also Waters of the State. All other waters described above that have an Ordinary High-Water Mark (streambeds) are Waters of the State. Additionally, the riparian zone and streambanks, described above, are also treated as Waters of the State by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Caltrans also evaluated the site to determine if any additional features are not meeting the criteria of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, but meeting the state definition would be considered state wetlands. No additional features were identified.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife 1600 Jurisdiction: Alamo Pintado Creek, including banks and riparian zones, will be subject to the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. California Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdiction over streams extends up streambanks to the top of the bank or to the edge of the riparian dripline where present. Some of the streams in the Biological Study Area have banks with herbaceous vegetation undifferentiated from surrounding upland areas, such that the limits of jurisdiction are generally to the top of the bank. However, some areas have woody vegetation overhanging the system, ranging from species dependent on supplemental shallow groundwater from the stream system, such as willows, to upland species that interact with the stream primarily by providing shade and organic matter inputs. Where riparian vegetation is present, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdiction has been mapped to include the riparian vegetation.

*Special-Status Plant and Animal Species*

The term special-status species refers to plants or animals that are federally or state listed as endangered, threatened, or rare species that are candidates or proposed for federal or state listing and species considered special-concern species by federal or state agencies. There are 20 special-status plant species and 22 special-status animal species known to occur within the Biological Study Area and the surrounding area. Of these, the special-status plant and animal species that have habitats present and could be affected by the project are described in greater detail below:

Late-flowered mariposa lily: The late-flowered mariposa lily is a California Rare Plant Rank 1B.3, which means it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere, though not very threatened in California. This species is a perennial bulbiferous herb and occurs in cismontane woodland, riparian woodland, and chaparral. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database occurrence is 5.5 miles south of the Biological Study Area, in the Santa Ynez Mountains, from 2014. No late-flowered mariposa lilies were seen during surveys.

Sonoran maiden fern: The Sonoran maiden fern is a California Rare Plant Rank 2B.2, which means it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere and moderately endangered in California. This species is a perennial rhizomatous herb and occurs in seeps and streams. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database occurrence is 7.5 miles south of the Biological Study Area, near Refugio State Beach, from 1976. No Sonoran maiden fern was seen during surveys.

California red-legged frog: The California red-legged frog is federally threatened and considered a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Federal critical habitat has been designated for the species, but the Biological Study Area does not overlap with it. The California red-legged frog historically ranged from Marin County southward to northern Baja California. It also historically occurred in California's Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada foothills, where it is now known from only a few isolated foothill occurrences. California red-legged frogs use a variety of areas, including aquatic, riparian, and upland habitats. The California red-legged frog uses riparian and upland habitats for foraging, shelter, cover, and non-dispersal movement. Terrestrial dispersal distances depend on habitat availability and environmental conditions, but have been observed up to 1 mile from aquatic habitat in San Luis Obispo County and over 2 miles from aquatic habitat in northern Santa Cruz County.

No protocol surveys were conducted for the California red-legged frog, and the species was not seen during general wildlife surveys. Biological surveys were also conducted in 2007 and 2008 for an earlier version of this project, which was ultimately not funded, and no California red-legged frogs were observed. However, additional daytime and nighttime surveys were done in 2010 at the request of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and one subadult California red-legged frog was observed within the Biological Study Area during the nighttime survey. This observation occurred in the riparian area to the east of the Valley Fresh Market parking lot upstream of the bridge. There are seven other California Natural Diversity Database occurrences of the California red-legged frog within 5 miles of the Biological Study Area. These occur along the Nojoqui Creek, Quiota Creek, and the Santa Ynez River south of the Biological Study Area, ranging from 1960 to 2019. Development within the vicinity of the project location has increased in the past few decades, modifying the creek channel and degrading the quality of the California red-legged frog dispersal habitat within the Biological Study Area. Despite this, habitat for the California red-legged frog in the Biological Study Area consists of the willow riparian forest for upland and dispersal habitat. The reach of Alamo Pintado Creek in the Biological Study Area does not contain pools of water generally needed for California red-legged frog breeding; however, the creek channel and riparian zone along Alamo Pintado Creek provide potentially suitable dispersal habitat for California red-legged frogs.

Southern California steelhead distinct population segment: The Southern California steelhead distinct population segment is a federally endangered and a state candidate endangered species. Federal critical habitat has been designated for the species, but the Biological Study Area does not overlap with it. This distinct population segment occurs in coastal drainages and coastal waters from the Santa Maria River south to the border with Mexico. Steelhead are generally anadromous; adults breed in freshwater rivers and streams in winter and early spring, where juveniles live for one to three years

before migrating to the ocean in late winter or spring to mature. There they stay for two to four years before returning to their natal stream or river to spawn. Adults may migrate after breeding, although they rarely spawn more than twice. Spawning habitat for steelhead consists of clear and cold water with a rocky substrate, approximately a 1-to-1 pool-to-riffle ratio, vegetated streambanks, ample in-stream cover, fairly stable water temperature and flow, and streambanks.

Between January and February, adult steelhead migrate from the ocean to spawn in the upper Santa Ynez River and its tributaries, as far upstream as Bradbury Dam. After spawning, adult steelhead may migrate back to the ocean and return to spawn again in later years. Steelhead may rear for one to four years in freshwater before migrating to the ocean as smolts, although Southern California steelhead tend to migrate after one to two years. The juvenile migration period is typically February through May, but the timing of migration is dependent on streamflow; therefore, migrating juveniles may move through the watershed from January through June.

No steelhead were observed in the Biological Study Area during project surveys. Recent survey work has indicated that steelhead primarily use tributaries south of the Santa Ynez River. Tributaries to the north, including Alamo Pintado Creek, are used to a much lesser extent. However, small steelhead have been observed in the upper reaches of Alamo Pintado Creek in the vicinity of Midland School in the nearby community of Los Olivos. The Area of Potential Impact contains marginal spawning habitat and low-quality rearing habitat. Some of the substrate in the channel is composed of gravel; however, the water level remains quite low during most of the year, and there are no pools in the Area of Potential Impact. Additionally, the creek channel upstream of the State Route 246 bridge over Alamo Pintado Creek has been altered in the past and is regularly disturbed during county flood control maintenance activities, diminishing the spawning and rearing value for steelhead.

In addition to the low potential for steelhead to spawn and/or rear in the Area of Potential Impact, migrating adult steelhead could be within the Area of Potential Impact during January through April. As such, if steelhead occur in Alamo Pintado Creek, they could be present in the Area of Potential Impact when there is adequate surface water. January through April would be the most likely time of year for occurrence. The Biological Study Area does not contain critical habitat for steelhead. A fish passage hydraulic analysis done for this project indicated that high flow velocities met fish passage criteria throughout the reach. However, the analysis found that low flow depth criteria for adult and juvenile salmonids were not met anywhere within the stream reach, including areas upstream and downstream and outside the influence of the bridge.

Southwestern pond turtle: The southwestern pond turtle is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern and was recently proposed as federally threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Historically, southwestern pond turtles were present in most Pacific slope drainages between the Oregon and Mexican borders. Southwestern pond turtles live where water persists year-round, in ponds along foothill streams or broad washes near the coast. The ponds favored by southwestern pond turtles typically support emergent and floating vegetation, such as cattails and algal mats. They also bask on half-submerged logs, rocks, or flat shorelines close to the edge of the water. The southwestern pond turtle is mostly aquatic, leaving its aquatic site to reproduce, estivate, and overwinter. It may overwinter on land or in water, but it may remain active in water during the winter season. In warmer areas along the Central and Southern California coast, southwestern pond turtles may be active all year. Breeding for southwestern pond turtles typically occurs from late April to July. Upland nesting sites are required near the aquatic site and are typically located in open, clay, or silt slopes to ensure proper incubation temperature. Eggs hatch in late fall or overwinter and hatch in early spring of the following year. Some females lay two or more clutches of eggs during the year.

No southwestern pond turtles were observed during any surveys for this project. Suitable aquatic and nesting habitat occurs within the Biological Study Area for the southwestern pond turtle along Alamo Pintado Creek and its associated riparian areas. The reach of Alamo Pintado Creek in the Biological Study Area represents wintering and dispersal habitat, as well as marginal breeding habitat. There is near-perennial surface water, basking sites, and summer cover in the form of aquatic vegetation, especially watercress. There are 14 known California Natural Diversity Database occurrences of the southwestern pond turtle within 5 miles of the Biological Study Area between 1975 and 2019. The nearest occurrence is from 2012, along the Santa Ynez River, approximately 1.4 miles southwest of the Biological Study Area, near the confluence with Alisal Creek.

Southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell’s vireo: The following species are addressed here as a group because they have similar habitat requirements.

The southwestern willow flycatcher is a federally and state-endangered species. The southwestern willow flycatcher is one of several subspecies of the willow flycatcher, three of which occur in California. The current breeding range of the southwestern willow flycatcher includes Southern California, but the quantity of suitable habitat is heavily reduced from historical levels. The southwestern willow flycatcher occurs from near sea level to over 8,500 feet, but is found mostly in lower-elevation riparian habitats. The southwestern willow flycatcher usually breeds in patchy to dense riparian habitats along streams or other wetlands, near or next to surface water, or underlain by

saturated soil. Southwestern willow flycatchers typically arrive on breeding grounds between early May and early June.

The least Bell's vireo is a federally and state-endangered species. The current range includes populations in Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and Inyo counties, with a few isolated individuals and/or breeding pairs observed in Kern, Monterey, San Benito, and Stanislaus counties. Least Bell's vireos require riparian areas to breed and typically live in structurally diverse woodlands along watercourses, including cottonwood-willow woodlands and forests, oak woodlands, and mule fat scrub. Least Bell's vireos usually arrive in California during mid-to-late March. They build their nests in a variety of plants that provide concealment in the form of dense foliage.

No least Bell's vireos or southwestern willow flycatchers were observed during reconnaissance wildlife surveys. Riparian habitat within the Biological Study Area may provide suitable foraging habitat for the least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher. However, the width of the corridor and proximity to State Route 246 and the city of Solvang likely decrease the overall value of the site to provide nesting habitat. Historical records of breeding southwestern willow flycatchers occurred 2 to 3 miles west of Buellton (approximately 6 to 7 miles west of the Biological Study Area) from 1989 to 1995 along the Santa Ynez River. An additional record of a singing male least Bell's vireo occurred in the same location in 2016. No designated critical habitat occurs for either species within or near the Biological Study Area. Nesting pairs of both species are considered unlikely but cannot be ruled out due to the presence of suitable riparian habitat.

Crotch's bumblebee and obscure bumblebee: The following species are addressed here as a group because they have similar habitat requirements.

Crotch's bumblebee is a candidate for listing as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act. The current range of this species is from coastal California to the Sierra Crest, extending into western and southern Nevada and into Baja California, Mexico. Habitat for this species includes grassland and scrub, but it is not specific because the food plants used by Crotch's bumblebees are widely distributed in different habitats. These plants include snapdragons, milkweed, phacelia, Chaenactis, Clarkia, poppies, buckwheat, lupines, Medicago, and sage.

Like most other species of bumblebees, Crotch's bumblebees typically nest in underground cavities such as animal burrows, though nests have also been reported in aboveground structures that provide suitable cavities. The flight period for Crotch's bumblebee queens in California is from late February to late October, and the period for workers and males in California is from late March through September. Little is known about overwintering sites for

queens, but other bumblebee species are known to overwinter in soft soil or under leaf litter and debris.

No focused surveys were conducted for Crotch's bumblebee or the obscure bumblebee, and no individuals were observed during wildlife surveys. There are no California Natural Diversity Database occurrences of either species within 5 miles of the Biological Study Area. However, there is one occurrence approximately 5.5 miles east of the project location from 1959. There are also no records of either species near the Biological Study Area from Bumble Bee Watch. The ornamental flowering plants within the Biological Study Area may provide foraging habitat. The non-native grassland on the south side of State Route 246 by the private driveway on High Meadow Road may also provide suitable foraging habitat. Any mammal burrows in that area may also provide suitable nesting habitat.

Coast range newt: The coast range newt is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern. This species is broadly found in the coastal ranges from central Mendocino County southward to northern San Diego County. Populations of coast range newts from the Salinas River in Monterey County south constitute a Priority 2 Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Coast range newts occur primarily in valley-foothill hardwood, valley-foothill hardwood-conifer, coastal scrub, and mixed chaparral, but are also found in annual grassland and mixed conifer types.

Terrestrial coast range newts seek cover under surface objects such as rocks and logs, or in mammal burrows, inside the bases of standing trees, or in human-made structures such as wells. Aquatic larvae find cover under submerged rocks, logs, debris, leaf packs in in-stream pools, and root mats along undercut banks. Terrestrial individuals are relatively inactive most of the year. Migrations to and from breeding areas usually occur at night, during, or just following, rains. Breeding adults and aquatic larvae are active both during the day and at night.

The coast range newt was not seen during wildlife reconnaissance-level surveys. Potentially suitable aquatic and upland habitat occurs within the Biological Study Area, similar to that of the California red-legged frog and southwestern pond turtle. Although the nearest California Natural Diversity Database occurrence of this species is 5.3 miles southeast of the Biological Study Area, its presence is still inferred.

Two-striped garter snake: The two-striped garter snake is considered a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Two-striped garter snakes occur along the southern coast of California, from Salinas to the Mexican border, at elevations ranging from sea level to about 8,000 feet. The species is closely associated with freshwater streams, creeks, and pools near willow, oak woodlands, cedar, coastal sage scrub, sparse

pine, scrub oak, and chaparral vegetation; however, the snakes will also use artificial stock ponds. Even though the two-striped garter snake has been found active for most of the year (as long as January through November), there is likely local variation in activity periods due to differences in surface water availability. Seasonal variation in habitat use has also been observed, with snakes using sites near water during the summer and upland chaparral and grassland during the winter. Breeding occurs in late March, and young are born from July to late October.

No two-striped garter snakes were observed during surveys. There is one California Natural Diversity Database occurrence approximately 3.5 miles west of the Biological Study Area, along Nojoqui Creek, from 2008.

The Biological Study Area contains wintering and dispersal habitat, as well as breeding habitat. The creek and rocky channel bed within the Biological Study Area provide suitable aquatic habitat. There is near-perennial surface water and summer cover in the form of aquatic vegetation.

Northern California legless lizard: The Northern California legless lizard is considered a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This species occurs in scattered locations in California in moist, warm, loose soils with leaf litter and plant cover. Habitats include beach dunes, pine-oak woodland, chaparral, desert scrub, sandy washes, and stream terraces. Northern California legless lizards do not bask in direct sunlight and live mostly underground, burrowing in loose, sandy soil. They are mostly active in the morning and evening when foraging beneath leaf litter. This species breeds between early spring and July and bears young between September and November.

No Northern California legless lizards were observed during surveys of the project's Biological Study Area, and there are no California Natural Diversity Database occurrences of the species within 5 miles of the Biological Study Area.

American badger: The American badger is considered a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. They are active during the day and night and are active year-round, with variable periods of hibernation in winter. Badger dens are generally identified by the D-shaped entrance and pile of soil from excavation. Badgers prefer open habitats such as grasslands, oak savannahs, and shrublands with friable soils. Studies also indicate that badgers have large home ranges, spanning hundreds to thousands of acres. Badgers mate in summer and early fall, with births mostly occurring between March and April. Threats to the American badger include habitat loss, indiscriminate trapping, and persistent poisons.

No American badgers, live or dead, or potential dens were observed during surveys of the project's Biological Study Area. No dirt piles, prey remains,

claw marks inside burrows, or other signs were observed within the project site. There is one California Natural Diversity Database occurrence of an American badger approximately 4 miles west of the Biological Study Area from 1989. This occurrence was a roadkill badger on U.S. 101.

Townsend's big-eared bat, pallid bat, and other roosting bats: The following roosting bat species are addressed here as a group because they have similar habitat requirements.

Roosts are important habitat features for bats. Bats often select roost locations because they are within range of foraging areas. Bats also select roost sites based on thermal characteristics, predation potential, noise, light levels, and other disturbance levels. Bats use night roosts between nighttime foraging flights to rest and process food. Night roosts provide easily accessed resting areas with suitable temperature characteristics that bats require for proper digestion at any time of the year. Day roosts provide shelter from weather and predators and are essential for sleeping, pup rearing, torpor, and socialization. Maternity roosts offer the cover, thermoregulation, and safety required for birthing and raising young.

Day roosts and maternity roosts are often regarded as the most important to protect because they allow for reproduction that perpetuates colonies. Disturbing maternal roosts when young are present can cause the adults to abandon young and to abort fetuses. Day and maternity roosts may be limiting factors for many bat populations, influencing species' distribution.

The Townsend's big-eared bat is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern. It forages over a wide variety of grassland, wetland, shrub, and wooded habitats, although it is most common in mesic forests. This species roosts in small colonies of 12 to 200 individuals, typically in caves and rock crevices. Bridges, buildings, and tree cavities are also occasionally used for roosting. Nursery roosts are most often located in caves, tunnels, mines, and buildings. Most breeding occurs in the winter, with peak mating activity ranging from November to February.

The pallid bat is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern. The pallid bat occurs throughout most of California, especially in open areas below 6,500 feet in elevation. The species is absent from Del Norte and western Siskiyou counties, south to northern Mendocino County, and in the high Sierra Nevada Mountains from Shasta to Kern counties. Pallid bat day roosts are typically in cliff fissures and other crevices, caves, mines, abandoned buildings, bird boxes, and occasionally under bridges and in hollow trees, while night roosts are in more open areas such as porches and open buildings. In the winter, pallid bats hibernate near summer day roost locations. Habitats where pallid bats are found include grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and forests. Foraging usually occurs 1.6 to 8 feet above open ground, and prey consists of insects and arachnids.

Breeding occurs from late October through February, but implantation is delayed, so pups are not born until the following spring and early summer. Maternity colonies form in early April, and pups are born mostly in May and June, but can be born as early as April and as late as July.

No Townsend's big-eared bat, pallid bat, or other species of roosting bats were observed during surveys. The bridge did not show signs of use by bat species and lacks the features that could support roosting. The trees within the riparian woodland provide potentially suitable roosting habitat; however, it is unlikely that these features could support maternity roosts due to a lack of optimal roosting habitat, which, when present in trees, typically requires long vertical crevices approximately 0.75 to 2 inches wide; dark, wind-sheltered areas with suitable temperatures; and areas away from anthropogenic disturbances and predator access. The riparian and non-native grassland provides foraging habitat for these and other common bat species.

There is one California Natural Diversity Database occurrence of a Townsend's big-eared bat approximately 5.5 miles east of the Biological Study Area along the Santa Ynez River from 1989 and one California Natural Diversity Database occurrence of a pallid bat approximately 4.5 miles west of the Biological Study Area near Buellton along the Santa Ynez River from 2015.

Cooper's hawk, purple martin, and other nesting birds: The following species are addressed here as a group because they have similar habitat requirements.

The Cooper's hawk is included in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Watch List. It is a fairly large accipiter hawk that ranges throughout the U.S. and is widely distributed throughout California. The Cooper's hawk occupies forests and woodlands, especially near the edges. The species is rarely found in areas without dense tree stands or patchy woodland habitat. Nests are built in deciduous trees, usually 20 to 50 feet above ground. Breeding occurs from March to August, peaking from May to July.

Purple martins have been eliminated from much of their previous range across the U.S. due to the introduction of non-native European starlings and house finches. The species has experienced extreme declines in recent decades through the loss of riparian habitat and competition for nest sites from non-native starlings. Purple martins are the largest North American swallow and are considered uncommon to rare in California.

Several nesting bird species that are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code Section 3503 could nest in habitats within the Biological Study Area. The nesting bird season for the Biological Study Area is February 1 to September 31.

No Cooper's hawks or purple martins were observed during surveys. A red-tailed hawk and a red-shouldered hawk were observed soaring overhead during surveys. There is one California Natural Diversity Database occurrence of a Cooper's hawk approximately 2 miles southeast of the Biological Study Area from 1989 along Zanja De Cota Creek. There is also one California Natural Diversity Database occurrence of a purple martin that overlaps the Biological Study Area from 1932, along with two additional occurrences within 5 miles of the Biological Study Area from 1928 and 1938.

The riparian corridor and the bridge itself provide nesting habitat for various bird species protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code Section 3503. One mud nest was observed on the underside of the Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge during surveys on June 17, 2024, likely belonging to a black phoebe, though the status of the nest was undetermined. The bridge showed signs of mud nests from previous years, but it does not appear to house several nests at a time.

*Invasive Species*

Executive Order 13112 defines invasive species as any species, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that is not native to that ecosystem and whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Biological surveys identified 31 plant species in the Biological Study Area that are listed as invasive by the online California Invasive Plant Council Database. Of these identified plant species, two were rated as highly invasive, eight were rated as moderately invasive, and 21 were rated as having limited invasiveness. The distribution of invasive plant species is scattered throughout the Biological Study Area and is most common in ruderal/disturbed areas.

### *Environmental Consequences*

*Natural Communities and Habitats of Concern*

Impacts on natural communities and habitats of concern have been determined by overlaying the project's Area of Potential Impact with the mapping of natural communities and habitats within the project's Biological Study Area. The disturbance will occur at proposed work areas, staging locations, access locations, and more. These estimates of permanent and temporary impacts on natural communities and habitats of concern are presented in Table 2.2.

Red Willow Riparian Woodland and Forest Natural Community: Red willow riparian woodland and forest occupy 6.7 acres within the Biological Study Area at Alamo Pintado Creek. This community makes up the primary riparian area associated with the creek and includes other trees such as western sycamore and Fremont cottonwood within the alliance. Temporary impacts to red willow riparian woodland and forest will occur from vegetation removal for

temporary access, equipment staging, and foot traffic at the bridge, and a total of approximately 13,605 square feet (0.31 acre) of red willow woodland and forest will be temporarily impacted as part of this project. Approximately 226 square feet (0.005 acre) of red willow riparian woodland and forest will be permanently impacted by the installation of new rock slope protection just downstream of the bridge. Red willow riparian woodland and forest is also considered a jurisdictional riparian area.

*Wetlands, Other Waters, and Riparian Areas*

Impacts on wetlands, other waters, and riparian areas have been determined by overlaying the project's Area of Potential Impact with the preliminary jurisdictional determination for the project's Biological Study Area location. Estimates of degraded, temporary, and permanent impacts on potential jurisdictional wetlands, other waters, riparian habitats, and other upland habitats are presented in Table 2.2. Other waters of the U.S. (streambeds) are regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Riparian and streambank habitats surrounding the streambed, including armored and unarmored sections of willow riparian habitat and armored and unarmored sections of streambanks with other vegetation types or lacking vegetation, are regulated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board and California Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdiction. Red willow woodland and forest is the primary willow riparian type present in the Biological Study Area. The existing condition of the stream corridor in the Biological Study Area includes existing rock slope protection, hardscape, and pipe/fence revetments due to past human modification.

Permanent impacts to jurisdictional features will occur from portions of the new abutment and retaining wall along the new multiuse path and the placement of new rock slope protection that will extend farther downstream from the bridge than existing hardscaping. The existing pier columns will be replaced with new, larger pier columns, but the new columns will mostly be farther outside of the Ordinary High-Water Mark than the existing ones. The removal of old columns balances out the footprint of new columns within the Ordinary High-Water Mark, so there are no new permanent impacts to Other Waters and Streambeds. A total of approximately 226 square feet (0.005 acre) of unarmored willow riparian habitat and 772 square feet (0.018 acre) of streambank (armored and unarmored areas combined) will be permanently impacted due to changes in the bridge column size and locations, as well as construction of new abutments and a retaining wall.

Temporary impacts to jurisdictional features will occur due to temporary access, staging areas, replacement of concrete slope paving with new rock slope protection, and temporary stream diversion if implemented in this project. A total of approximately 14,076 square feet (0.33 acre) of other waters and streambeds will be temporarily impacted. A total of 13,605 square feet (0.31 acre) of willow riparian habitat (armored and unarmored areas

combined) and 12,826 square feet (0.29 acre) of streambank (armored and unarmored areas combined) will be temporarily impacted. To minimize these temporary impacts to the streambed, the diversion system and temporary fills will be removed during the wet seasons to allow the stream to flow unobstructed.

Habitat degradation will occur along the streambank within ruderal herbaceous and landscaped vegetation where armoring currently exists. These areas have existing rock slope protection along the streambank, some of which is buried within soil and vegetated, including some mature trees. Trees will be removed, and new rock slope protection will be placed, degrading the existing quality of the already disturbed streambank; this is considered degradation because the configuration of new rock slope protection will differ somewhat in size, shape, and degree of backfill from existing streambank armoring and will result in changes to the amount of vegetation due to the removal of some large trees currently shading the stream corridor. A total of 815 square feet (0.02 acre) of other waters/streambeds will be degraded, and a total of 7,745 square feet (0.18 acre) of armored streambank will be degraded.

[The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Further, the proposed geotechnical drilling may result in minor temporary impacts to these jurisdictional features.

An estimated total of 23 trees may need to be removed from the riparian habitat and streambank for temporary access. Approximately five trees with a diameter at standard height, measured four and a half feet from ground level, of 6 to 12 inches, 17 trees with a diameter at standard height of 12 to 24 inches, and one tree with a diameter at standard height greater than 24 inches may be removed. Trees scoped for removal include Arroyo willow, coast live oak, cottonwood, red willow, sycamore, and valley oak.

**Table 2.2 Summary of Potential Impacts to Jurisdictional Aquatic Resources, Natural Communities, and Habitats of Concern**

| Land Cover Type | Degraded Impacts (Square Feet/Acres) | Temporary Impacts (Square Feet/Acres) | Permanent Impacts (Square Feet/Acres) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Other Waters/Streambed | 815 square feet/0.02 acre | 14,076 square feet/0.33 acre | None |
| Willow Riparian Habitat: Unarmored | None | 10,014 square feet/0.23 acre | 226 square feet/0.005 acre |
| Willow Riparian Habitat: Armored | None | 3,591 square feet/0.08 acre | None |
| Streambank: Unarmored | None | 496 square feet/0.01 acre | 736 square feet/0.017 acre |
| Streambank: Armored | 7,745 square feet/0.18 acre | 12,330 square feet/0.28 acre | 36 square feet/less than 0.001 acre |
| Red Willow Riparian Woodland and Forest (also captured above as willow riparian) | None | 13,605 square feet/0.31 acre | 226 square feet/0.005 acre |

*Special-Status Plant and Animal Species*

The project as proposed is not expected to impact the late-flowered mariposa lily, Sonoran maiden fern, or any other special-status plant species.

California red-legged frog: Impacts on California red-legged frogs and their respective habitat are presented in Table 2.3. The proposed project may result in up to 7,745 square feet (0.18 acre) of degradation impacts, up to 26,431 square feet (0.60 acre) of temporary impacts, and up to 998 square feet (0.022 acre) of permanent impacts to potential upland/dispersal habitat, including armored and unarmored willow riparian and streambank. Project construction could result in the injury or mortality of the California red-legged frog if present. The potential need to capture and relocate California red-legged frogs could subject these animals to stresses that could result in adverse effects. Injury or mortality could occur via accidental crushing by worker foot traffic or construction equipment. The potential for impacts to the California red-legged frog is anticipated to be low due to no observations of the species within the Biological Study Area during recent reconnaissance surveys, but this could change over time, where the species could potentially disperse and/or expand populations throughout the Biological Study Area.

[The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Further, the proposed geotechnical drilling may result in minor temporary impacts to California red-legged frog upland habitat.

However, no critical habitat for the California red-legged frog occurs at the proposed boring locations.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that the proposed project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, the California red-legged frog. The basis for this determination is that presence has been inferred, and there will be a low but possible potential for take of the species due to project activities. No critical habitat occurs within the Biological Study Area.

Southern California steelhead: The Area of Potential Impact includes potential migratory habitat for the Southern California steelhead, as well as marginal spawning habitat and low-quality rearing habitat. The potential for steelhead to be present within the project work area is very low because of the following reasons: Few steelhead are expected due to consistently low water levels, the lack of pools, and regular disturbance by maintenance activities. To the extent practicable, work in the channel will be done during the dry season of the year, when the water level will be lowest and steelhead are unlikely to be moving through the Area of Potential Impact.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that the project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, Southern California steelhead. No critical habitat occurs within the Biological Study Area. The California Endangered Species Act determination is that there will be no take of the Southern California steelhead.

Southwestern pond turtle: Impacts on southwestern pond turtles and their respective habitat are presented in Table 2.3. As mentioned in the California red-legged frog discussion above, the proposed project may result in up to 7,745 square feet (0.18 acre) of degradation impacts, up to 26,431 square feet (0.60 acre) of temporary impacts, and up to 998 square feet (0.022 acre) of permanent impacts to potential upland/dispersal habitat, including armored and unarmored willow riparian and streambank. Additionally, the proposed project may result in up to 815 square feet (0.02 acre) of degradation impacts and 14,076 square feet (0.33 acre) of temporary impacts to aquatic stream habitat for the southwestern pond turtle. Causes of temporary, permanent, and degradation impacts on southwestern pond turtles are similar to those described above for jurisdictional aquatic features. These estimated impacts represent the worst-case scenario based on the assumption that all upland habitat impact areas within the dispersal range of the southwestern pond turtle are suitable migratory and refuge habitat and that the creek provides suitable aquatic habitat.

Project construction could result in the injury or mortality of southwestern pond turtles (if present) during diversion and/or dewatering, along with other general construction activities. The potential need to capture and relocate southwestern pond turtles could subject these animals to stresses that could

result in adverse effects. Injury or mortality could occur via accidental crushing by worker foot traffic or construction equipment. Indirect impacts could also result from noise and disturbance associated with construction, which could alter foraging and/or dispersal behaviors. Erosion and sedimentation could also occur, which will directly or indirectly affect water quality. The potential for these impacts is anticipated to be low due to no observations of the species within the Biological Study Area during surveys. However, this could change over time, where these species could potentially expand populations or colonize within the streams and/or ponds in the Area of Potential Impact.

[The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Further, the proposed geotechnical drilling may result in minor temporary impacts to Southwestern pond turtle upland habitat. However, no critical habitat for the Southwestern pond turtle occurs at the proposed boring locations.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that the project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, the southwestern pond turtle. The basis for this determination is that southwestern pond turtle presence is inferred, and there will be a low but possible potential for take of the species because of project activities.

**Table 2.3 Estimated Impact to Habitats**

| Habitat | Degraded Impacts (Square Feet/Acres) | Temporary Impacts (Square Feet/Acres) | Permanent Impacts (Square Feet/Acres) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Southwestern pond turtle and California red-legged frog upland habitat | 7,745 square feet/0.18 acre | 26,431 square feet/0.60 acre | 998 square feet/0.022 acre |
| Southwestern pond turtle aquatic habitat | 815 square feet/0.02 acre | 14,076 square feet/0.33 acre | 0 square feet/0 acre |

Southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo: Based on historical data in the vicinity of the Biological Study Area, there is very low potential for least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher to be present within the Area of Potential Impact. The project will have small temporary impacts on marginal foraging habitat at Alamo Pintado Creek (13,605 square feet/0.31 acre of willow riparian habitat: armored and unarmored). Additionally, the willow riparian habitat that will be impacted by project activities is at the edges of the riparian corridor dispersed throughout the project area, rather than in one consolidated area.

With the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures used to protect all nesting bird species protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act, the California Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the California Fish and Game Code, the Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher. The project will not impact the designated critical habitat for these species.

The southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo are also state-listed taxa under the California Endangered Species Act. No California Endangered Species Act take of these species is expected. However, if either of these species is detected during preconstruction surveys, coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be required.

[The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] No known nests will be impacted by the proposed geotechnical drilling. If any are found during preconstruction surveys for geotechnical drilling, appropriate avoidance measures will be implemented, and appropriate agencies will be contacted if necessary.

Crotch's bumblebee and obscure bumblebee: Potential for project activities to impact these species is low because work will be limited to the bridge location, the existing roadway, and highly disturbed areas along the shoulders. However, temporary impacts to Crotch's or obscure bumblebees could occur if the species is present during vegetation removal, staging, and ground-disturbing activities at locations beyond the highway shoulder where suitable habitat exists. Permanent impacts to the species are unlikely to occur because rock slope protection will be placed in areas not suitable for nesting or foraging, and primarily in areas already partially armored in some form. If Crotch's or obscure bumblebees are present on the project site, there is a potential for individuals to be directly impacted by construction-associated ground-disturbing activities, which could lead to mortality for individual bees or a colony. While Crotch's or obscure bumblebees are not anticipated to be nesting in the project area, additional focused surveys will be conducted during the design phase. If the Crotch's bumblebee is observed using the

project area, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and apply for a Section 2081 Incidental Take Permit if necessary.

Coast range newt: Like the impacts described previously for the California red-legged frog, construction activities for the proposed project could result in the injury or mortality of coast range newts, if present. The potential need to capture and relocate coast range newts will subject these animals to stresses that could result in adverse effects. Injury or mortality could occur from accidental crushing by worker foot traffic or construction equipment. Erosion and sedimentation could also occur, which will directly or indirectly affect water quality. The potential for these impacts is anticipated to be low due to a lack of observations of the species within the Biological Study Area locations during surveys, but this could change over time.

Two-striped garter snake: The proposed project could impact the two-striped garter snake if found in the Area of Potential Impact. However, the chances are low due to poor habitat conditions immediately next to the highway and commercial areas where most of the work will take place. With the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures described below, impacts to the two-striped garter snake are anticipated to be minimized.

Northern California legless lizard: The Biological Study Area supports habitat for the Northern California legless lizard, primarily in the intact oak woodland areas. Most construction activities will occur within the streambed, riparian habitat, and disturbed ruderal areas next to the bridge. However, the disturbance of dirt and vegetation could directly impact the species. Indirect impacts could also result from noise and disturbance associated with construction, which could alter foraging and/or nesting behaviors. With the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures described below, impacts to the Northern California legless lizard are not anticipated.

American badger: While the Biological Study Area supports habitat for the American badger, the area within the Biological Study Area was assessed to be marginal habitat at best because it occurs next to the State Route 246 travel corridor and is next to the urban area of Solvang. The disturbance of dirt and vegetation could directly impact burrows of any size or crush the species. Indirect impacts could also result from noise and disturbance associated with construction, which could alter foraging and/or nesting behaviors. With the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures described below, impacts to the American badger are not anticipated.

Townsend’s big-eared bat, pallid bat, and other roosting bats: Although no bat roosts or bat roost signs were observed during surveys, there is a marginal potential that bats could establish new roosts in trees within the Area of Potential Impact. There is a potential that woody riparian trees proposed for removal could support a variety of roosting bat species. However, the likelihood is low due to the low density of trees near the bridge within the

landscaped area and the high amount of paved areas, creating less sheltering habitat. Tree removal could impact roosting bats if present during construction.

If bats were to be present during construction, indirect impacts could result from noise and disturbance associated with construction, which could alter roosting behaviors. Much like with bird species, the removal of trees and other vegetation could directly impact roosting bats, if present. Direct effects could result in injury or mortality of bats, and harassment could alter roosting behaviors. The implementation of pre-activity surveys and exclusion zones, if necessary, will reduce the potential for adverse effects to roosting bat species.

[The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] No roosting bats will be impacted by the proposed geotechnical drilling. If any are found during preconstruction surveys for geotechnical drilling, appropriate avoidance measures will be implemented, and appropriate agencies will be contacted if necessary.

Cooper's hawk, purple martin, and other nesting birds: Vegetation removal and site grading could impact active bird nests and any eggs or young living in nests. Indirect impacts could also result from noise and disturbance associated with construction, which could alter foraging or nesting behaviors. While a temporary loss of vegetation that provides potential nesting habitat could occur, this will be offset by revegetation efforts for the project. The implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures described below will reduce the potential for negative impacts to nesting bird species.

[The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] No known nests will be impacted by the proposed geotechnical drilling. If any are found during preconstruction surveys for geotechnical drilling, appropriate avoidance measures will be implemented, and appropriate agencies will be contacted if necessary.

*Invasive Species*

Ground disturbance and other aspects of project construction could potentially spread or introduce invasive species within the Biological Study Area. The proposed project could cause an increase in invasive terrestrial species in communities and spread into areas not currently dominated by them. However, the project also has the opportunity to reduce the abundance and spread of invasive species through avoidance and minimization efforts.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

The measures listed below will reduce potential impacts on biological resources. The measures have been organized by the primary resource or species they are designed to protect, but they may apply to several biological resources. Also note that the Water Pollution Control Program and many of

the Best Management Practices and standard specifications outlined in Section 1.6 will avoid and minimize impacts on biological resources.

[The following have changed since the release of the Draft Environmental Document per comments received during public circulation: BIO-2, BIO-10, BIO-11, BIO-19, BIO-24, BIO-26, BIO-27, BIO-28, BIO-30, and BIO-31.

Further, measure BIO-16 was revised to include the proposed ratio for permanent impacts.

Lastly, measures BIO-37 to BIO-56 were added specifically for the proposed geotechnical drilling operations.]

*All Biological Resources*

The following general measures will apply for biological resources:

**BIO-1**: Before construction, a qualified biologist will conduct a Worker Environmental Awareness Training course for all personnel regarding all the identified biological resources in the project area. The contractor shall submit a written request to the resident engineer to schedule the training 14 calendar days before performing any work on the project.

**BIO-2**: Caltrans will immediately notify the California Department of Fish and Wildlife of any observations of any special-status plant and animal species. Observations of any special-status plant and animal species will also be documented on California Natural Diversity Database forms and submitted to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife within one month of observation during project activities.

**BIO-3**: Before the start of excavation or construction activities, a qualified biologist will conduct a preconstruction survey for all identified special-status animal species discussed in this document. If any of these species are found within the Area of Potential Impact, they will be relocated to a suitable location outside the Area of Potential Impact. If Southern California steelheads are found, then all project activities will immediately stop, and the appropriate regulatory agencies will be contacted to pursue take coverage. The qualified biologist will use the most current survey protocols available for the species to ensure the highest level of species detection, including visual encounter surveys and nesting survey techniques.

*Natural Communities and Habitats of Concern*

The avoidance, minimization, and compensatory mitigation measures proposed for jurisdictional aquatic resources described below have been assessed as sufficient to minimize impacts to red willow riparian woodland and forest.

*Wetlands, Other Waters, and Riparian Areas*

Before construction, Caltrans shall obtain a Section 404 Nationwide Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and a Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for activities that impact their respective jurisdictions. Permit conditions will be implemented during construction.

**BIO-4**: Before the start of any ground-disturbing activities, environmentally sensitive area fencing, flagging, or another boundary marking system shall be used to demarcate (distinguish) jurisdictional features and the dripline of trees to be protected within the project limits. Caltrans-defined environmentally sensitive areas shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field before the start of construction activities.

**BIO-5**: No work shall occur in areas of standing or flowing surface water. If dewatering or diversion operations are necessary, a detailed dewatering and diversion plan, inclusive of water quality monitoring requirements, will be prepared and implemented.

**BIO-6**: Construction activities in jurisdictional areas and temporary stream diversion, if needed, shall be timed to occur during the dry season, when the surface water is likely to be dry or at a seasonal minimum, typically between June 1 and October 31 in any given year, or as otherwise directed by the regulatory agencies. Deviations from this work window will only be made with permission from the relevant regulatory agencies. Activities that may be approved outside the typical construction window include tree removal and trimming that does not require grubbing or ground disturbance; restoration seeding, planting, and maintenance of plantings; and stormwater measures that require the use of equipment, subject to prior agency approval. Maintenance of Stormwater Best Management Practices using hand tools is permitted year-round.

**BIO-7**: During construction, sediment and erosion control measures shall be implemented and maintained. Fiber rolls, barriers, and other Best Management Practices shall be installed as needed to stabilize the project site. Jurisdictional areas shall be stabilized for winter before November 1, either by completing construction in these areas, including installation of permanent erosion control measures, or by implementing winterization stabilization measures that ensure disturbed soils in jurisdictional areas are stabilized to withstand the 10-year, 24-hour storm event. At a minimum, erosion controls shall be maintained by the contractor on a daily basis throughout the construction period.

**BIO-8**: Other than the implementation of stormwater measures and water quality sampling, work will not occur in jurisdictional areas when rain is falling or when the National Weather Service forecast predicts a 25 percent chance

or greater of at least 0.1 inch of rain within a 24-hour period. Work can resume if rain does not occur, or after rain has stopped, the forecast predicts at least 72 hours of clear weather, and site conditions are dry enough to avoid discharges of sediment into jurisdictional areas.

**BIO-9**: No concrete shall be poured if the National Weather Service forecast predicts a 10 percent or greater chance of rain for the city of Solvang within the next 72 hours. All poured concrete must be protected from contact with rainwater or surface waters for 30 days or until testing levels for pH (potential for hydrogen) with tap water measure below 9.5.

**BIO-10**: To the extent feasible, staging, parking, and refueling of equipment and vehicles must occur at least 100 feet from jurisdictional areas. Street legal vehicles must be maintained and fueled at least 100 feet away from jurisdictional areas. Further, all refueling must be conducted outside the wetted channel, fully isolated from the streambed, in a designated area within secondary containment adequate to contain the full volume of material. If staging of equipment and materials must occur closer than 100 feet from jurisdictional areas, the staging areas must have adequate Best Management Practices to prevent discharges from leaving the staging area and entering jurisdictional areas. Secondary containment adequate to contain the full volume of liquids must be provided.

**BIO-11**: At a minimum, all equipment and vehicles shall be checked and maintained by the contractor on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and avoid potential leaks or spills. Drip pans must be placed under equipment that is stationary for more than 12 hours. Stationary equipment used in jurisdictional areas, such as generators, must be placed in secondary containment. Equipment must be removed from the channel if the National Weather Service predicts a chance of at least 0.1 inch of rain within a 24-hour period for the city of Solvang.

At all times of year, equipment must be removed from floodprone areas if the National Weather Service predicts a greater than 25 percent chance of storms exceeding the 10-year 24-hour event, atmospheric river conditions affecting the Alamo Pintado watershed, or other storm conditions that could result in flow overtopping the streambanks.

**BIO-12**: Limited night work is permitted within jurisdictional areas. Lighting must be angled down and pointed toward work areas to minimize illumination of nearby jurisdictional areas outside project limits.

**BIO-13**: All litter, construction debris, equipment, loose materials, and soil spoils shall be removed from jurisdictional areas at the end of every work shift. Stockpiles of materials, including temporarily stockpiled soils, may not be stored within jurisdictional areas. Stockpiles not actively being used for construction must be covered and surrounded with a linear sediment barrier.

**BIO-14**: Stream contours shall be restored as close as possible to their original condition.

**BIO-15**: The temporary stream diversion and temporary fills will be removed during the wet seasons to allow flow and to minimize the temporal loss of jurisdictional features.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-16**: Caltrans shall restore all temporarily impacted areas to pre-project conditions, functions, and values and install replacement plantings, vegetate newly installed rock slope protection along the streambank, implement invasive species control along the Alamo Pintado Creek corridor, and implement other potential means of mitigation. Caltrans will restore all areas temporarily impacted for access needs on-site at a 1-to-1 ratio. Additionally, for areas that are treated with buried/backfilled rock slope protection (degradation impacts), Caltrans will restore vegetation over the buried/backfilled rock slope protection and will also restore an additional 0.5 acre of riparian vegetation for each acre of vegetated backfilled rock slope protection, resulting in a 1.5-to-1 ratio of restoration for degraded areas. Caltrans would also restore or re-establish riparian vegetation at a ratio of 3-to-1 to offset each acre of permanently impacted streambed and streambank habitats.

Trees that are removed within jurisdictional areas shall be replanted as follows: trees with a diameter at standard height between 6 and 12 inches shall be replanted at a 3-to-1 ratio, trees with a diameter at standard height between 12 and 24 inches shall be replanted at a 5-to-1 ratio, and trees with a diameter at standard height greater than 24 inches shall be replanted at a 10-to-1 ratio.

*Late-Flowered Mariposa Lily, Sonoran Maiden Fern, and Other Special-Status Plant Species*

**BIO-17**: To avoid impacts to special-status plant species, all staging and equipment storage areas shall occur in existing pullouts or at paved locations that have been cleared by Caltrans Environmental.

*California Red-Legged Frog*

All temporary impacts to native vegetation will be offset by replacement plantings within the project limits. In addition to the measures detailed below, the mitigation proposed for jurisdictional aquatic resources described above will also mitigate impacts to California red-legged frog habitat.

**BIO-18**: Caltrans anticipates the proposed project will qualify for Federal Endangered Species Act incidental take coverage under the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program, which contains an extensive

list of measures for each phase of the construction period. Some of the notable measures are summarized below:

- Only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologists shall participate in activities associated with the capture, handling, and monitoring of California red-legged frogs.

- Ground disturbance shall not begin until written approval is received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the biologist is qualified to conduct the work.

- Preconstruction surveys must be completed 48 hours before any construction work starts. If any life stage of the California red-legged frog is detected, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be notified prior to the start of construction.

- Biologists will conduct Worker Environmental Awareness Training for construction personnel.

- A biological monitor shall be on-site until all California red-legged frogs have been removed, workers have been instructed, and all disturbances to the habitat area are completed.

- During project activities, all trash that may attract predators or scavengers shall be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and debris shall be removed from work areas.

- All refueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment and vehicles shall occur at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies and not in a location from which a spill will drain directly toward aquatic habitat, unless otherwise preapproved by the necessary agencies.

- Habitat contours shall be returned to a natural configuration at the end of project activities. This measure shall be implemented in all areas disturbed by activities associated with the project, unless the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Caltrans determine that it is not feasible or modification of original contours will benefit the California red-legged frog.

- The number of access routes, the size of staging areas, and the total area of activity shall be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project.

- Caltrans shall attempt to schedule work for times of the year when impacts to the California red-legged frog will be minimal. For example, work that will affect large pools that may support breeding will be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the breeding season (November through May). Isolated pools that are important to maintain California red-

legged frogs through the driest portions of the year will be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the late summer and early fall.

- If a work site is to be temporarily dewatered by pumping, intakes will be completely screened with wire mesh not larger than 0.2 inch to prevent California red-legged frogs from entering the pump system. Water will be released or pumped downstream at an appropriate rate to maintain downstream flows during construction. Upon completion of construction activities, any diversions or barriers to flow will be removed in a manner that will allow flow to resume with the least disturbance to the substrate.

- Unless approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, water will not be impounded in a manner that may attract California red-legged frogs.

- A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall permanently remove any individuals of exotic species, such as bullfrogs.

- The fieldwork code of practice developed by the Declining Amphibian Task Force shall be followed at all times to prevent the introduction of diseases.

- Restore the site to natural contours and revegetate it with native plants suitable for the habitats within the project area.

*Southern California Steelhead*

In addition to the measures detailed below, the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures, including the work windows, proposed for jurisdictional aquatic resources described above, will also mitigate impacts to Southern California steelhead.

**BIO-19**: During in-stream work, a qualified biologist will be retained with experience in steelhead biology and ecology, aquatic habitats, biological monitoring (including diversion/dewatering), and capturing, handling, and relocating fish species. During in-stream work, a qualified biologist will continuously monitor placement and removal of any required stream diversions and will capture stranded fish species and relocate them to suitable habitat, as appropriate.

**BIO-20**: If any steelhead are found during construction monitoring, all work activities will stop, and the appropriate regulatory agencies will be contacted to pursue take coverage.

**BIO-21**: Caltrans will design replacement bridge structures without scuppers, deck drains, or other facilities that drain stormwater directly into the stream to prevent pollutants such as 6PPD-quinone (an oxidation product of 6PPD, which is an additive intended to prevent damage to tire rubber from ozone) from directly entering waterways.

*Southwestern Pond Turtle*

In addition to the measures detailed below, the compensatory mitigation proposed for jurisdictional aquatic resources described above will also mitigate impacts to the southwestern pond turtle. Further, implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures outlined for jurisdictional aquatic resources and the California red-legged frog will avoid and minimize impacts to individuals of the southwestern pond turtle as well. Lastly, Caltrans Best Management Practices implemented to avoid impacts on water quality will avoid impacts on aquatic habitat for the southwestern pond turtle.

**BIO-22**: The project includes environmentally sensitive areas to minimize impacts to sensitive areas and species. The project plans will delineate environmentally sensitive areas that restrict access to the minimum required for construction, minimizing impacts to southwestern pond turtles and their habitat. No vehicle access within these environmentally sensitive areas will be permitted. During construction, the resident engineer and biological monitor will determine and agree upon the exact placement of environmentally sensitive area markers, based on the project plans, and will determine and agree upon the appropriate material for marking environmentally sensitive areas.

*Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher*

In addition to the measures described below, the compensatory mitigation measures proposed for riparian habitat in the jurisdictional aquatic features section will also mitigate the impacts to least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher habitat. Further, the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures used to protect all nesting bird species will also minimize any potential impacts to the least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher. Lastly, impacts to vegetation will be offset by replacement plantings within the project limits, which will also replace in-kind nesting habitat.

**BIO-23**: Focused surveys following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey guidelines for the least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher shall be completed to determine the presence/absence of the least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher wherever suitable habitat is present within 500 feet of the limits of construction. Surveys shall be conducted within one year before the start of construction activities. If the least Bell's vireo or southwestern willow flycatcher is detected during these surveys, formal Section 7 consultation will be initiated. Caltrans will provide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with a report detailing least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher survey efforts for the breeding season preceding construction.

**BIO-24**: Before construction starts, vegetation removal shall be scheduled to occur from October 1 to January 31, outside the typical nesting bird season, if

possible, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 500 feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 30), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than five calendar days before the start of construction. If an active nest is identified, a qualified biologist shall establish a buffer between the construction activities and the nest so that nesting activities are not interrupted. Standard buffers are 300 feet for highly sensitive birds and 500 feet for raptors. The buffer shall be delineated by temporary fencing and remain in effect as long as construction occurs. No project construction shall occur within the fenced nest zone until the young have fledged, are no longer being fed by the parents, have left the nest, and will no longer be impacted by the project. Any reductions to the nest buffer distance require written approval from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**BIO-25**: If the least Bell's vireo or southwestern willow flycatcher is observed within 100 feet of the project area during construction or the preconstruction surveys, all project activities shall stop immediately, and the relevant resource agencies shall be consulted. Development of additional avoidance and minimization measures will occur as necessary in coordination with the pertinent agencies.

*Crotch's Bumblebee and Obscure Bumblebee*

**BIO-26**: During the design phase, a Crotch's bumblebee habitat assessment will be conducted following the California Department of Fish and Wildlife "Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act Candidate Bumble Bee Species," dated June 6, 2023. If Crotch's bumblebee habitat is determined to be present within the project site:

- At a minimum, three focused non-invasive surveys shall be conducted before ground disturbance for the Crotch's bumblebee and its nests, following California Department of Fish and Wildlife guidance. Each survey should be ideally spaced two to four weeks apart during the colony active period to ensure that the surveys cover a range of dates within the same calendar year. A survey report shall be submitted to the lead agency and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 30 days of completion.

- A Worker Environmental Awareness Training course will be provided for all construction personnel before the start of any ground disturbance or vegetation removal to discuss Crotch's bumblebee identification, ecology, habitat, and avoidance and minimization measures.

- Before starting any ground-disturbing activities, the qualified biologist shall identify and flag Crotch's bumblebee feeding and nesting habitat to be avoided. Environmentally sensitive area fencing shall be installed around these areas, inspected weekly, and maintained for the duration of

construction. Environmentally sensitive areas to be avoided shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field before the start of construction activities.

**BIO-27**: If a Crotch's bumblebee is identified in the project area, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine whether, a Section 2081 Incidental Take Permit will be necessary pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2080 and what follows. Caltrans shall comply with conditions set forth in Incidental Take Permit and shall obtain a fully executed take authorization prior to implementing or continuing project ground-disturbing activities.

*American Badger*

**BIO-28**: No rodent control pesticides shall be used, including anticoagulant rodenticides such as brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone, and difenacoum. This is necessary to minimize the possibility of primary or secondary poisoning of American badgers or other special-status species. A qualified biologist shall inspect all burrows within the project area for American badgers and other wildlife which may use these burrows as refugia. Inspections shall be conducted within three days prior to ground-disturbing or clearing activities. If an active burrow is identified, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife shall be notified, and a protective buffer shall be established around the burrow with California Department of Fish and Wildlife concurrence. No construction or clearing shall occur within the buffer until the burrow is no longer active or until written approval is obtained from California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Inspection results, buffer locations, and any follow-up actions shall be documented and submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 14 days of the inspection. Inspection results, buffer locations, and any follow-up actions shall be documented and submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 14 days of the inspection.

*Townsend's Big-Eared Bat, Pallid Bat, and Other Roosting Bats*

**BIO-29**: Tree removal shall be scheduled to occur from September 1 to February 14, outside the typical bat maternity roosting season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to roosting bats.

**BIO-30**: If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 100 feet of potential habitat during the bat maternity roosting season (February 1 to September 1), a bat roost survey shall be conducted by a biologist determined qualified by Caltrans within 14 days before construction. The biologist conducting the preconstruction survey will also identify the nature of the bat utilization (in essence, no roosting, night roost, day roost, hibernation roost, or maternity roost) and determine if passive bat exclusion will be necessary and feasible. If an exclusion is necessary, Caltrans shall consult with California Department of Fish and Wildlife on design and

implementation of the exclusion. If an active day roost is found, a qualified Caltrans biologist shall determine, in consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area shall be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that roosting activity has stopped or exclusionary methods have successfully evicted roosting bats.

**BIO-31**: If bats are found by a qualified biologist to be maternity roosting, active bat maternity roosts shall not be disturbed or destroyed until pups are capable of flight. Caltrans should establish a 500-foot buffer around the colony where no construction activities may take place during the bat maternity season (April 1-August 31). This will reduce the disturbance to the colony and therefore reduce the risk that the bats will abandon the colony and/or young. The final buffer may be adjusted by a qualified biologist, with written California Department of Fish and Wildlife approval, based on species-specific behavior, roost type, and site conditions, while larger buffers (e.g., 500 feet) are applied to maternity colonies due to the increased vulnerability of pups. To protect hibernating bats, no construction or tree removal shall occur within 100 feet of known or potential hibernacula between October 1 and January 31 unless a qualified biologist determines that bats are absent. All survey results, buffer locations, and exclusion activities shall be documented and submitted to Caltrans within 14 days of completion. Survey results shall be available to California Department of Fish and Wildlife upon request.

*Cooper's Hawk, Purple Martin, and Other Nesting Birds*

**BIO-32**: During the non-nesting season (October 1 to January 31), methods to deter new nests will be implemented to prevent new nests from forming during project activities. Exact methods of deterrence will be determined during the design phase. Removal of nests as they are beginning to form may be conducted as a last resort to further prevent nesting during project activities. There will be no removal of fully formed active nests. Partially built nests may only be removed if they have been monitored by a qualified biologist and determined to be inactive. If an active nest is found, the qualified biologist will determine an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area will be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that juveniles have fledged and are no longer dependent on the nest.

**BIO-33**: Active bird nests must not be disturbed, and eggs or young of birds covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code must not be killed, destroyed, injured, or harassed at any time.

*Invasive Species*

During construction, Caltrans will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible as follows:

**BIO-34**: Only clean fill shall be imported. When practicable, invasive exotic plants on the project site shall be removed and properly disposed of. All invasive vegetation removed from the construction site shall be taken to a landfill to prevent the spread of invasive species. If soil from weedy areas must be removed off-site, the top 6 inches containing the seed layer in areas with weedy species shall be disposed of at a landfill. Species that occur on the California Invasive Plant Council's Invasive Plant Inventory shall not be used in the Caltrans erosion control seed mix or landscaping plans for the project.

**BIO-35**: To minimize the introduction of invasive plant species, all vehicles, machinery, and equipment shall be in a clean and soil-free condition before entering the project limits. Construction equipment shall be certified as "weed-free" by Caltrans before entering the construction site.

**BIO-36** Selected use of herbicides may be used to target highly invasive species already present within the project area that are difficult to control with mechanical techniques alone. Herbicide application will be limited to spot spraying target species and will only be applied during periods of dry weather when winds are less than 3 miles per hour. Herbicide application will be conducted to improve conditions over baseline by reducing the cover of highly invasive species.

*Geotechnical Drilling*

The following additional measures shall be implemented specifically for the geotechnical drilling operation:

**BIO-37**: Prior to the start of drilling activities, Caltrans will obtain required 404, 401 and 1600 permits, certifications and agreements. Additionally, Caltrans will obtain concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service through section 7 consultation.

**BIO-38**: If work will occur between February 1-September 30, the typical nesting bird season, a nesting bird survey will be conducted. If an active nest of a native species is found, a qualified biologist will determine an appropriate buffer size based on species and response to work conditions. Work within the established buffer will be delayed and/or monitored until the nest is no longer active.

**BIO-39**: A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved biologist will survey the work area around Locations 2 and 3 no more than 48 hours before the onset of work activities for California red-legged frog. If any life stage of the

California red-legged frog is found, and these individuals are likely to be killed or injured by work activities, the approved biologist shall be allowed sufficient time to move them from the site before work begins. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved biologist shall relocate the California red-legged frogs the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and will not be affected by the activities associated with the project. The relocation site shall be in the same drainage to the extent practicable. Caltrans shall coordinate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the relocation site prior to the capture of any California red-legged frogs.

**BIO-40**: Staging and equipment and material storage will occur in existing pullouts or previously paved locations.

**BIO-41**: All drilling mud and all fluids associated with testing must be prevented from leaking or washing into waterways adjacent to geotechnical study areas. All fueling of equipment must be done at least 100 feet from waterways.

**BIO-42**: No work will occur at night during or within 24 hours following rain events (more than 0.1 inch of rain within 24 hours) in order to avoid impacting migrating amphibians.

**BIO-43**: Vehicles, machinery, and equipment shall be in a clean and soil-free condition before traveling off-pavement in the project site.

**BIO-44**: If suspected contaminated soil is discovered during potholing, all work will cease in the suspected contaminated area and the Caltrans hazardous waste specialist will be contacted.

**BIO-45**: Only water will be used for dust abatement.

**BIO-46**: Construction pipes or similar structures with a diameter of four-inches or greater that are stored at the project site overnight will be thoroughly inspected before the pipe is moved, buried, capped, or otherwise moved in any way.

**BIO-47**: Workers shall inspect under vehicles and equipment for wildlife before they are moved.

**BIO-48**: All food-related trash items will be disposed of in securely closed containers and removed from the project site at least once per week.

**BIO-49**: Pets and firearms are prohibited within the project area.

**BIO-50**: Ensure that project related vehicles do not leak anti-freeze or other hazardous materials.

**BIO-51**: Water may not be impounded in any manner that may attract wildlife.

**BIO-52**: If any sensitive species are found in the project area they should be allowed to leave of their own accord or may be relocated out of harm's way by a qualified biologist.

**BIO-53:** If a special status species is observed in or adjacent to the project site, it will be immediately reported to the Caltrans Geotechnical Engineer who will immediately notify the Caltrans biologist.

**BIO-54:** Any contractor, employee, or other personnel who inadvertently kills or injures a special-status species will immediately report the incident to the Caltrans Geotechnical Engineer who will immediately notify the Caltrans biologist.

**BIO-55**: Upon completion of project, all construction refuse shall be removed from the project site and disposed of properly.

**BIO-56**: For borings in streambed and bank areas, the last few feet of backfill placed to seal boreholes must be native stream substrate.

### 2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Historical Property Survey Report, Archaeological Survey Report, and Historic Resource Evaluation Report, all dated March 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources |
|---|---|
| a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5? | **No Impact** |
| b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |

#### *Affected Environment*

The term "cultural resources," as used in this document, refers to the "built environment" (for example, structures, bridges, railroads, and water conveyance systems), places of traditional or cultural importance, and archaeological sites (both prehistoric and historic), regardless of significance. Under federal and state laws, cultural resources that meet certain criteria of

significance are referred to by various terms, including “historic properties,” “historic sites,” “historical resources,” and “tribal cultural resources.”

In accordance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement between Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration, and the California State Historic Preservation Officer, the Area of Potential Effect was established to include all areas of potential impacts and the extent of the horizontal and vertical limits of disturbance from construction, as determined by Caltrans District 5 Design Engineers. The Area of Potential Effect for purposes of Section 106 is the area within which a project may directly or indirectly cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, should any be present. The Area of Potential Effect encompasses all ground disturbance, staging and storage areas, Caltrans right-of-way within the project limits, and any privately owned lands where a Temporary Construction Easement, property acquisition, or Rights of Entry have been (or will need to be) obtained.

The Area of Direct Impact is defined as any known areas of planned direct impact, such as those shown on engineering plans. The Area of Direct Impact includes all areas subject to project-related ground-disturbing activities. The project’s Area of Direct Impact includes the location of the bridge replacement, sidewalks to be upgraded, rock slope protection installation areas, areas of vegetation removal, the private driveway to be realigned, access roads, and equipment storage areas.

*Native American Heritage Commission, Native American Tribes, Groups, and Individuals*

In October 2023, Caltrans sent letters to the Native American Heritage Commission, requesting a search of the Sacred Lands Files as well as a list of Native American individuals who are familiar with the project area and may have information pertinent to cultural resource studies. In November 2023, the Native American Heritage Commission responded to inform Caltrans that the Sacred Lands File search was positive for cultural resources. They also provided a list of Native American tribes and individuals who may have knowledge of cultural resources in the proposed project area. However, due to project changes, a second request was sent to the Native American Heritage Commission in April 2024, and a response was received shortly thereafter with updated Sacred Lands Files positive search results and a contact list.

Native American consultation is required under state law, Assembly Bill 52 (Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1). In April 2024, Caltrans sent letters to the list of individuals provided by the Native American Heritage Commission to initiate consultation under Assembly Bill 52 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The letter included a project description and mapping indicating where the project proposes work and a list of known cultural resources found within the project limits. The Santa Ynez

Band of Chumash Indians responded to the outreach to request formal tribal consultation. The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians expressed an interest in assisting with the development of aesthetic treatments and the incorporation of tribal motifs or similar and requested to have a tribal monitor present during the construction phase of the project. Caltrans will continue to consult with interested tribal parties throughout the project.

In April 2024, Caltrans held an introductory partner stakeholder outreach meeting to discuss the project, and tribal representatives who were listed on the Native American Heritage Commission contact list were invited and attended the meeting.

*Local Historical Society and Historic Preservation Groups*

In February 2023, Caltrans contacted the Elverhøj Museum of History and Art, a museum in Solvang whose mission is to preserve and exhibit the history and Danish culture of the city of Solvang, for any additional information about historic resources in the vicinity of the project. The museum provided further information on various nearby historical resources, such as grist and fulling mills associated with the mission era.

In March 2023, Caltrans coordinated with the County of Santa Barbara Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission to discuss historic resources related to Mission Santa Inés within the proximity of the project. In May 2023, Caltrans also coordinated with the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Trust provided additional information about nearby resources related to Mission Santa Inés.

*Architectural History*

Architectural history studies conducted for the project found that there are three historic-period built-environment resources, including the Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge, which was constructed in 1954 and widened in 1972. The other two resources are located on two nearby commercial properties at the following addresses in the city of Solvang: 2021 Mission Drive and 2025 Mission Drive. A Historic Resources Evaluation Report was prepared, documenting the evaluation and findings.

The Alamo Pintado Bridge was evaluated and determined to be ineligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historical Resources (Category 5 Bridges), with concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Officer on this finding. In addition, the two commercial properties within the Area of Potential Effect were evaluated and also determined to be ineligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historical Resources, and therefore are not historical resources for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act.

*Archaeology*

Several methods were implemented as part of archaeological studies for this project: a records search at the Central Coast Information Center and the Caltrans Cultural Resources Database; a review of historical mapping, aerials, and assessor's records; Native American consultation; a buried site sensitivity study; an archaeological survey; and an Archaeological Survey Report.

Three resources were identified within the project area. One of these resources is the Alamo Pintado Bridge, which, as previously mentioned, was determined to be ineligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources (Category 5 Bridge). The other two resources include Historic State Route 246 and the Old Mission Road Bridge Abutment. Both of these resources were determined to meet the criteria of being exempt from evaluation (Property Type 1: Minor, ubiquitous, or fragmentary infrastructure elements) in accordance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans.

The methodology previously described also found that a previous Extended Phase 1 geoarchaeological investigation was conducted within the proposed Area of Potential Effect in 2010. This study found that the Alamo Pintado Creek floodplain contains at least one extensive soil deposit that could contain buried prehistoric archaeological remains. This study also conducted continuous core boring excavations at nine locations within the Area of Potential Effect and Area of Direct Impact for the Alamo Pintado Bridge Replacement Project. These borings had negative findings, and no resources were identified in the nearby creek banks or within the deposits of the continuous cores that were placed within the floodplain. Caltrans determined this report to be sufficient and consistent with the findings of the current survey for this project.

### *Environmental Consequences*

Pursuant to the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement between Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration, and the California State Historic Preservation Officer, Caltrans has determined that a Finding of No Historic Properties Affected is appropriate for this undertaking because there are no historic properties within the Area of Potential Effect. Therefore, no impacts on historical resources are anticipated as a result of this project.

The Archaeological Survey Report prepared in support of this project determined negative findings, and no previously unidentified resources were located within the Area of Potential Effect.

Caltrans applies standard specifications to all projects in the event of the discovery of unanticipated cultural materials. If previously identified cultural materials are unearthed during project construction, it is Caltrans policy that

work be stopped in that area until a qualified archaeologist can assess the significance of the find. An additional archaeological survey will be needed if project limits are extended beyond the present survey limits.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

The following avoidance measure will help reduce the potential for any impacts on archaeological resources.

**CUL-1**: A preconstruction Worker Environmental Awareness Program training for construction personnel and construction phase tribal monitoring of project excavation and initial ground disturbance shall occur.

## 2.1.6 Energy

Caltrans incorporates energy efficiency, conservation, and climate change measures into transportation planning, project development, design, operations, and maintenance of transportation facilities, fleets, buildings, and equipment to minimize the use of fuel supplies and energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The project is not capacity increasing, and, therefore, the operation will not increase energy use.

Energy usage will be required during construction but will be minimized whenever possible through the recycling of materials and the implementation of greenhouse gas reduction strategies. Replacing or repairing the existing highway facilities is needed to prevent the undermining of the roadway and maintain the safety and reliability of the State Route 246 corridor.

Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy |
|---|---|
| a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation? | **No Impact** |
| b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency? | **No Impact** |

## 2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information in the Geologic Hazards Report dated April 2025, the Structure Preliminary Geotechnical Report dated August 2023, and the Paleontological Identification Report dated April 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils |
|---|---|
| a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:<br>i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. | **No Impact** |
| ii) Strong seismic ground shaking? | **No Impact** |
| iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| iv) Landslides? | **No Impact** |
| b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on-site or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property? | **No Impact** |
| e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater? | **No Impact** |
| f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature? | **No Impact** |

### *Affected Environment*

The project site is located approximately 8.7 miles southeast of the central portion of the Los Alamos Fault, which may be potentially active according to archived documentation on the California Geological Survey's Alquist-Priolo Site Investigation Reports Online Database and the U.S. Geological Survey's online Quaternary Fault and Fold Database of the U.S. The most active fault

zone, the San Andreas Fault, is approximately 42 miles northeast of the project site.

The California Geological Survey record and the U.S. Geological Survey Quaternary Fault and Fold database indicate the proposed improvements are not within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone or within 1,000 feet of any mapped fault that is Holocene (up to 11,000 years old) or younger. Therefore, the proposed improvements are not considered susceptible to surface fault rupture hazards per Caltrans standards.

The Structure Preliminary Geotechnical Report for the project identified the site as potentially susceptible to liquefaction or related seismic hazards, including total or differential ground settlement, seismic downdrag, and lateral spreading. Upon review of published geologic maps, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's soil survey report and the site-specific report's proposed improvements in the project limits were found to be situated on primarily embankment fill and valley and floodplain deposits. These geologic units are relatively stable but have the potential for liquefaction.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture soil survey report generated for the project site found soils with soil erodibility factors ranging from 0.10 to 0.32, which corresponds to low to moderate erodibility. The moderately erodible soil is found within approximately 200 feet of the Alamo Pintado intersection. The remainder of the project site consists of low-erodible soil. Unified Soil Classification data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's soil survey report also shows the project limits have no high plasticity surficial clay or silt and will not pose substantial risks to life or property, considering the proposed improvements.

There are no known aspects related to septic systems for the proposed improvements; however, based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's soil survey report, the soil for the project area is very limited for the use of septic tanks and other alternative wastewater disposal systems.

Site topography is mostly on gently sloping terrain with steeper slopes within the stream channel. The project objectives do not include significant changes to slopes, and steepened slopes will be supported with walls. Landslide risk will be minimal.

While excavation will be required for the replacement of the bridge, installation of rock slope protection, driveway realignment, and curb ramp improvements, the depth required for these elements likely will not disturb native sediments with high paleontological potential. The bridge piers will be located in Holocene-aged alluvial deposits, which have low paleontological potential. Excavation for other project elements, including the bridge abutments and approaches, will not extend beyond deposits that were

previously disturbed during the initial construction of the bridge and the existing ongoing maintenance of the highway.

### *Environmental Consequences*

While the project includes areas considered susceptible to liquefaction, as well as areas rated as moderate risk for soil erosion potential, this project is not expected to further exacerbate these risks and will be designed to account for soil conditions. Subsequent geotechnical drilling will inform the project design to ensure the bridge complies with all building requirements.

The project is unlikely to affect paleontological resources because no sediments with a high paleontological potential ranking will be disturbed by project construction. [The following sentence has been added since the release of the draft environmental document.] Further, the proposed geotechnical drillings will also be unlikely to impact paleontological resources based on their locations.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

## 2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Climate Change Technical Report dated April 2025 and the Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Noise Technical Memorandum dated February 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions |
|---|---|
| a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |

### *Affected Environment*

The applicable Metropolitan Planning Organization for the proposed project is the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments. The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments' Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy for the project area is "Connected 2050," which was adopted in August 2021. This proposed project is included in the plan and strategy, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17 percent in the region by 2035. Santa Barbara County has prepared several

planning documents that contain air quality goals and policies that will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled. These documents include the Santa Barbara County 2030 Climate Action Plan, adopted August 2024, and the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Element, Circulation Element, and Energy Element.

### *Environmental Consequences*

#### *Operational Emissions*

The purpose of this project is to address the stability issues associated with the existing Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge (Bridge Number 51-0130), maintain improved traffic flow on State Route 246, and upgrade existing outdated Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps. The project will not increase the vehicle capacity of the roadway. This type of project generally causes minimal or no increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions. Because the project will not increase the number of travel lanes on State Route 246, no increase in vehicle miles traveled will occur. While some greenhouse gas emissions during the construction period will be unavoidable, no increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions is expected.

#### *Construction Emissions*

Construction greenhouse gas emissions will result from material processing and transportation, on-site construction equipment, and traffic delays due to construction. These emissions will be produced at different levels throughout the construction phase; their frequency and occurrence can be reduced through innovations in plans and specifications and by implementing better traffic management during construction phases. While construction greenhouse gas emissions are only produced for a short time, they have long-term effects in the atmosphere, so they cannot be considered "temporary" in the same way as criteria pollutants that subside after construction is completed.

The use of long-life pavement, improved traffic management plans, and changes in materials can also help offset emissions produced during construction by allowing longer intervals between maintenance and rehabilitation activities.

Construction is expected to last for approximately 305 working days. Construction-generated greenhouse gas emissions were quantified based on project-specific construction data using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool, which largely models the emissions from construction equipment. Greenhouse gas emissions will total about 640 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent during the estimated 305-day construction period. Carbon dioxide equivalent is a measure used to compare emissions from various greenhouse gases based on their global warming potential. Calculating the carbon dioxide equivalent includes converting the emissions of other gases to the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide with the same global warming potential and then

totaling the emissions together. For this project, the carbon dioxide equivalent calculation considers carbon dioxide and the converted equivalent amounts of methane, nitrous oxide, and hydrofluorocarbons. Note that this estimate is based on assumptions made during the environmental planning phase of the project and is considered a “ballpark” estimate of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions, relying on limited data inputs and default modeling. In addition to construction emissions, it should be noted that traffic delays during construction may result in increased greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, and that the production and processing of construction materials, such as concrete, will also produce emissions.

All construction contracts include Caltrans Standard Specifications related to air quality. Sections 7-1.02A and 7-1.02C, Emissions Reduction, require contractors to comply with all laws applicable to the project and to certify they are aware of and will comply with all California Air Resources Board emission reduction regulations. Section 14-9.02, Air Pollution Control, requires contractors to comply with all air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes. Certain common regulations, such as equipment idling restrictions, that reduce construction vehicle emissions also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. An additional standard specification that shall be complied with during project construction and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions during construction is Section 14-10, Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling. Recycling greater quantities of construction waste will help to offset greenhouse gas emissions from construction activities. Furthermore, Standard Specifications Section 12, Temporary Traffic Control, outlines the standards for properly implementing traffic controls during construction. Standard Specifications Section 21-2.02K, Compost, will guide the inclusion of compost or mulch in the landscape plan where it is appropriate. Landscaping components, such as mulch and compost, improve carbon sequestration rates in soils and reduce organic waste.

Caltrans is firmly committed to implementing measures to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These measures are outlined in the following section.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

The following minimization measures will be implemented in the project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and potential climate change impacts from the project related to construction activities:

**GHG-1**: Limit idling to 5 minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment not in active operations.

**GHG-2**: Schedule delivery truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours.

**GHG-3**: Schedule longer-duration lane closures to reduce the number of equipment mobilization efforts (combine with public information efforts for congested areas).

**GHG-4**: For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment:

- Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition.
- Use the right-sized equipment for the job.

**GHG-5**: Use alternative fuels such as renewable diesel for construction equipment.

**GHG-6**: Earthwork Balance: Reduce the need for transport of earthen materials by balancing cut and fill quantities.

**GHG-7**: Supplement existing construction environmental training with information on methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to construction.

**GHG-8**: Use Caltrans “Accelerated Bridge Construction” method. This method will reduce construction windows and use more precast elements that, in turn, reduce the need for additional falsework, forms, bracing, etc.

**GHG-9**: Salvage disposed materials on-site, such as rebar from demolished concrete, and process waste to create usable fill.

**GHG-10**: Maximize the use of recycled materials (tire rubber, for example).

**GHG-11**: Salvage large trees removed for lumber or similar on-site beneficial uses other than standard woodchipping (for example, use in roadside landscape projects or green infrastructure components).

**GHG-12**: Recycle existing project features on-site (for example, metal beam guardrail, light standards, sub-base granular material, or native material that meets Caltrans specifications for incorporation into new work).

Reduce construction waste. For example, reuse or recycle construction and demolition waste (reduces consumption of raw materials, which reduces waste and transportation to landfills; saves costs).

**GHG-13**: Use recycled water or reduce consumption of potable water for construction.

**GHG-14**: Use cold in-place recycling.

**GHG-15**: Replace lighting with ultra-reflective sign materials that are illuminated by headlights to reduce energy used by electric lighting.

### 2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information in the Hazardous Waste Initial Site Assessment dated April 2024, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials |
|---|---|
| a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school? | **No Impact** |
| d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area? | **No Impact** |
| f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires? | **No Impact** |

#### *Affected Environment*

The project is along a rural highway with few public services aside from recreational opportunities. There are no schools or airports within 0.25 mile

and 2 miles, respectively, of the project. State Route 246 is listed as a primary evacuation route in the City of Solvang General Plan.

According to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CalFire's) Fire Hazard Severity Zone Viewer, the project limits fall within a "Moderate" Fire Hazard Severity Zone under a State Responsibility Area. There are areas in the city of Solvang, in both State Responsibility and Local Responsibility Areas, that are designated as "High" to "Very High" Fire Hazard Severity Zones, but these areas are located outside the project's Area of Potential Impact boundary.

Several sources were used during the records search for this project's hazardous waste review. These sources include the Hazardous Waste and Substances Site List (or the Cortese List, pursuant to California Government Code Section 65962.5), the California State Water Resources Control Board's "GeoTracker" database, the Department of Toxic Substances Control's "EnviroStor" database, and Caltrans internal files. There are hazardous waste sites and businesses commonly associated with hazardous waste generation in the project vicinity, but none are likely to have an impact due to project activities. The following is a discussion regarding typical hazardous materials and wastes that are routinely encountered during highway construction projects.

*Hazardous Sites*

Record searches identified one closed leaking underground storage tank case within 1,000 feet of the project limits, near the Jim's Service Center in the city of Solvang. However, several remediation efforts since 1989 have been conducted at the site, such as the removal of leaking tank infrastructure, the excavation of affected soil, and the installation of a biosparge treatment system. This case was considered closed by the California State Water Resources Control Board in June 2022, under its "Low Threat Underground Storage Tank Closure Policy: Groundwater Specific Criteria (5)." This policy states that the regulatory agency has determined that, based on an analysis of site-specific conditions, under current and reasonably anticipated near-term future scenarios, the contaminant plume poses a low threat to human health and safety and to the environment, and water quality objectives will be achieved within a reasonable time frame. Because Alamo Pintado Creek is considered a "losing stream" in which the groundwater table is below the level of the creek and surface water infiltrates from the stream channel into the groundwater table, residual impacts are pushed away from the creek. Further, contaminant concentrations have been decreasing as a result of corrective actions and natural attenuation.

Testing of soil and groundwater, intended to monitor the long-term impacts of the leaking underground storage tank, also revealed the presence of dry-cleaning-related solvents and associated breakdown products in soils near the case location. A dry cleaner located 300 feet north of Jim's Service Center

was identified as a possible source of the contamination in case files posted to the site's GeoTracker webpage.

The contamination associated with the gas station and dry-cleaning operation is 15 to 20 feet below grade and encroaches into the right-of-way, where Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramp work is planned. However, with the current scope of work, it is not anticipated that project construction will encounter these residual plumes, and no right-of-way acquisitions are expected within the contaminated areas.

[The following sentence has been added since the release of the draft environmental document.] Further, it has been determined that the proposed geotechnical drilling locations will not be affected by the remnant contaminant plume associated with this site.

Therefore, Caltrans has determined that the contamination poses a low risk to the project. During the project's next phase, these conclusions will be further evaluated, and additional sampling will be completed if required.

*Aerially Deposited Lead*

The historic use of leaded gasoline in automobiles has resulted in soils along roadways throughout California containing elevated concentrations of lead. Soil with lead concentrations exceeding stipulated thresholds must be managed under the July 1, 2016, Aerially Deposited Lead Agreement between Caltrans and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control. This agreement outlines which soils can be safely reused within the project limits and which soils must be exported and disposed of as hazardous waste.

Previously completed aerially deposited lead studies performed at post mile 30.0 in 2011 indicate that aerially deposited lead is present within the project limits at concentrations that exceed regulatory limits. During the project design phase, the project's hazardous waste specialist will work with the project design team to design a task order to have a consultant perform aerially deposited lead testing at project locations where ground disturbance for this project will be occurring. The purpose of this study is to document site-specific lead concentrations so that disturbed soils can be properly handled, reused, or disposed of. The appropriate Caltrans Standard Specifications for aerially deposited lead soil management will be determined in the project's next phase, based on the results of the studies.

*Yellow Thermoplastic or Traffic Stripe*

Yellow traffic paint purchased by Caltrans before 1997 contained high concentrations of lead. Application of yellow thermoplastic material containing high concentrations of lead continued until at least 2004 to 2006. The lead concentrations in the older yellow paint and yellow thermoplastic are high enough to make these materials hazardous waste when they are removed.

A review of as-builts indicates that the yellow stripe in the vicinity of the project was removed most recently as part of a different Caltrans project in 2014. The existing yellow stripe within the project limits is therefore assumed to be nonhazardous. The appropriate standard specifications for removal of traffic stripes and pavement markings, if required, will be determined during the project design phase once the removal method is known (for example, separate removal of the nonhazardous paint/stripe and/or cold planing or grinding).

In addition, a Lead Compliance Plan that addresses traffic stripe removal must be developed and implemented by the construction contractor.

*Naturally Occurring Asbestos*

Naturally occurring asbestos refers to silicate minerals that occur as asbestiform fibers and are found as a natural component of soils or rocks. Disturbance of rocks containing naturally occurring asbestos can release asbestos fibers into the air, which pose a human health risk when inhaled. In Caltrans District 5, naturally occurring asbestos can be found within serpentine and ultramafic rocks of the coast ranges and within fault zones.

A review of geologic mapping and mineral hazard maps indicates that no naturally occurring asbestos is present within the project's Area of Potential Impact. Project activities are therefore unlikely to encounter naturally occurring asbestos.

*Lead-Containing Paint and Asbestos-Containing Materials*

Bridges and structures may have materials with lead-containing paint and asbestos. Removal and replacement of the Alamo Pintado Bridge will cause disturbances that will require testing for lead-containing paint and asbestos-containing materials.

A site-specific lead-containing paint and asbestos-containing materials survey and assessment will be completed during the project's design phase to determine the proper handling and disposal methods of any materials.

*Treated Wood Waste*

Caltrans guardrail supports and signposts often consist of wood that has been treated with chemical preservatives to prevent rot or insect attack. Treated wood waste is considered to be a California hazardous waste but is subject to alternative management standards under Health and Safety Code Section 25230 that allow for simplified management and transport of treated wood waste and disposal at nonhazardous waste landfills that meet certain requirements.

Treated wood waste may be generated by the project via guardrail and signpost removal. If treated wood waste will be disposed of as part of the project, then Caltrans Standard Special Provisions Section 14-11.14 should

be included in the construction contract for proper management and disposal of treated wood waste.

*Electrical Equipment*

Removal and disposal of electrical equipment may generate hazardous waste or require special handling. Electrical equipment could include mercury-containing switches, sensors, or timers; ballasts with polychlorinated biphenyl; and other electrical waste components that require special handling. Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-11.15 contains the requirements for management and disposal of electrical equipment, including instructions for packaging and transporting to an appropriately permitted disposal facility.

No electrical equipment is anticipated to be removed as part of the project scope.

[The following sentence has been added since the release of the draft environmental document.] The proposed geotechnical drilling operations are not anticipated to conflict with any of the mentioned hazardous waste concerns.

### *Environmental Consequences*

The completed project will improve highway reliability and will not interfere with emergency response or emergency evacuation plans. While State Route 246 is listed as the primary evacuation route for the city of Solvang, the traffic management plan prepared for this project will account for emergency evacuations, and, therefore, the evacuation plan will not be impaired. The project will also not change the fire risk in the area.

Routine hazardous waste issues may be encountered during construction, but will be appropriately handled, treated, and disposed of (if required) with the implementation of Caltrans Standard Specifications. During the project design phase, an aerially deposited lead study may be completed, and the hazardous waste specialist will work with the project design team to determine the appropriate Standard Special Provisions to include in the construction contract. With the implementation of appropriate Standard Special Provisions, adverse effects on human health or the environment are not anticipated.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

[The following measure has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

The following avoidance and minimization measures will further reduce the potential for impacts related to hazardous waste.

**HAZ-1**. During project construction, notify California Geologic Energy Management Division and other appropriate agencies if soils containing

significant amounts of hydrocarbons are discovered during soil-disturbing activities. Caltrans will also notify California Geologic Energy Management Division if any wells that were not part of this review are encountered during surveys or construction activities.

### 2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information in the Water Quality Assessment Report dated April 2025, the Structures Preliminary Geotechnical Report dated August 2023, and the Location Hydraulic Study dated April 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality |
|---|---|
| a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface water or groundwater quality? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin? | **No Impact** |
| c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:<br>(i) result in substantial erosion or siltation on-site or off-site; | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| (ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-site or off-site; | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| (iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| (iv) impede or redirect flood flows? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality |
|---|---|
| d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |

### *Affected Environment*

The project is in the Santa Ynez Hydrologic Unit, the Los Olivos Hydrologic Area, and undefined Hydrologic Sub-Area 314.40. The project site is located along the Alamo Pintado Creek, which drains southwards through the Santa Ynez Valley to meet the Santa Ynez River. The project is within the Alamo Pintado Creek watershed.

Beneficial uses are critical to water quality management in California. Beneficial uses for surface water and groundwater are divided into the 20 standard categories, with definitions listed in the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin, prepared by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Protection and enhancement of existing and potential beneficial uses are the primary goals of water quality planning. The beneficial uses of Alamo Pintado Creek have been identified as the following: Municipal and Domestic Supply, Agricultural Supply, Industrial Service Supply, Groundwater Recharge, Water Contact Recreation, Non-Contact Water Recreation, Commercial and Sport Fishing, Warm Fresh Water Habitat, and Wildlife Habitat.

Alamo Pintado Creek is not on the 2010 Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of impaired waters, but the Santa Ynez River (the downstream receiving water) is listed for several pollutants such as sedimentation, sodium, temperature, total dissolved solids, and toxicity; however, the source for these pollutants is unknown. The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, which develops and enforces water quality objectives and plans for the area, has not adopted Total Maximum Daily Loads for any pollutants in the Alamo Pintado Creek or the Santa Ynez River.

Per the project's Structure Preliminary Geotechnical Report, recent borings determined that groundwater in the vicinity of the bridge site is at an estimated 7.5 to 16 feet below the ground surface.

In addition, as per the project's Location Hydraulic Study, the proposed work will be within a Federal Emergency Management Agency-regulated floodplain. As per the project's Natural Environment Study, the following stream/riparian habitats are present in the Biological Study Area: Red Willow

Riparian Woodland and Forest, Other Waters and Streambed, Willow Riparian Habitat (armored and unarmored), and streambank (armored and unarmored). The proposed project will require a Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and a Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. See Section 2.1.4 Biological Resources for details on impacts to jurisdictional areas.

### *Environmental Consequences*

*Stormwater*

Generally, as the Disturbed Soil Area increases, the potential for temporary water quality impacts also increases. Currently, the total proposed Disturbed Soil Area across the project area is approximately 0.67 acre (of the total project area of 4.79 acres), which will be used for the Construction General Permit compliance; this permit regulates stormwater discharges from construction sites that result in a Disturbed Soil Area of 1 acre or greater and/or are smaller sites that are part of a larger common plan of development. This approximate area accounts for all disturbed soil associated with the removal, modification, and replacement of structures and associated contractor staging and stockpile locations. The temporary effects that disturbing 0.67 acre of soil will have on the receiving waters can be minimized by implementing temporary Best Management Practices proposed in the Water Quality Assessment Report and listed in the Avoidance and Minimization Measures section below. As mentioned above, Alamo Pintado Creek is not identified as an impaired water body on the Section 303(d) list.

A preliminary project risk level assessment has determined this project to be a risk level two out of three. The risk level was determined using the combined project sediment risk and receiving water risk. The project sediment risk was calculated to be medium (52.65 tons/acre). The receiving water risk is classified as low due to Alamo Pintado Creek not having beneficial uses for Cold Fresh Water Habitat, Fish Spawning, and/or Fish Migration.

The project will produce approximately 4,617 square feet of net impervious surface. Since it is less than 10,000 square feet, no permanent Best Management Practices are required to be implemented. However, increases in impervious surface will increase the amount of stormwater runoff, which, in turn, has the potential to affect receiving water quality. The nature of these impacts depends on the uses and flow rate or volume of the receiving water, rainfall characteristics, and highway characteristics. Heavy metals associated with vehicle tire and brake wear, oil and grease, and exhaust emissions are the primary pollutants associated with transportation corridors. There are no existing treatment Best Management Practices along State Route 246 within the project limits to treat roadway runoff; therefore, the water quality of the receiving water bodies will still be affected by highway runoff as a result of

this project. Typically, highway projects increase impervious areas, potentially increasing the volume and velocity of stormwater flow to downstream receiving water bodies. However, in the presence of effective combinations of temporary and permanent erosion and sediment controls, these impacts are anticipated to be minimal.

*Water Resources*

Temporary impacts to aquatic resources and jurisdictional features will occur due to temporary access, staging areas, replacement of concrete slope paving with new rock slope protection, and temporary stream diversion if implemented in this project. Permanent impacts to aquatic resources will occur from portions of the new abutment and retaining wall along the new multiuse path and the placement of new rock slope protection that will extend farther downstream from the bridge than existing hardscaping.

Further information on temporary and permanent impacts on water resources, as well as the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures proposed for these impacts, can be found in Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources.

*Groundwater*

Proposed earthwork, excavation, and pile driving operations are not anticipated to encounter groundwater during construction activities. Hence, no permanent or temporary groundwater impacts are anticipated with the current project scope.

*Floodplains*

As previously mentioned, the proposed work will be within a Federal Emergency Management Agency-regulated floodplain. However, the project will not raise the base flood elevation or alter the 100-year floodplain or any other floodplains and therefore will not have any significant floodplain encroachment.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

See Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, for more information on the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures proposed for jurisdictional areas.

During construction, effective combinations of temporary and permanent erosion and sediment controls will be used. Stormwater management for the site will be coordinated through the contractor with Caltrans construction personnel to effectively manage erosion from the Disturbed Soil Areas by implementing a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. Selected Best Management Practices that will be included but not limited to the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan for the project are defined as follows:

*Temporary Soil Stabilization*

**HYDRO-1**: Minimize active disturbed soil areas during the rainy season by using scheduling techniques.

**HYDRO-2**: Preserve existing vegetation to the maximum extent feasible.

**HYDRO-3**: Implement temporary protective cover/erosion control on all non-active disturbed soil areas and soil stockpiles.

**HYDRO-4**: Control erosive forces of stormwater runoff with effective storm flow management, such as temporary concentrated flow conveyance devices, earthen dikes, drainage swales, lined ditches, outlet protection/velocity dissipation devices, and slope drains. These practices will be determined as feasible during the project's next phase.

*Temporary Sediment Controls*

**HYDRO-5**: Implement linear sediment controls such as fiber rolls, check dams, or gravel bag berms on all active and non-active disturbed soil areas during the rainy season.

**HYDRO-6**: To further help prevent sediment discharge, stabilize construction site entrances, implement temporary drainage inlet protection, and implement street sweeping and vacuuming.

**HYDRO-7**: Implement appropriate wind erosion controls year-round.

*Non-Stormwater Management*

The appropriate non-stormwater Best Management Practices will be implemented year-round as follows:

**HYDRO-8**: Water conservation practices shall be implemented on all construction sites and wherever water is used.

**HYDRO-9**: Paving and grinding procedures shall be implemented where paving, surfacing, resurfacing, grinding, or saw cutting may pollute stormwater runoff or discharge to the storm drain system or watercourses.

**HYDRO-10**: Follow appropriate procedures and practices designed for construction contractors to recognize illicit connections or illegally dumped or discharged materials on a construction site and report incidents to the resident engineer.

[The following measure has been revised since the release of the draft environmental document, per comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Santa Ynez Valley Citizens Council.]

**HYDRO-11**: Stockpiling materials, storing equipment and liquid waste containers, washing vehicles or equipment, and fueling and maintaining street legal vehicles must be performed at least 100 feet from concentrated flows of stormwater, drainage courses, and inlets if within the floodplain. The activities must be performed at least 50 feet from the aforementioned areas if outside of the floodplain. Refueling of heavy equipment that is within 100 feet of Alamo Pintado Creek must be isolated from the stream system such that refueling will not occur within the wetted channel and no deleterious materials will enter the channel. Secondary containment adequate to contain the full volume of material must be provided.

**HYDRO-12**: Pile driving operations will be considered part of the construction activities.

**HYDRO-13**: Concrete curing will be used in the construction of structures such as bridges and abutments. Concrete curing includes the use of both chemical and water methods. Proper procedures will minimize the pollution of runoff during concrete curing.

**HYDRO-14**: Since the project involves structure demolition/removal over the Alamo Pintado Creek, proper procedures will be implemented to minimize pollution during these activities.

**HYDRO-15**: The following construction site Best Management Practices shall be bid items for this project to ensure they are implemented during construction:

- Job Site Management
- Prepare Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program
- Stormwater Sampling and Analysis Day
- Stormwater Annual Report
- Move In/Move Out (Temporary Erosion Control)
- Temporary Hydraulic Mulch (Bonded Fiber Matrix)
- Temporary Check Dam
- Temporary Drainage Inlet Protection
- Temporary Fiber Roll
- Temporary Large Sediment Barrier
- Temporary Construction Entrance

- Street Sweeping
- Temporary Concrete Washout
- Temporary Fence (Environmentally Sensitive Area type fence)

### 2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

The project will not change the location, function, or capacity of State Route 246 and will not physically divide an established community. The project will not conflict with the City of Solvang General Plan, the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan, the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments' Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, or any other policy or regulation meant to avoid or mitigate an environmental effect.

Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning |
|---|---|
| a) Physically divide an established community? | **No Impact** |
| b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect? | **No Impact** |

### 2.1.12 Mineral Resources

The project will not involve the removal or extraction of mineral resources, and, therefore, there is no potential for the loss of valuable mineral resources.

Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources |
|---|---|
| a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state? | **No Impact** |
| b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan? | **No Impact** |

### 2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information in the Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Noise Technical Memorandum dated February 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project result in: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise |
|---|---|
| a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels? | **No Impact** |

#### *Affected Environment*

The project location is mainly surrounded by commercial and residential land uses. The nearest noise-sensitive receptor is a residence that is located approximately 122 feet away from the project vicinity.

#### *Environmental Consequences*

Since no capacity will be added to the highway and because the highway will not be realigned, this project will be considered a Type 3 project. Local noise levels will be the same after project completion as they were before. Long-term abatement measures will not be recommended for this project.

Local noise levels in the vicinity of construction will inevitably experience a short-term increase due to construction activities. The amount of construction noise will vary with the particular activities and associated models and types of equipment used by the contractor. Caltrans policy states that normal construction equipment should not emit noise levels greater than 86 A-weighted decibels at 50 feet from the source during the period of 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

Due to daytime traffic conditions, it is possible that some nighttime work will be required for this project. Nighttime work can adversely impact local residents' normal sleep activities. Exceeding the interior threshold for school facilities can negatively impact learning outcomes. With the implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures described below, potential impacts at any given sensitive receptor location are not expected to last very long.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Noise Abatement Measures*

The following avoidance and minimization measures will further reduce the potential for impacts on local noise levels.

**NOISE-1**: The public within 500 feet of construction activities shall be notified at least two weeks before the start of construction noise and upcoming construction activities that are likely to produce an adverse noise environment. The Caltrans District 5 Public Information Office shall publish notice of the proposed dates and duration of proposed construction activities and potential community impacts in local news media after receiving notice from the resident engineer.

**NOISE-2**: The contractor shall develop a Noise Control Plan and submit it to district noise staff for review. District noise staff will be responsible for obtaining a non-standard special provision addressing the requirements of the Noise Control Plan.

**NOISE-3**: The contractor must provide a list of affected residents to a Caltrans Public Information Officer and resident engineer.

**NOISE-4**: The state shall consider the following measures to minimize any negative noise impact on residents' sleep:

- The contractor shall purchase noise-canceling headphones before the start of construction, and they should be provided as the first line of preventative measures for affected residents.
- For temporary accommodation, the state will need to approve the number of nights and verify that the resident is on the list of those affected contained in the Noise Control Plan.
- Affected residents will be reimbursed by the contractor at the state rate. A change order will have to be developed to reimburse the contractor.

**NOISE-5**: Whenever possible, construction work shall be done during the day.

**NOISE-6**: When nighttime construction is necessary, the construction activities that generate the greatest amount of noise shall be done as early in the evening as possible.

**NOISE-7**: The contractor shall shield loud pieces of stationary construction equipment with sound barriers if complaints are received from the public.

**NOISE-8**: The contractor shall locate portable generators, air compressors, etc., away from sensitive noise receptors as feasible.

**NOISE-9**: The contractor shall limit grouping major pieces of equipment operating in one area to the greatest extent feasible.

**NOISE-10**: The contractor shall use newer equipment that is quieter and ensure that all equipment items have the manufacturers' recommended noise abatement measures, such as mufflers, engine covers, and engine vibration isolators, intact and operational. Internal combustion engines used for any purpose on or related to the job shall be equipped with a muffler or baffle of a type recommended by the manufacturer.

**NOISE-11**: The contractor shall consult District 5 noise staff to determine appropriate steps to alleviate noise-related concerns if noise complaints are received from the public during the construction process.

The following Caltrans Standard Specification for Noise Control will also be implemented to reduce impacts related to nighttime work.

**NOISE-12:** If nighttime construction is necessary, the noisiest construction activities should be done as early in the evening as possible. Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02 requires the contractor to control and monitor noise resulting from work activities and not to exceed 86 A-weighted decibels maximum sound level at 50 feet from the job site from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

### 2.1.14 Population and Housing

The project will not change the capacity or function of State Route 246 and will, therefore, not influence population growth. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing |
|---|---|
| a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)? | **No Impact** |

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing |
|---|---|
| b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere? | **No Impact** |

### 2.1.15 Public Services

Considering that the project will not trigger the need for new or modified public services, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services |
|---|---|
| a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:<br>Fire protection? | **No Impact** |
| Police protection? | **No Impact** |
| Schools? | **No Impact** |
| Parks? | **No Impact** |
| Other public facilities? | **No Impact** |

### 2.1.16 Recreation

The purpose of this project is to address the stability issues associated with the existing Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge (Bridge Number 51-0130), maintain improved traffic flow on State Route 246, and upgrade existing outdated Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps. The project will not change the capacity or function of the highway within the project limits. The project will, therefore, not influence the use of local recreational facilities.

Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Recreation |
|---|---|
| a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated? | **No Impact** |
| b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment? | **No Impact** |

### 2.1.17 Transportation

The purpose of this project is to address the stability issues associated with the existing Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge (Bridge Number 51-0130), maintain improved traffic flow on State Route 246, and upgrade existing outdated Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps. Therefore, the project will not change the function of the highway. Because the project will not increase the capacity of the highway, it will not influence vehicle miles traveled. The project, therefore, will not conflict with relevant transportation programs, plans, ordinances, or policies.

A Traffic Management Plan will be prepared during the project's next phase to address any potential traffic delays on State Route 246 that may occur during project construction due to temporary closures on either side of the highway. This will ensure that access via State Route 246 will be maintained at all times throughout the construction period and will account for emergency access and limit delays to the maximum extent feasible.

Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation |
|---|---|
| a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities? | **No Impact** |
| b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)? | **No Impact** |

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation |
|---|---|
| c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)? | **No Impact** |
| d) Result in inadequate emergency access? | **No Impact** |

### 2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Archaeological Survey Report dated March 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

| Question: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources |
|---|---|
| a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe. | **Less Than Significant Impact** |

#### *Affected Environment*

In October 2023, Caltrans sent letters to the Native American Heritage Commission, requesting a search of the Sacred Lands Files as well as a list of Native American individuals who are familiar with the project area and may have information pertinent to cultural resource studies. In November 2023, the Native American Heritage Commission responded to inform Caltrans that the Sacred Lands File search was positive for cultural resources. They also provided a list of Native American tribes and individuals who may have

knowledge of cultural resources in the proposed project area. However, due to changes in the project's scope, a second request was sent to the Native American Heritage Commission in April 2024, and a response was received shortly thereafter with updated Sacred Lands Files positive search results and a contact list.

Native American consultation is required under state law, Assembly Bill 52 (Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1). In April 2024, Caltrans sent letters to the list of individuals provided by the Native American Heritage Commission to initiate consultation under Assembly Bill 52 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The letters included a project description and mapping indicating where the project proposes work and a list of known cultural resources found within the project limits.

In April 2024, an introductory partner stakeholder outreach meeting was held by Caltrans to discuss the project, and tribal representatives who were listed on the Native American Heritage Commission contact list were invited and attended the meeting.

#### *Environmental Consequences*

Pursuant to the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement between Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration, and the California State Historic Preservation Officer, Caltrans has determined that a Finding of No Historic Properties Affected is appropriate for this undertaking because there are no historic properties within the Area of Potential Effect. The project is also not anticipated to impact tribal cultural resources, given this finding. Further, the implementation of Caltrans Standard Specifications for cultural resources will help to further reduce the potential for any impacts on tribal cultural resources. Please refer to Section 2.1.5, Cultural Resources, for more information on this proposed measure.

#### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

No further avoidance and minimization measures are proposed at this time.

### 2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Based on preliminary evaluation of utilities and service systems within the project area, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems |
|---|---|
| a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years? | **No Impact** |
| c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments? | **No Impact** |
| d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste? | **No Impact** |

### *Affected Environment*

Based on the preliminary permit search information and field review observation, there are existing utility joint poles with electric and telecom overhead lines and underground pipes within the project limits. Gas and sewer lines run along the northeast side of State Route 246. Additionally, a 3-inch gas line is located on the bridge.

### *Environmental Consequences*

The existing utilities within the work area will require Positive Location Determination potholing by the Caltrans Utility Engineering Workgroup during the project's subsequent design phase. Once completed, workarounds and utility encroachment exceptions will be considered before relocation of any utility is proposed. If a conflict is discovered, Caltrans Environmental will review the proposed relocation, and the project development team will work

with the utility owner to ensure the utility is moved before the start of project construction.

Neither project construction nor operation will significantly increase demand for water or wastewater supply or demand. The project also will not alter the functions or demand for electrical, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities in the region.

The project is not anticipated to generate excessive amounts of solid waste that will overwhelm the capacities of existing waste management facilities. Any recyclable waste materials generated from project construction will be recycled. Waste materials generated by project construction will be collected and disposed of properly to meet all state and federal requirements.

Impacts on utilities and service systems will be less than significant.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

## 2.1.20 Wildfire

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection provides a fire hazard severity zone mapping tool that helps assess the project location's vulnerability to future wildfire events. The fire hazard severity zones are developed using a science-based and field-tested model that assigns a hazard score based on the factors that influence fire likelihood and fire behavior. Many factors are considered, such as vegetation, topography, climate, crown fire potential, ember production and movement, and the fire history of the area. Three levels of hazards are used in this mapping tool: moderate, high, and very high. These areas can fall under three different responsibility areas: Local Responsibility, State Responsibility, and Federal Responsibility. Most of the project area is located within a State Responsibility Area, with some nearby areas left uncategorized. The project limits fall within a "Moderate" Fire Hazard Severity Zone. There are areas in the city of Solvang, in both State Responsibility and Local Responsibility Areas, that are designated as "High" to "Very High" Fire Hazard Severity Zones, but these areas are located outside the project's Area of Potential Impact boundary.

Wildfires directly affect highways by burning infrastructure such as wooden posts for signs and guardrails. Wildfires indirectly affect highways because they can contribute to landslides and flooding exposure by burning off soil-stabilizing vegetation and reducing the capacity of soils to absorb rainfall. Wildfire smoke can also affect visibility and the health of the public and Caltrans staff.

The project is not anticipated to increase wildfire risk. Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 7-1.02M(2) for Fire Protection will be implemented

during project construction. To avoid impeding fire evacuation or response traffic, any necessary traffic control measures will be implemented. Emergency responders will be notified of any traffic disruptions, delays, or detours in advance. The completed project should improve highway reliability and not interfere with emergency response or emergency evacuation plans. The project will not place new structures or other facilities that will be vulnerable to wildfires within the project limits. The project is therefore not anticipated to exacerbate the impacts of wildfires intensified by climate change.

Considering this information, along with the information in the Climate Change Technical Report dated April 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones:

| **Question—Would the project:** | **CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire** |
|---|---|
| a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan? | **No Impact** |
| b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire? | **No Impact** |
| c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment? | **No Impact** |
| d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes? | **No Impact** |

## 2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

| Question: | CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance |
|---|---|
| a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory? | **Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated** |
| b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.) | **Less Than Significant Impact** |
| c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly? | **Less Than Significant Impact** |

### *Affected Environment*

Project work will occur from post mile 30.23 to post mile 30.49 along State Route 246 in Santa Barbara County. Throughout the project limits, State Route 246 is a two-lane highway and is not classified as an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway. State Route 246 traverses several communities, including Solvang, Buellton, and the Santa Ynez Valley. Throughout the project limits, the overall topography is generally flat to gently rolling with scattered oak trees and riparian corridors, including the Alamo Pintado Creek, with land uses, including low-density residential, light service commercial, recreational, open space, and agricultural.

### *Environmental Consequences*

*Natural and Historic Resources*

*Biological Resources*

The project is anticipated to have temporary and permanent impacts on the Red Willow Riparian Woodland and Forest Natural Community. The project is also anticipated to have degradation, temporary, and permanent impacts on jurisdictional and riparian areas. The Section 7 effects determination is that the project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, the California red-legged frog. Further, the Section 7 effects determination is that the project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, southwestern pond turtles. These impacts are also summarized in Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, under Tables 2.2 and 2.3, respectively. However, with the implementation of the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures proposed under Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, these impacts are anticipated to be lessened to a level that will be considered less than significant. Additionally, the general minimization recommendations outlined below in this section will further help to reduce the cumulative impact of the resources within the general project location.

*Cultural and Paleontological Resources*

Pursuant to the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement between Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration, and the California State Historic Preservation Officer, Caltrans has determined that a Finding of No Historic Properties Affected is appropriate for this undertaking because there are no historic properties within the Area of Potential Effect. The project is also unlikely to affect paleontological resources because no sediments with a high paleontological potential ranking will be disturbed by project construction. Therefore, the project will not eliminate important examples of the major periods of California's history or prehistory. See Sections 2.1.5, Cultural Resources, 2.1.18, Tribal Cultural Resources, and 2.1.7, Geology and Soils, for more information on these resources.

*Cumulative Impacts*

A Cumulative Impact Report has been completed for the project. The Cumulative Impact Report follows the 2005 *Caltrans Cumulative Impact Analysis and Growth Related, Indirect Impact Guidance*. The guidance outlines an eight-step process for evaluating cumulative impacts.

Step one is to identify resources that must be evaluated for cumulative impacts. The project was evaluated for potential cumulative impacts on the following biological resources: California red-legged frog, southwestern pond turtle, and jurisdictional aquatic features.

Step two is to identify appropriate Resource Study Areas for each of the resources identified in the Cumulative Impact Report. A Resource Study Area is the geographic area within which impacts on a resource are analyzed. The

boundaries of a Resource Study Area are often broader than the boundaries used for project-specific analysis, such as a Biological Study Area. To completely capture all project activities and their impacts on the resources identified above, two different Resource Study Areas were defined:

- The Resource Study Area for the California red-legged frog and southwestern pond turtle was defined as a 2-mile buffer of the project's Area of Potential Impact to encompass the known maximum dispersal range of these species.

- The Resource Study Area for jurisdictional other waters and riparian habitat was defined using the nearby watershed Hydrologic Unit Code 12, which is the Alamo Pintado Creek Watershed.

Step 3 is an evaluation of the resource's health and the historical context of the resource, as explained below.

*California Red-Legged Frog*

The Resource Study Area for this project is approximately 9,700 acres. The Resource Study Area falls within the Northern Transverse Ranges and Tehachapi Mountains Recovery Unit for the California red-legged frog, which includes the Santa Maria-Santa Ynez River Core Area identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This core area is currently occupied by California red-legged frogs and is believed to harbor a source population and provide necessary connectivity between known populations. Threats to California red-legged frogs include habitat loss, fragmentation, predation, and climate change. Water diversions, groundwater pumping, and agricultural diversions have likely reduced available aquatic and upland California red-legged frog habitat within the watersheds of this project.

*Southwestern Pond Turtle*

Threats to southwestern pond turtles are similar to those of California red-legged frogs, including habitat loss, fragmentation from urbanization and land conversion, predation, invasive species, water diversions, dams, and climate change (for example, prolonged periods of drought).

*Jurisdictional Aquatic Features*

Historically, agricultural activity and more recently residential development have each facilitated a decline in the health of riparian habitats along Alamo Pintado Creek in the lower watershed downstream of Figueroa Mountain Road. The expansion of these activities has mostly slowed or stabilized during recent years. Santa Barbara County Flood Control also conducts periodic maintenance in this section of Alamo Pintado Creek, which is also a source of ongoing disturbance to riparian habitats within the Resource Study Area. Dependence on groundwater has likely affected the frequency and quantity of surface water conditions in Alamo Pintado Creek. In addition,

oversight and regulations have been implemented with the advent of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and new water restrictions resulting from the recent drought. The trend for shaded habitat along Alamo Pintado Creek is considered to be stable or slightly improving. However, within the watershed, invasive species, such as the tree of heaven, privet, poison hemlock, and giant reed, continue to degrade the habitat value for wildlife.

Step 4 is to identify the direct and indirect impacts of the project on those resources identified in Step 1. See Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, for a detailed description of project-level impacts.

Step 5 requires identifying current and reasonably foreseeable actions that could affect each of the three biological resources included in the analysis. A total of 12 past, present, or future projects with available environmental documents were identified, which were found to have had, or will have, permanent and/or temporary impacts on one of the identified resources in their respective Resource Study Areas. Of these projects identified, five may affect the California red-legged frog, four may affect the southwestern pond turtle, and six may affect jurisdictional aquatic features. Furthermore, one reasonably foreseeable project was identified that did not have a readily available environmental or scoping document but had a high probability of impacting the identified resources. Several projects from the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy and Regional Transportation Plans for Santa Barbara County also have the potential to affect these resources. However, it is anticipated that avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures will be implemented to the extent determined necessary and feasible.

Step 6 is the process of assessing potential cumulative impacts. See Table 2.4 for the determination of each resource.

## Table 2.4 Summary of Overall Cumulative Impacts

| Resource | Would the Proposed Project Contribute to an Existing Adverse Cumulative Impact? | Would the Proposed Project's Contribution Be Considerable? | Considerations for Identifying Adverse Cumulative Impacts and the Proposed Project's Contribution |
|---|---|---|---|
| California Red-Legged Frog | Yes | No | Estimates of permanent and temporary impacts on California red-legged frogs and their respective habitat are presented in Table 2.3 of this document. The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that the proposed project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, California red-legged frogs. The basis for this determination is that presence has been inferred, and there will be a low but possible potential for take of the species due to project activities.<br><br>Avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures related to the California red-legged frog are presented in Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, of the draft environmental document. With the implementation of these proposed measures, the project will not considerably contribute to impacts on California red-legged frogs within their Resource Study Area. |

| Resource | Would the Proposed Project Contribute to an Existing Adverse Cumulative Impact? | Would the Proposed Project's Contribution Be Considerable? | Considerations for Identifying Adverse Cumulative Impacts and the Proposed Project's Contribution |
|---|---|---|---|
| Southwestern Pond Turtle | Yes | No | Estimates of permanent and temporary impacts on southwestern pond turtles and their respective habitat are presented in Table 2.3 of this document. The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that this project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, southwestern pond turtles. The basis for this determination is that southwestern pond turtle presence is inferred, and there will be a low but possible potential for take of the species because of project activities.<br><br>Avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures related to the southwestern pond turtle are presented in Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, of the draft environmental document. With the implementation of these proposed measures, the project will not considerably contribute to impacts on southwestern pond turtles within their Resource Study Area. |
| Jurisdictional Waters and Riparian Habitat | Yes | No | Estimates of permanent, temporary, and degradation impacts on jurisdictional waters and riparian habitat as a result of the project are presented in Table 2.2 of this document. Information on the causes of temporary, permanent, and degradation impacts on jurisdictional features can be found in Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, of the draft environmental document. Avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures related to this resource can also be found in this section. With the implementation of these measures, the project's impact on jurisdictional features will be considered less than significant, and the project will not considerably contribute to cumulative impacts within the Resource Study Area. |

Step 7 is to document the results of the cumulative impact analysis process performed in steps one through seven. The Cumulative Impact Report documents and summarizes these seven steps.

In accordance with *Caltrans Cumulative Impact Analysis and Growth Related, Indirect Impact Guidance*, the final step—step 8—in the cumulative impact analysis is to recommend actions to sustain these resources. These are

actions that the identified agencies could take to influence the sustainability of the resource. These measures are presented in the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures section below.

*Human Environment*

*Aesthetics*

The project includes avoidance and minimization measures to reduce its impact on the aesthetic environment. Although visual changes will occur, the same type of elements proposed with this project are seen elsewhere along State Route 246 and are not, by themselves, inconsistent with the rural roadway character of the region. As a result, the proposed widening and new bridge rails will be subordinate to the overall experience of traveling along State Route 246. With the implementation of the measures proposed in Section 2.1.1, Aesthetics, along with the restoration and replanting efforts detailed in Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, the project will be consistent with the aesthetic and visual resource protection goals along State Route 246. Therefore, these visual changes will cause only a minor reduction in visual quality in the immediate project area.

*Air Quality*

The project will cause a temporary increase in air emissions and fugitive dust during the construction period. Ultimately, however, there will be no difference in long-term air emissions with or without the project. Impacts due to fugitive dust generation from heavy equipment use and earthwork during construction will be considered less than significant with the implementation of standard construction dust and emission minimization practices and procedures.

*Geology and Soils*

The project will not directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects due to geologic or soil conditions. A less than significant overall impact will occur. No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are necessary. See Section 2.1.7 for more information and for the discussion of paleontological resources.

*Greenhouse Gas Emissions*

This type of project is not expected to alter operational greenhouse gas emissions. Because the project will not increase the number of travel lanes on State Route 246, no increase in vehicle miles traveled will occur as a result of project implementation. However, some greenhouse gas emissions will be generated during the construction period. With the implementation of Caltrans Standard Specifications and avoidance and minimization measures, a less than significant impact will result. See Section 2.1.8 for more information.

*Hazardous Waste*

The project will include Caltrans standard measures for hazardous waste testing and monitoring to protect the public from hazards that could arise from

project construction activities. The project will not generate hazards or expose the public to hazards that could result in substantial adverse effects. Therefore, the project will not result in considerable impacts on the public due to hazardous waste.

*Noise*

The project will inevitably generate noise during the construction process. The increase in noise levels because of construction activities will not be substantial because construction activities will be temporary and intermittent. Avoidance and minimization measures to reduce disturbance due to construction noise are listed in Section 2.1.13, Noise. In addition, the project includes Caltrans Standard Specifications for noise control to minimize potential noise-related disturbances caused by construction activities.

*Water Quality*

The total proposed Disturbed Soil Area across the project area is approximately 0.67 acre (of the total project area of 4.79 acres), which will be used for the Construction General Permit compliance; this permit regulates stormwater discharges from construction sites that result in a Disturbed Soil Area of 1 acre or greater and/or are smaller sites that are part of a larger common plan of development. The temporary effects that disturbing 0.67 acre of soil will have on the receiving waters can be minimized by implementing temporary Best Management Practices proposed in the Water Quality Assessment Report and listed in the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures section of this document. A preliminary project risk level assessment has determined this project to be a risk level two out of three in regard to stormwater.

Temporary impacts to aquatic resources and jurisdictional features will occur due to temporary access, staging areas, replacement of concrete slope paving with new rock slope protection, and temporary stream diversion if implemented in this project. Permanent impacts to aquatic resources will occur from portions of the new abutment and retaining wall along the new multiuse path and the placement of new rock slope protection that will extend farther downstream from the bridge than existing hardscaping.

The project's earthwork, excavation, and pile-driving operations are not anticipated to encounter groundwater during construction activities. Hence, no temporary or permanent groundwater impacts are anticipated at the time of this document.

The project will produce 4,617 square feet of net impervious surface. Increases in impervious surface will increase the amount of stormwater runoff, which, in turn, could affect receiving water quality. The nature of these impacts depends on the uses and flow rate or volume of the receiving water, rainfall characteristics, and highway characteristics. Heavy metals associated with vehicle tire and brake wear, oil and grease, and exhaust emissions are

the primary pollutants associated with transportation corridors. There are no existing treatment Best Management Practices along State Route 246 within the project limits to treat roadway runoff; therefore, the water quality of the receiving water bodies will still be affected by highway runoff due to this project. Typically, highway projects increase impervious areas and, therefore, potentially increase the volume and velocity of stormwater flow to downstream receiving water bodies. However, in the presence of effective combinations of temporary and permanent erosion and sediment controls, these impacts are anticipated to be minimal.

The project will occur within Federal Emergency Management Agency-regulated floodplains. However, no significant floodplain encroachments have been identified with the project. The project will not significantly impact the 100-year floodplains.

See Section 2.1.4 and Section 2.1.10 for more information and for a list of avoidance and minimization measures related to water quality and aquatic resources.

*Transportation*

The project will not change the function of the highway. Because the project will not increase the capacity of the highway, it will not influence vehicle miles traveled. There will be traffic delays during construction due to temporary closures, ramp closures, and/or one-way traffic control. However, a Traffic Management Plan will be prepared during the project's next phase to address any potential traffic delays on State Route 246 that may occur during project construction due to temporary closures on either side of the highway. This will ensure that access via State Route 246 will be maintained at all times throughout the construction period and will account for emergency access and limit delays to the maximum extent feasible.

### *Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures*

The following general minimization recommendations were made to reduce the overall decline in the health of the identified resources:

*California Red-Legged Frog*

**CUMULATIVE-1**: Agencies with regulatory authority over California red-legged frogs include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Efforts should continue to be made by these agencies to support projects that improve habitat acreage and function for these species through enhancement and creation. Providing suitable contiguous habitat will make this resource more resilient and resistant to decline.

*Southwestern Pond Turtle*

**CUMULATIVE-2**: Agencies with regulatory authority over southwestern pond turtles include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Efforts should continue to be made by these agencies to support projects that improve habitat acreage and function for these species through enhancement and creation. Providing suitable contiguous habitat will make this resource more resilient and resistant to decline.

*Jurisdictional Waters and Riparian Habitat*

**CUMULATIVE-3**: Agencies with regulatory authority over jurisdictional areas include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Agencies should continue to implement existing policies requiring restoration of temporary impacts and mitigation to achieve no net loss of ecological function and value to offset permanent impacts. Agencies should also promote policies that encourage development setbacks from stream corridors and assist in programs that preserve and restore existing stream and riparian habitats.

# Chapter 3 Coordination

Agency consultation for this project has been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods, including project development team meetings, phone calls, emails, etc. Public participation was sought before and through the release of the Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration and will continue throughout the circulation, review, and release of the final environmental document. This chapter summarizes the results of Caltrans' efforts to date to identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

### *Biological Resources Coordination*

- On November 6, 2024, Caltrans biologists, aquatic resource specialists, and hydraulic engineers met with Rick Macala, a hydraulic engineer with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, on-site to discuss fish passage.

- On December 18, 2024, Caltrans Project Biologist AnnMarie Blackburn obtained an unofficial species list from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through its Information for Planning and Consultation website and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

- On August 12, 2025, Caltrans biologist AnnMarie Blackburn initiated informal Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Concurrence was received September 30, 2025.

- On August 20, 2025, Caltrans biologist AnnMarie Blackburn initiated informal Section 7 consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service. During consultation it was decided to delay Section 7 consultation to the design phase.

- On September 22, 2025, Technical Assistance with the National Marine Fisheries Service was completed with Caltrans biologist AnnMarie Blackburn, Caltrans senior biologist Amy Millan, and National Marine Fisheries Service biologist Jess Fischer.

### *Tribal Consultation*

- In October 2023, Caltrans sent letters to the Native American Heritage Commission, requesting a Sacred Lands File search and a list of Native American individuals familiar with the project area and may have information pertinent to cultural resource studies. In November 2023, the Native American Heritage Commission responded to inform Caltrans that the Sacred Lands File search was positive for cultural resources. They also provided a list of Native American tribes and individuals who may have knowledge of cultural resources in the proposed project area.

- In April 2024, a second request was sent to the Native American Heritage Commission due to project changes, and a response was received shortly thereafter with an updated Sacred Lands File positive search result and contact list.

- In April 2024, Caltrans sent letters to the list of individuals provided by the Native American Heritage Commission to initiate consultation under Assembly Bill 52 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The letters included a project description and mapping indicating where the project proposes work and a list of known cultural resources found within the project limits.

- In April 2024, an introductory partner stakeholder outreach meeting was held by Caltrans to discuss the project, and tribal representatives who were listed on the Native American Heritage Commission contact list were invited and attended the meeting.

# **Appendix A** Title VI Policy Statement

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

**California Department of Transportation**

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September 2024

**TITLE VI/NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT**

It is the policy of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the assurances set forth in the Caltrans' Title VI Program Plan, to ensure that no person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Related non-discrimination authorities, remedies, and state law further those protections, including sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, age, low income, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Caltrans is committed to complying with 23 C.F.R. Part 200, 49 C.F.R. Part 21, 49 C.F.R. Part 303, and the Federal Transit Administration Circular 4702.1B. Caltrans will make every effort to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its services, programs, and activities, whether they are federally funded or not, and that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, color, or national origin (including LEP). In addition, Caltrans will facilitate meaningful participation in the transportation planning process in a non-discriminatory manner.

The overall responsibility for this policy is assigned to the Caltrans Director. The Caltrans Title VI Coordinator is assigned to the Caltrans Office of Civil Rights Deputy Director, who then delegates sufficient responsibility and authority to the Office of Civil Rights' managers, including the Title VI Branch Manager, to effectively implement the Caltrans Title VI Program. Individuals with questions or requiring additional information relating to the policy or the implementation of the Caltrans Title VI Program should contact the Title VI Branch Manager at title.vi@dot.ca.gov or at (916) 639-6392, or visit the following web page: https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi.

TONY TAVARES
Director

"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment"

# Appendix B Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Summary

### *Visual Resources*

Implementation of the following minimization measures will ensure that the project's visual effects are consistent with local scenic values along State Route 246.

**VIS-1:** Following construction, regrade and recontour any new construction access roads, staging and storage areas, and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding natural topography along State Route 246; avoid unnatural-appearing remnant landforms where possible.

**VIS-2**: Preserve existing vegetation to the maximum extent feasible.

**VIS-3**: Bridge rails shall be an open style to preserve views and be approved by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-4**: Bridge rail shall be aesthetically treated to visually recede or appear consistent with the architectural character and community setting. The aesthetic treatment shall be developed and approved by Caltrans District 5 Structure Design in conjunction with District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-5:** Bicycle and pedestrian railing shall be selected or treated to reduce glare and minimize contrast and noticeability. Style and color should be consistent with local character and aesthetic goals, as well as be compatible with the vehicular railing. Railing type and treatment will be developed and approved by District 5 Structure Design in conjunction with District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-6**: Depending on the final design, some metal elements, such as bridge railing, pedestrian railing, guardrail, posts, transitions, and end treatments attached to the proposed bridge, may require staining or darkening. The color or treatment, if any, shall be determined and approved by District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-7**: The retaining wall shall be textured or treated to reduce potential graffiti and the urbanizing effect. Proposed tie-back wall aesthetics should blend with the area's architectural character in style and color. Wall aesthetics shall be selected by District 5 Landscape Architecture staff to complement community architecture guidelines in harmony with the natural environment.

**VIS-8**: Rock slope protection shall be backfilled with soil and revegetated. If this is not feasible, rock slope protection shall be stained to reduce glare and be more visually compatible with the landscape.

**VIS-9**: If feasible, all existing overhead utilities next to the new bridge shall be placed in the bridge structure. If it is not technically possible to locate conduit within the structure, surface-mounted conduits shall be painted to match the bridge structure as determined by District 5 Landscape Architecture.

**VIS-10**: Replacement planting shall include aesthetic considerations and inherent biological goals. Revegetation shall include native trees and plants as determined by a Caltrans District 5 biologist and landscape architect. Revegetation shall occur to the maximum extent horticulturally feasible. Planting should be maintained until established.

### *Air Quality*

The following measure will avoid or minimize impacts on air quality:

**AIR-1:** To minimize dust emissions from the project, Section 14-9.02 (Air Pollution Control) of the 2023 Standard Specifications states that the contractor is responsible for complying with all local air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes that apply to work performed under the contract, including those provided in Government Code Section 11017 (Public Contract Code Section 10231). Additionally, the project-level Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will address water pollution control measures that cross-correlate with standard dust emission minimization measures such as covering soil stockpiles, watering haul roads, watering excavation and grading areas, and so on. By incorporating appropriate engineering design and stormwater Best Management Practices during construction, minimal short-term air quality impacts are anticipated.

### *Biological Resources*

The measures listed below will reduce potential impacts on biological resources. The measures have been organized by the primary resource or species they are designed to protect, but they may apply to several biological resources. Also note that the Water Pollution Control Program and many of the Best Management Practices and standard specifications outlined in Section 1.6 will avoid and minimize impacts on biological resources.

[The following have changed since the release of the Draft Environmental Document per comments received from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife during public circulation: BIO-2, BIO-10, BIO-19, BIO-24, BIO-26, BIO-27, BIO-28, BIO-30, and BIO-31.

Further, measure BIO-16 was revised to include the proposed ratio for permanent impacts.

Lastly, measures BIO-37 to BIO-56 were added specifically for the proposed geotechnical drilling operations.]

*All Biological Resources*

The following general measures will apply for biological resources:

**BIO-1**: Before construction, a qualified biologist will conduct a Worker Environmental Awareness Training course for all personnel regarding all the identified biological resources in the project area. The contractor shall submit a written request to the resident engineer to schedule the training 14 calendar days before performing any work on the project.

**BIO-2**: Caltrans will immediately notify the California Department of Fish and Wildlife of any observations of any special-status plant and animal species. Observations of any special-status plant and animal species will also be documented on California Natural Diversity Database forms and submitted to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife within one month of observation during project activities.

**BIO-3**: Before the start of excavation or construction activities, a qualified biologist will conduct a preconstruction survey for all identified special-status animal species discussed in this document. If any of these species are found within the Area of Potential Impact, they will be relocated to a suitable location outside the Area of Potential Impact. If Southern California steelheads are found, then all project activities will immediately stop, and the appropriate regulatory agencies will be contacted to pursue take coverage. The qualified biologist will use the most current survey protocols available for the species to ensure the highest level of species detection, including visual encounter surveys and nesting survey techniques.

*Natural Communities and Habitats of Concern*

The avoidance, minimization, and compensatory mitigation measures proposed for jurisdictional aquatic resources described below have been assessed as sufficient to minimize impacts to red willow riparian woodland and forest.

*Wetlands, Other Waters, and Riparian Areas*

Before construction, Caltrans shall obtain a Section 404 Nationwide Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and a Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for activities that impact their respective jurisdictions. Permit conditions will be implemented during construction.

**BIO-4**: Before the start of any ground-disturbing activities, environmentally sensitive area fencing, flagging, or another boundary marking system shall be used to demarcate (distinguish) jurisdictional features and the dripline of trees to be protected within the project limits. Caltrans-defined environmentally

sensitive areas shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field before the start of construction activities.

**BIO-5**: No work shall occur in areas of standing or flowing surface water. If dewatering or diversion operations are necessary, a detailed dewatering and diversion plan, inclusive of water quality monitoring requirements, will be prepared and implemented.

**BIO-6**: Construction activities in jurisdictional areas and temporary stream diversion, if needed, shall be timed to occur during the dry season, when the surface water is likely to be dry or at a seasonal minimum, typically between June 1 and October 31 in any given year, or as otherwise directed by the regulatory agencies. Deviations from this work window will only be made with permission from the relevant regulatory agencies. Activities that may be approved outside the typical construction window include tree removal and trimming that does not require grubbing or ground disturbance; restoration seeding, planting, and maintenance of plantings; and stormwater measures that require the use of equipment, subject to prior agency approval. Maintenance of Stormwater Best Management Practices using hand tools is permitted year-round.

**BIO-7**: During construction, sediment and erosion control measures shall be implemented and maintained. Fiber rolls, barriers, and other Best Management Practices shall be installed as needed to stabilize the project site. Jurisdictional areas shall be stabilized for winter before November 1, either by completing construction in these areas, including installation of permanent erosion control measures, or by implementing winterization stabilization measures that ensure disturbed soils in jurisdictional areas are stabilized to withstand the 10-year, 24-hour storm event. At a minimum, erosion controls shall be maintained by the contractor on a daily basis throughout the construction period.

**BIO-8**: Other than the implementation of stormwater measures and water quality sampling, work will not occur in jurisdictional areas when rain is falling or when the National Weather Service forecast predicts a 25 percent chance or greater of at least 0.1 inch of rain within a 24-hour period. Work can resume if rain does not occur, or after rain has stopped, the forecast predicts at least 72 hours of clear weather, and site conditions are dry enough to avoid discharges of sediment into jurisdictional areas.

**BIO-9**: No concrete shall be poured if the National Weather Service forecast predicts a 10 percent or greater chance of rain for the city of Solvang within the next 72 hours. All poured concrete must be protected from contact with rainwater or surface waters for 30 days or until testing levels for pH (potential for hydrogen) with tap water measure below 9.5.

**BIO-10**: To the extent feasible, staging, parking, and refueling of equipment and vehicles must occur at least 100 feet from jurisdictional areas. Street legal vehicles must be maintained and fueled at least 100 feet away from jurisdictional areas. Further, all refueling must be conducted outside the wetted channel, fully isolated from the streambed, in a designated area within secondary containment adequate to contain the full volume of material. If staging of equipment and materials must occur closer than 100 feet from jurisdictional areas, the staging areas must have adequate Best Management Practices to prevent discharges from leaving the staging area and entering jurisdictional areas. Secondary containment adequate to contain the full volume of liquids must be provided.

**BIO-11**: At a minimum, all equipment and vehicles shall be checked and maintained by the contractor on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and avoid potential leaks or spills. Drip pans must be placed under equipment that is stationary for more than 12 hours. Stationary equipment used in jurisdictional areas, such as generators, must be placed in secondary containment. Equipment must be removed from the channel if the National Weather Service predicts a chance of at least 0.1 inch of rain within a 24-hour period for the city of Solvang.

At all times of year, equipment must be removed from floodprone areas if the National Weather Service predicts a greater than 25 percent chance of storms exceeding the 10-year 24-hour event, atmospheric river conditions affecting the Alamo Pintado watershed, or other storm conditions that could result in flow overtopping the streambanks.

**BIO-12**: Limited night work is permitted within jurisdictional areas. Lighting must be angled down and pointed toward work areas to minimize illumination of nearby jurisdictional areas outside project limits.

**BIO-13**: All litter, construction debris, equipment, loose materials, and soil spoils shall be removed from jurisdictional areas at the end of every work shift. Stockpiles of materials, including temporarily stockpiled soils, may not be stored within jurisdictional areas. Stockpiles not actively being used for construction must be covered and surrounded with a linear sediment barrier.

**BIO-14**: Stream contours shall be restored as close as possible to their original condition.

**BIO-15**: The temporary stream diversion and temporary fills will be removed during the wet seasons to allow flow and to minimize the temporal loss of jurisdictional features.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-16**: Caltrans shall restore all temporarily impacted areas to pre-project conditions, functions, and values and install replacement plantings, vegetate newly installed rock slope protection along the

streambank, implement invasive species control along the Alamo Pintado Creek corridor, and implement other potential means of mitigation. Caltrans will restore all areas temporarily impacted for access needs on-site at a 1-to-1 ratio. Additionally, for areas that are treated with buried/backfilled rock slope protection (degradation impacts), Caltrans will restore vegetation over the buried/backfilled rock slope protection and will also restore an additional 0.5 acre of riparian vegetation for each acre of vegetated backfilled rock slope protection, resulting in a 1.5-to-1 ratio of restoration for degraded areas. Caltrans would also restore or re-establish riparian vegetation at a ratio of 3-to-1 to offset each acre of permanently impacted streambed and streambank habitats.

Trees that are removed within jurisdictional areas shall be replanted as follows: trees with a diameter at standard height between 6 and 12 inches shall be replanted at a 3-to-1 ratio, trees with a diameter at standard height between 12 and 24 inches shall be replanted at a 5-to-1 ratio, and trees with a diameter at standard height greater than 24 inches shall be replanted at a 10-to-1 ratio.

*Late-Flowered Mariposa Lily, Sonoran Maiden Fern, and Other Special-Status Plant Species*

**BIO-17**: To avoid impacts to special-status plant species, all staging and equipment storage areas shall occur in existing pullouts or at paved locations that have been cleared by Caltrans Environmental.

*California Red-Legged Frog*

All temporary impacts to native vegetation will be offset by replacement plantings within the project limits. In addition to the measures detailed below, the mitigation proposed for jurisdictional aquatic resources described above will also mitigate impacts to California red-legged frog habitat.

**BIO-18**: Caltrans anticipates the proposed project will qualify for Federal Endangered Species Act incidental take coverage under the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program, which contains an extensive list of measures for each phase of the construction period. Some of the notable measures are summarized below:

- Only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologists shall participate in activities associated with the capture, handling, and monitoring of California red-legged frogs.
- Ground disturbance shall not begin until written approval is received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the biologist is qualified to conduct the work.

- Preconstruction surveys must be completed 48 hours before any construction work starts. If any life stage of the California red-legged frog is detected, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be notified prior to the start of construction.

- Biologists will conduct Worker Environmental Awareness Training for construction personnel.

- A biological monitor shall be on-site until all California red-legged frogs have been removed, workers have been instructed, and all disturbances to the habitat area are completed.

- During project activities, all trash that may attract predators or scavengers shall be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and debris shall be removed from work areas.

- All refueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment and vehicles shall occur at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies and not in a location from which a spill will drain directly toward aquatic habitat, unless otherwise preapproved by the necessary agencies.

- Habitat contours shall be returned to a natural configuration at the end of project activities. This measure shall be implemented in all areas disturbed by activities associated with the project, unless the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Caltrans determine that it is not feasible or modification of original contours will benefit the California red-legged frog.

- The number of access routes, the size of staging areas, and the total area of activity shall be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project.

- Caltrans shall attempt to schedule work for times of the year when impacts to the California red-legged frog will be minimal. For example, work that will affect large pools that may support breeding will be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the breeding season (November through May). Isolated pools that are important to maintain California red-legged frogs through the driest portions of the year will be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the late summer and early fall.

- If a work site is to be temporarily dewatered by pumping, intakes will be completely screened with wire mesh not larger than 0.2 inch to prevent California red-legged frogs from entering the pump system. Water will be released or pumped downstream at an appropriate rate to maintain downstream flows during construction. Upon completion of construction activities, any diversions or barriers to flow will be removed in a manner that will allow flow to resume with the least disturbance to the substrate.

- Unless approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, water will not be impounded in a manner that may attract California red-legged frogs.
- A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall permanently remove any individuals of exotic species, such as bullfrogs.
- The fieldwork code of practice developed by the Declining Amphibian Task Force shall be followed at all times to prevent the introduction of diseases.
- Restore the site to natural contours and revegetate it with native plants suitable for the habitats within the project area.

*Southern California Steelhead*

In addition to the measures detailed below, the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures, including the work windows, proposed for jurisdictional aquatic resources described above, will also mitigate impacts to Southern California steelhead.

**BIO-19**: During in-stream work, a qualified biologist will be retained with experience in steelhead biology and ecology, aquatic habitats, biological monitoring (including diversion/dewatering), and capturing, handling, and relocating fish species. During in-stream work, a qualified biologist will continuously monitor placement and removal of any required stream diversions and will capture stranded fish species and relocate them to suitable habitat, as appropriate.

**BIO-20**: If any steelhead are found during construction monitoring, all work activities will stop, and the appropriate regulatory agencies will be contacted to pursue take coverage.

**BIO-21**: Caltrans will design replacement bridge structures without scuppers, deck drains, or other facilities that drain stormwater directly into the stream to prevent pollutants such as 6PPD-quinone (an oxidation product of 6PPD, which is an additive intended to prevent damage to tire rubber from ozone) from directly entering waterways.

*Southwestern Pond Turtle*

In addition to the measures detailed below, the compensatory mitigation proposed for jurisdictional aquatic resources described above will also mitigate impacts to the southwestern pond turtle. Further, implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures outlined for jurisdictional aquatic resources and the California red-legged frog will avoid and minimize impacts to individuals of the southwestern pond turtle as well. Lastly, Caltrans Best Management Practices implemented to avoid impacts on water quality will avoid impacts on aquatic habitat for the southwestern pond turtle.

**BIO-22**: The project includes environmentally sensitive areas to minimize impacts to sensitive areas and species. The project plans will delineate environmentally sensitive areas that restrict access to the minimum required for construction, minimizing impacts to southwestern pond turtles and their habitat. No vehicle access within these environmentally sensitive areas will be permitted. During construction, the resident engineer and biological monitor will determine and agree upon the exact placement of environmentally sensitive area markers, based on the project plans, and will determine and agree upon the appropriate material for marking environmentally sensitive areas.

*Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher*

In addition to the measures described below, the compensatory mitigation measures proposed for riparian habitat in the jurisdictional aquatic features section will also mitigate the impacts to least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher habitat. Further, the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures used to protect all nesting bird species will also minimize any potential impacts to the least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher. Lastly, impacts to vegetation will be offset by replacement plantings within the project limits, which will also replace in-kind nesting habitat.

**BIO-23**: Focused surveys following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey guidelines for the least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher shall be completed to determine the presence/absence of the least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher wherever suitable habitat is present within 500 feet of the limits of construction. Surveys shall be conducted within one year before the start of construction activities. If the least Bell's vireo or southwestern willow flycatcher is detected during these surveys, formal Section 7 consultation will be initiated. Caltrans will provide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with a report detailing least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher survey efforts for the breeding season preceding construction.

**BIO-24**: Before construction starts, vegetation removal shall be scheduled to occur from October 1 to January 31, outside the typical nesting bird season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 500 feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 30), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than five calendar days before the start of construction. If an active nest is identified, a qualified biologist shall establish a buffer between the construction activities and the nest so that nesting activities are not interrupted. Standard buffers are 300 feet for highly sensitive birds and 500 feet for raptors. The buffer shall be delineated by temporary fencing and remain in effect as long as construction occurs. No project construction shall occur within the fenced nest zone until the young have fledged, are no longer being fed by the parents,

have left the nest, and will no longer be impacted by the project. Any reductions to the nest buffer distance require written approval from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**BIO-25**: If the least Bell's vireo or southwestern willow flycatcher is observed within 100 feet of the project area during construction or the preconstruction surveys, all project activities shall stop immediately, and the relevant resource agencies shall be consulted. Development of additional avoidance and minimization measures will occur as necessary in coordination with the pertinent agencies.

*Crotch's Bumblebee and Obscure Bumblebee*

**BIO-26**: During the design phase, a Crotch's bumblebee habitat assessment will be conducted following the California Department of Fish and Wildlife "Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act Candidate Bumble Bee Species," dated June 6, 2023. If Crotch's bumblebee habitat is determined to be present within the project site:

- At a minimum, three focused non-invasive surveys shall be conducted before ground disturbance for the Crotch's bumblebee and its nests, following California Department of Fish and Wildlife guidance. Each survey should be ideally spaced two to four weeks apart during the colony active period to ensure that the surveys cover a range of dates within the same calendar year. A survey report shall be submitted to the lead agency and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 30 days of completion.

- A Worker Environmental Awareness Training course will be provided for all construction personnel before the start of any ground disturbance or vegetation removal to discuss Crotch's bumblebee identification, ecology, habitat, and avoidance and minimization measures.

- Before starting any ground-disturbing activities, the qualified biologist shall identify and flag Crotch's bumblebee feeding and nesting habitat to be avoided. Environmentally sensitive area fencing shall be installed around these areas, inspected weekly, and maintained for the duration of construction. Environmentally sensitive areas to be avoided shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field before the start of construction activities.

**BIO-27**: If a Crotch's bumblebee is identified in the project area, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine whether, a Section 2081 Incidental Take Permit will be necessary pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2080 and what follows. Caltrans shall comply with conditions set forth in Incidental Take Permit and shall obtain a fully executed take authorization prior to implementing or continuing project ground-disturbing activities.

*American Badger*

**BIO-28**: No rodent control pesticides shall be used, including anticoagulant rodenticides such as brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone, and difenacoum. This is necessary to minimize the possibility of primary or secondary poisoning of American badgers or other special-status species. A qualified biologist shall inspect all burrows within the project area for American badgers and other wildlife which may use these burrows as refugia. Inspections shall be conducted within three days prior to ground-disturbing or clearing activities. If an active burrow is identified, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife shall be notified, and a protective buffer shall be established around the burrow with California Department of Fish and Wildlife concurrence. No construction or clearing shall occur within the buffer until the burrow is no longer active or until written approval is obtained from California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Inspection results, buffer locations, and any follow-up actions shall be documented and submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 14 days of the inspection. Inspection results, buffer locations, and any follow-up actions shall be documented and submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 14 days of the inspection.

*Townsend's Big-Eared Bat, Pallid Bat, and Other Roosting Bats*

**BIO-29**: Tree removal shall be scheduled to occur from September 1 to February 14, outside the typical bat maternity roosting season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to roosting bats.

**BIO-30**: If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 100 feet of potential habitat during the bat maternity roosting season (February 1 to September 1), a bat roost survey shall be conducted by a biologist determined qualified by Caltrans within 14 days before construction. The biologist conducting the preconstruction survey will also identify the nature of the bat utilization (in essence, no roosting, night roost, day roost, hibernation roost, or maternity roost) and determine if passive bat exclusion will be necessary and feasible. If an exclusion is necessary, Caltrans shall consult with California Department of Fish and Wildlife on design and implementation of the exclusion. If an active day roost is found, a qualified Caltrans biologist shall determine, in consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area shall be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that roosting activity has stopped or exclusionary methods have successfully evicted roosting bats.

**BIO-31**: If bats are found by a qualified biologist to be maternity roosting, active bat maternity roosts shall not be disturbed or destroyed until pups are capable of flight. Caltrans should establish a 500-foot buffer around the colony where no construction activities may take place during the bat maternity season (April 1-August 31). This will reduce the disturbance to the

colony and therefore reduce the risk that the bats will abandon the colony and/or young. The final buffer may be adjusted by a qualified biologist, with written California Department of Fish and Wildlife approval, based on species-specific behavior, roost type, and site conditions, while larger buffers (e.g., 500 feet) are applied to maternity colonies due to the increased vulnerability of pups. To protect hibernating bats, no construction or tree removal shall occur within 100 feet of known or potential hibernacula between October 1 and January 31 unless a qualified biologist determines that bats are absent. All survey results, buffer locations, and exclusion activities shall be documented and submitted to Caltrans within 14 days of completion. Survey results shall be available to California Department of Fish and Wildlife upon request.

*Cooper's Hawk, Purple Martin, and Other Nesting Birds*

**BIO-32**: During the non-nesting season (October 1 to January 31), methods to deter new nests will be implemented to prevent new nests from forming during project activities. Exact methods of deterrence will be determined during the design phase. Removal of nests as they are beginning to form may be conducted as a last resort to further prevent nesting during project activities. There will be no removal of fully formed active nests. Partially built nests may only be removed if they have been monitored by a qualified biologist and determined to be inactive. If an active nest is found, the qualified biologist will determine an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area will be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that juveniles have fledged and are no longer dependent on the nest.

**BIO-33**: Active bird nests must not be disturbed, and eggs or young of birds covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code must not be killed, destroyed, injured, or harassed at any time.

*Invasive Species*

During construction, Caltrans will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible as follows:

**BIO-34**: Only clean fill shall be imported. When practicable, invasive exotic plants on the project site shall be removed and properly disposed of. All invasive vegetation removed from the construction site shall be taken to a landfill to prevent the spread of invasive species. If soil from weedy areas must be removed off-site, the top 6 inches containing the seed layer in areas with weedy species shall be disposed of at a landfill. Species that occur on the California Invasive Plant Council's Invasive Plant Inventory shall not be used in the Caltrans erosion control seed mix or landscaping plans for the project.

**BIO-35**: To minimize the introduction of invasive plant species, all vehicles, machinery, and equipment shall be in a clean and soil-free condition before entering the project limits. Construction equipment shall be certified as "weed-free" by Caltrans before entering the construction site.

**BIO-36** Selected use of herbicides may be used to target highly invasive species already present within the project area that are difficult to control with mechanical techniques alone. Herbicide application will be limited to spot spraying target species and will only be applied during periods of dry weather when winds are less than 3 miles per hour. Herbicide application will be conducted to improve conditions over baseline by reducing the cover of highly invasive species.

*Geotechnical Drilling*

The following additional measures shall be implemented specifically for the geotechnical drilling operation:

**BIO-37**: Prior to the start of drilling activities, Caltrans will obtain required 404, 401 and 1600 permits, certifications and agreements. Additionally, Caltrans will obtain concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service through section 7 consultation.

**BIO-38**: If work will occur between February 1-September 30, the typical nesting bird season, a nesting bird survey will be conducted. If an active nest of a native species is found, a qualified biologist will determine an appropriate buffer size based on species and response to work conditions. Work within the established buffer will be delayed and/or monitored until the nest is no longer active.

**BIO-39**: A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved biologist will survey the work area around Locations 2 and 3 no more than 48 hours before the onset of work activities for California red-legged frog. If any life stage of the California red-legged frog is found, and these individuals are likely to be killed or injured by work activities, the approved biologist shall be allowed sufficient time to move them from the site before work begins. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved biologist shall relocate the California red-legged frogs the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and will not be affected by the activities associated with the project. The relocation site shall be in the same drainage to the extent practicable. Caltrans shall coordinate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the relocation site prior to the capture of any California red-legged frogs.

**BIO-40**: Staging and equipment and material storage will occur in existing pullouts or previously paved locations.

**BIO-41**: All drilling mud and all fluids associated with testing must be prevented from leaking or washing into waterways adjacent to geotechnical

study areas. All fueling of equipment must be done at least 100 feet from waterways.

**BIO-42**: No work will occur at night during or within 24 hours following rain events (more than 0.1 inch of rain within 24 hours) in order to avoid impacting migrating amphibians.

**BIO-43**: Vehicles, machinery, and equipment shall be in a clean and soil-free condition before traveling off-pavement in the project site.

**BIO-44**: If suspected contaminated soil is discovered during potholing, all work will cease in the suspected contaminated area and the Caltrans hazardous waste specialist will be contacted.

**BIO-45**: Only water will be used for dust abatement.

**BIO-46**: Construction pipes or similar structures with a diameter of four-inches or greater that are stored at the project site overnight will be thoroughly inspected before the pipe is moved, buried, capped, or otherwise moved in any way.

**BIO-47**: Workers shall inspect under vehicles and equipment for wildlife before they are moved.

**BIO-48**: All food-related trash items will be disposed of in securely closed containers and removed from the project site at least once per week.

**BIO-49**: Pets and firearms are prohibited within the project area.

**BIO-50**: Ensure that project related vehicles do not leak anti-freeze or other hazardous materials.

**BIO-51**: Water may not be impounded in any manner that may attract wildlife.

**BIO-52**: If any sensitive species are found in the project area they should be allowed to leave of their own accord or may be relocated out of harm's way by a qualified biologist.

**BIO-53:** If a special status species is observed in or adjacent to the project site, it will be immediately reported to the Caltrans Geotechnical Engineer who will immediately notify the Caltrans biologist.

**BIO-54:** Any contractor, employee, or other personnel who inadvertently kills or injures a special-status species will immediately report the incident to the Caltrans Geotechnical Engineer who will immediately notify the Caltrans biologist.

**BIO-55**: Upon completion of project, all construction refuse shall be removed from the project site and disposed of properly.

**BIO-56**: For borings in streambed and bank areas, the last few feet of backfill placed to seal boreholes must be native stream substrate.

### *Cultural Resources*

The following measure will help reduce the potential for any impacts on archaeological resources.

**CUL-1**: A preconstruction Worker Environmental Awareness Program training for construction personnel and construction phase tribal monitoring of project excavation and initial ground disturbance shall occur.

### *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*

The following measures will be implemented in the project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and potential climate change impacts from the project related to construction activities:

**GHG-1**: Limit idling to 5 minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment not in active operations.

**GHG-2**: Schedule delivery truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours.

**GHG-3**: Schedule longer-duration lane closures to reduce the number of equipment mobilization efforts (combine with public information efforts for congested areas).

**GHG-4**: For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment:

- Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition.
- Use the right-sized equipment for the job.

**GHG-5**: Use alternative fuels such as renewable diesel for construction equipment.

**GHG-6**: Earthwork Balance: Reduce the need for transport of earthen materials by balancing cut and fill quantities.

**GHG-7**: Supplement existing construction environmental training with information on methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to construction.

**GHG-8**: Use Caltrans “Accelerated Bridge Construction” method. This method will reduce construction windows and use more precast elements that, in turn, reduce the need for additional falsework, forms, bracing, etc.

**GHG-9**: Salvage disposed materials on-site, such as rebar from demolished concrete, and process waste to create usable fill.

**GHG-10**: Maximize the use of recycled materials (tire rubber, for example).

**GHG-11**: Salvage large trees removed for lumber or similar on-site beneficial uses other than standard woodchipping (for example, use in roadside landscape projects or green infrastructure components).

**GHG-12**: Recycle existing project features on-site (for example, metal beam guardrail, light standards, sub-base granular material, or native material that meets Caltrans specifications for incorporation into new work).

Reduce construction waste. For example, reuse or recycle construction and demolition waste (reduces consumption of raw materials, which reduces waste and transportation to landfills; saves costs).

**GHG-13**: Use recycled water or reduce consumption of potable water for construction.

**GHG-14**: Use cold in-place recycling.

**GHG-15**: Replace lighting with ultra-reflective sign materials that are illuminated by headlights to reduce energy used by electric lighting.

### *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*

[The following measure has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

The following avoidance and minimization measures will further reduce the potential for impacts related to hazardous waste.

**HAZ-1**. During project construction, notify California Geologic Energy Management Division and other appropriate agencies if soils containing significant amounts of hydrocarbons are discovered during soil-disturbing activities. Caltrans will also notify California Geologic Energy Management Division if any wells that were not part of this review are encountered during surveys or construction activities.

### *Hydrology and Water Quality*

See Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, for more information on the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures proposed for jurisdictional areas.

During construction, effective combinations of temporary and permanent erosion and sediment controls will be used. Stormwater management for the site will be coordinated through the contractor with Caltrans construction

personnel to effectively manage erosion from the Disturbed Soil Areas by implementing a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. Selected Best Management Practices that will be included but not limited to the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan for the project are defined as follows:

*Temporary Soil Stabilization*

**HYDRO-1**: Minimize active disturbed soil areas during the rainy season by using scheduling techniques.

**HYDRO-2**: Preserve existing vegetation to the maximum extent feasible.

**HYDRO-3**: Implement temporary protective cover/erosion control on all non-active disturbed soil areas and soil stockpiles.

**HYDRO-4**: Control erosive forces of stormwater runoff with effective storm flow management, such as temporary concentrated flow conveyance devices, earthen dikes, drainage swales, lined ditches, outlet protection/velocity dissipation devices, and slope drains. These practices will be determined as feasible during the project's next phase.

*Temporary Sediment Controls*

**HYDRO-5**: Implement linear sediment controls such as fiber rolls, check dams, or gravel bag berms on all active and non-active disturbed soil areas during the rainy season.

**HYDRO-6**: To further help prevent sediment discharge, stabilize construction site entrances, implement temporary drainage inlet protection, and implement street sweeping and vacuuming.

**HYDRO-7**: Implement appropriate wind erosion controls year-round.

*Non-Stormwater Management*

The appropriate non-stormwater Best Management Practices will be implemented year-round as follows:

**HYDRO-8**: Water conservation practices shall be implemented on all construction sites and wherever water is used.

**HYDRO-9**: Paving and grinding procedures shall be implemented where paving, surfacing, resurfacing, grinding, or saw cutting may pollute stormwater runoff or discharge to the storm drain system or watercourses.

**HYDRO-10**: Follow appropriate procedures and practices designed for construction contractors to recognize illicit connections or illegally dumped or discharged materials on a construction site and report incidents to the resident engineer.

**HYDRO-11**: Stockpiling materials, storing equipment and liquid waste containers, washing vehicles or equipment, and fueling and maintaining street legal vehicles and equipment must be performed at least 100 feet from concentrated flows of stormwater, drainage courses, and inlets if within the floodplain. The activities must be performed at least 50 feet from the aforementioned areas if outside of the floodplain. Refueling of heavy equipment that is within 100 feet of Alamo Pintado Creek must be isolated from the stream system such that refueling will not occur within the wetted channel and no deleterious materials will enter the channel. Secondary containment adequate to contain the full volume of material must be provided.

**HYDRO-12**: Pile driving operations will be considered part of the construction activities.

**HYDRO-13**: Concrete curing will be used in the construction of structures such as bridges and abutments. Concrete curing includes the use of both chemical and water methods. Proper procedures will minimize the pollution of runoff during concrete curing.

**HYDRO-14**: Since the project involves structure demolition/removal over the Alamo Pintado Creek, proper procedures will be implemented to minimize pollution during these activities.

**HYDRO-15**: The following construction site Best Management Practices shall be bid items for this project to ensure they are implemented during construction:

- Job Site Management
- Prepare Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program
- Stormwater Sampling and Analysis Day
- Stormwater Annual Report
- Move In/Move Out (Temporary Erosion Control)
- Temporary Hydraulic Mulch (Bonded Fiber Matrix)
- Temporary Check Dam
- Temporary Drainage Inlet Protection
- Temporary Fiber Roll
- Temporary Large Sediment Barrier
- Temporary Construction Entrance

- Street Sweeping
- Temporary Concrete Washout
- Temporary Fence (Environmentally Sensitive Area type fence)

### *Noise*

The following avoidance and minimization measures will further reduce the potential for impacts on local noise levels.

**NOISE-1**: The public within 500 feet of construction activities shall be notified at least two weeks before the start of construction noise and upcoming construction activities that are likely to produce an adverse noise environment. The Caltrans District 5 Public Information Office shall publish notice of the proposed dates and duration of proposed construction activities and potential community impacts in local news media after receiving notice from the resident engineer.

**NOISE-2**: The contractor shall develop a Noise Control Plan and submit it to district noise staff for review. District noise staff will be responsible for obtaining a non-standard special provision addressing the requirements of the Noise Control Plan.

**NOISE-3**: The contractor must provide a list of affected residents to a Caltrans Public Information Officer and resident engineer.

**NOISE-4**: The state shall consider the following measures to minimize any negative noise impact on residents' sleep:

- The contractor shall purchase noise-canceling headphones before the start of construction, and they should be provided as the first line of preventative measures for affected residents.
- For temporary accommodation, the state will need to approve the number of nights and verify that the resident is on the list of those affected contained in the Noise Control Plan.
- Affected residents will be reimbursed by the contractor at the state rate. A change order will have to be developed to reimburse the contractor.

**NOISE-5**: Whenever possible, construction work shall be done during the day.

**NOISE-6**: When nighttime construction is necessary, the construction activities that generate the greatest amount of noise shall be done as early in the evening as possible.

**NOISE-7**: The contractor shall shield loud pieces of stationary construction equipment with sound barriers if complaints are received from the public.

**NOISE-8**: The contractor shall locate portable generators, air compressors, etc., away from sensitive noise receptors as feasible.

**NOISE-9**: The contractor shall limit grouping major pieces of equipment operating in one area to the greatest extent feasible.

**NOISE-10**: The contractor shall use newer equipment that is quieter and ensure that all equipment items have the manufacturers' recommended noise abatement measures, such as mufflers, engine covers, and engine vibration isolators, intact and operational. Internal combustion engines used for any purpose on or related to the job shall be equipped with a muffler or baffle of a type recommended by the manufacturer.

**NOISE-11**: The contractor shall consult District 5 noise staff to determine appropriate steps to alleviate noise-related concerns if noise complaints are received from the public during the construction process.

The following Caltrans Standard Specification for Noise Control will also be implemented to reduce impacts related to nighttime work.

**NOISE-12:** If nighttime construction is necessary, the noisiest construction activities should be done as early in the evening as possible. Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02 requires the contractor to control and monitor noise resulting from work activities and not to exceed 86 A-weighted decibels maximum sound level at 50 feet from the job site from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

### *Cumulative Impacts*

The following general minimization recommendations were made to reduce the overall decline in the health of the identified resources:

*California Red-Legged Frog*

**CUMULATIVE-1**: Agencies with regulatory authority over California red-legged frogs include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Efforts should continue to be made by these agencies to support projects that improve habitat acreage and function for these species through enhancement and creation. Providing suitable contiguous habitat will make this resource more resilient and resistant to decline.

*Southwestern Pond Turtle*

**CUMULATIVE-2**: Agencies with regulatory authority over southwestern pond turtles include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Efforts should continue to be made by these

agencies to support projects that improve habitat acreage and function for these species through enhancement and creation. Providing suitable contiguous habitat will make this resource more resilient and resistant to decline.

*Jurisdictional Waters and Riparian Habitat*

**CUMULATIVE-3**: Agencies with regulatory authority over jurisdictional areas include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Agencies should continue to implement existing policies requiring restoration of temporary impacts and mitigation to achieve no net loss of ecological function and value to offset permanent impacts. Agencies should also promote policies that encourage development setbacks from stream corridors and assist in programs that preserve and restore existing stream and riparian habitats.

# **Appendix C** Comment Letters and Responses

[This appendix has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

This appendix contains the comments received on the Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration during the public circulation and comment period from July 16, 2025, to August 22, 2025. The comments have been retyped for improved readability. The comment letters are stated verbatim as submitted, with acronyms, abbreviations, and any original grammatical or typographical errors included. (Note that, within the comments, any references to page numbers correspond to the pages in the original circulated Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration; text may have shifted to other pages in this final environmental document.)

A Caltrans response follows each comment presented. Copies of the original comment letters and documents can be found in Volume 2 of this document.

A public notice was published in the local newspaper, The Santa Ynez Valley News, and on the Caltrans website with information about the document's availability for review and comment, as well as information regarding the project's hybrid Open House Public Meeting. The Open House Public Meeting was held on August 7th, 2025, at the City of Solvang Council Chamber, as well as virtually via the online meeting communication tool Webex. During the public meeting, several members of the community requested that the comment period be extended. Caltrans was able to accommodate this request, and extended the comment period by one week. Caltrans circulated another newspaper notice, as well as a supplemental posting to the State Clearinghouse website CEQANet, to alert the public that an additional week will be provided, and comments received up to August 22 will be addressed in the Final Environmental Document.

## Comment from the California Department of Conservation, Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM)

### Comment 1:

Construction Site Well Review. The California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) has received the above-referenced project dated July 25, 2025. To assist local permitting agencies, property owners, and developers in making safe and practical land use decisions regarding potential development near oil, gas, or geothermal wells, CalGEM provides a table in the attached enclosure of the wells within the parcel boundary or in its vicinity, based on CalGEM's Well Finder database.

CalGEM categorically advises against building over, or in any way impeding access to, oil, gas, or geothermal wells. Impeding access to a well could result in the need to remove any structure or obstacle that prevents or impedes access including, but not limited to, buildings, housing, fencing, landscaping, trees, pools, patios, sidewalks, roadways, and decking at the landowner's expense if there is a need to access a well. Maintaining sufficient access is considered the ability for a well servicing unit and associated necessary equipment (consisting of well servicing rig, pumping equipment, pipe trailer) to reach a well from a public street or access way, solely over the parcel on which the well is located. A well servicing unit, and any necessary equipment, should be able to pass unimpeded along and over the route, and should be able to access the well without disturbing the integrity of surrounding infrastructure. Impermeable barriers such as asphalt, concrete, and plastic may trap hazardous gases and liquids underneath and could create a safety hazard if built over a well that later develops a leak.

CalGEM recommends that any well for which access is impeded or built over, against CalGEM's advice, should be evaluated by a qualified petroleum professional for compliance with the statutory objectives of isolating all hydrocarbon-bearing strata; protecting underground and surface waters; prevention of subsequent damage to life, health, property, and other resources; and prevention of loss of oil, gas, or reservoir energy. CalGEM recommends that wells that do not meet these standards are abandoned or re-abandoned prior to construction. The well information can be accessed through CalGEM's Well Finder database mentioned above. PRC section 3208, subdivision (a), provides the primary statutory authority for CalGEM to oversee adequate abandonment of wells. Additionally, CalGEM has developed the regulatory guidance for operators to be followed during well abandonment, which are listed within California Code of Regulation, title 14 (CCR) section 1723 and associated sub-sections (for onshore wells), and section 1745 and associated sub-sections (for offshore wells).

There is no guarantee that a well abandoned in compliance with current Division requirements as prescribed by law will not start leaking in the future.

Due to the inability to predict all subsurface conditions or changes, it always remains a possibility that any well may start to leak oil, gas, and/or water after abandonment, no matter how thoroughly the well was plugged and abandoned. CalGEM acknowledges wells plugged and abandoned to the most current Division requirements as prescribed by law have a lower probability of leaking in the future, however there is no guarantee that such abandoned wells will not leak.

CalGEM advises that all wells identified on the development parcel prior to, or during, development activities be tested for liquid and gas leakage. Surveyed locations in Latitude and Longitude, NAD 83 decimal format, and leak testing results should be provided to CalGEM. CalGEM expects any wells found leaking to be reported to CalGEM immediately.

PRC section 3208.1 gives CalGEM the authority to order or permit the re-abandonment of any well where it has reason to question the integrity of the previous abandonment. Responsibility for re-abandonment costs may be affected by the choices made by the local permitting agency, property owner, and/or developer in considering the general advice set forth in this letter. The PRC continues to define the person or entity responsible for re-abandonment as:

1. The property owner - If the well was plugged and abandoned in conformance with Division requirements at the time of abandonment, and in its current condition does not pose an immediate danger to life, health, and property, but requires additional work solely because the owner of the property on which the well is located proposes construction on the property that would prevent or impede access to the well for purposes of remedying a currently perceived future problem, then the owner of the property on which the well is located shall obtain all rights necessary to re-abandon the well and be responsible for the re-abandonment.

2. The person or entity causing construction over or near the well - If the well was plugged and abandoned in conformance with Division requirements at the time of plugging and abandonment, and the property owner, developer, or local agency permitting the construction failed either to obtain an opinion from the supervisor or district deputy as to whether the previously abandoned well is required to be re-abandoned, or to follow theadvice of the supervisor or district deputy not to undertake construction that impedes access, then the person or entity causing the construction over or near the well shall obtain all rights necessary to re-abandon the well and be responsible for the re-abandonment.

3. The party or parties responsible for disturbing the integrity of the abandonment - If the well was plugged and abandoned in conformance

with Division requirements at the time of plugging and abandonment, and after that time someone other than the operator or an affiliate of the operator disturbed the integrity of the abandonment in the course of developing the property, then the party or parties responsible for disturbing the integrity of the abandonment shall be responsible for the re-abandonment.

Should any wells require abandonment or re-abandonment, the responsible party must submit a Notice of Intention (NOI) to CalGEM through WellSTAR.

No well work may be performed on any oil, gas, or geothermal well without written approval from CalGEM. Well work requiring approval includes, but is not limited to, mitigating leaking gas or other fluids from abandoned wells, modifications to well casings, and/or any other re-abandonment work. CalGEM also regulates the top of a plugged and abandoned well's minimum and maximum depth below final grade. CCR section1723.5 states well casings shall be cut off at least 5 feet but no more than 10 feet below the surface of the ground. If any well needs to be lowered or raised (i.e. casing cut down or casing riser added) to meet this regulation, a permit from CalGEM is required before work can start.

CalGEM makes the following additional recommendations to the local permitting agency, property owner, and developer:

1. To ensure that present and future property owners are aware of (a) the existence of all wells located on the property, and (b) potentially significant issues associated with any improvements near oil or gas wells, CalGEM recommends that information regarding the below identified well(s), and any other pertinent information obtained after the issuance of this letter, be communicated to the appropriate county recorder for inclusion in the title information of the subject real property.

2. CalGEM recommends that any soil containing hydrocarbons be disposed of in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. Please notify the appropriate authorities if soil containing significant amounts of hydrocarbons is discovered during development.

As indicated in PRC section 3106, CalGEM has statutory authority over the drilling, operation, maintenance, and abandonment of oil, gas, and geothermal wells, and attendant facilities, to prevent, as far as possible, damage to life, health, property, and natural resources; damage to underground oil, gas, and geothermal deposits; and damage to underground and surface waters suitable for irrigation or domestic purposes. In addition to CalGEM's authority to order work on wells pursuant to PRC sections 3208.1 and 3224, it has authority to issue civil and criminal penalties under PRC sections 3236, 3236.5, and 3359 for violations within CalGEM's jurisdictional

authority. CalGEM does not regulate grading, excavations, or other land use issues.

Should you have any questions, or if any wells are encountered that were not part of this letter, contact CalGEM at 805-937-7246 or via email at CalGEMNorthern@conservation.ca.gov.

**Response to Comment 1**: The CalGEM Well Finder was used to search for wells in the project vicinity. The nearest well is over 4,000 feet away from the project area. No wells are located within the Area of Potential Impact. The wells will not be affected by project activities.

Caltrans has standard procedures in place in the event that hydrocarbon contaminated soils are unearthed during project construction. Standard Specification 14-11.02 provides procedures to be followed for unanticipated discoveries of contaminated soils/groundwater and will be included in the construction contract. During project construction, Caltrans will notify CalGEM and other appropriate agencies if soils containing significant amounts of hydrocarbons are discovered during soil-disturbing activities. Caltrans will also notify CalGEM if any wells that were not part of this review are encountered during surveys or construction activities. Measure HAZ-1 has been added to cover these notification requirements.

**Comments from Martha and Michael Nedegaard**

**Comment 1:**

1. Resident of High Meadow - 46 years -
2. 3 left turn accidents off 246 – 1 totaling my car.
3. We have asked for a left-hand turn lane for years.
4. There are a lot more vehicles on 246 then bikes or pedestrians. Who do you receive revenue from?
5. 4-year project for Caltrans and High Meadow as we are the most impacted by this project. Yet we have not a say to the project. No one has contacted residents to discuss.
6. I do not want to be a statistic!

**Response to Comment 1:**

Thank you for your comments. The funding for this project primarily comes from the State Highway Operations and Preservation Program (SHOPP). This program is intended to fund projects that maintain existing facilities, and not

for any operational or capacity increasing improvements. In this case, the SHOPP funds are directed at replacing a deteriorating structure

This project is also partially funded by the “Measure A” Program, which is a transportation measure administered by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments that provides funding for:

- Local street improvements such as pothole repairs and synchronized traffic signals
- Increasing senior and disabled accessibility to public transit
- Building safer walking and bike routes to schools
- Providing increased opportunities for carpool and vanpool programs.

Further, local funds (Measure A) have been made available via a cooperative agreement executed between the City of Solvang and Caltrans for multi-modal improvements.

As such, these local contributions and partnerships were spurred by the community and regional desire for bike and pedestrian connectivity.

It is also important to note that the project would not preclude future widening at this location under a different project, should justification and a funding source become available in the future. That effort would need to originate from a local effort aimed at regionally addressing congestion.

In regard to outreach, several methods were utilized for this project over the life of the project. This effort began with our public agency partners and then expanded to the general public. A partner meeting was held on April 18, 2024, where the Caltrans Project Development Team provided information on the project and answered questions from attendees. In attendance were partners from the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, the City of Solvang, Santa Barbara County Flood Control District, Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, California Department of Parks and Recreation, local Native American tribe members, along with members of the general public. Follow up meetings were then held with individual public agency partners as requested. Those included a meeting with County of Santa Barbara Flood Control on May 29, 2024, United States Fish and Wildlife on April 23, 2024, City of Solvang presentation at City Council meeting on August 12, 2024, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians on July 15, 2024, and Supervisor Hartmann's office October 28, 2024.

Due to challenges with the hydraulic study and subsequently the number of alternatives which could be presented to the public, general public outreach was deferred until the study  available, as these results significantly influenced the final proposed alternative.

In preparation of the recent Open House Public Meeting hosted by Caltrans on August 7, 2025, several methods were utilized to alert the public. A newspaper ad for the public meeting was included in the Santa Ynez Valley News on July 17, 2025. On July 16, 2025, information regarding the project and the meeting was published on the Caltrans District 5 website under "Current Projects", as well as on the California State Clearinghouse's "CEQANet" website, which provides key information from all California Environmental Quality Act documents submitted to the State Clearinghouse for review. Leading up to the public meeting, flyers were distributed across several local businesses and establishments throughout Downtown Solvang, and posts were made on Caltrans District 5's Instagram and Facebook accounts to notify the public of the meeting. Lastly, on July 28, 2025, notice of the public meeting was provided at the City of Solvang's bi-monthly City Council meeting.

**Comment 2**:

Safety. Safety should be a top priority in this project. Constructing a separate arched bicycle pedestrian bridge tying the existing bike path to the Old Mission Drive before the main bridge construction would eliminate many safety issues and the termination on to Old Mission Drive would be better than at the gas station and busy intersection. Riders and walkers are likely headed toward Old Mission anyways. By eliminating the bike/pedestrian section of the main bridge, a center lane could be included from the intersection on the west to the east past High Meadow Road to allow High Meadow residents a safer ingress and egress to and from Mission Drive. My wife has been rear-ended three times heading westbound and stopped to make the left turn onto High Meadow. With more building and traffic coming in the future, it will be nearly impossible to exit High Meadow going left (westbound) without a center lane where we can merge into traffic. This could help save lives in the future.

**Response to Comment 2:** Thank you for your comment.

Addressing safety is a primary concern in transportation improvement projects that Caltrans develops. Safety is at the top of 5 key goals identified in the Caltrans 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

The routing of the multi-use trail on a separate alignment over the creek and terminating on Old Mission Drive was considered by members of the design team and did not move forward as part of the studied alternatives for several reasons. That alignment would mean proposing public improvements on private property where there is not adequate room for a bike path. The portion of Old Mission Drive adjacent to the creek is currently used as a parking lot, in which the main access drive is very narrow, one way, and is often congested. Ultimately the alignment is outside of Caltrans right of way and SHOPP funds

are not eligible for use in transportation improvements outside of the state right of way.

There have been several recent planning efforts related to the project area. This list includes:

- The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments' Regional Active Transportation Plan
- Santa Ynez Valley Bicycle Master Plan, sponsored and advised on by several agencies such as the City of Solvang, the County of Santa Barbara, The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, and the City of Buellton
- The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments' Santa Ynez River Trail Alignment & Safety Study
- Santa Ynez Valley Traffic Circulation and Safety Study, sponsored by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
- The County of Santa Barbara's Active Transportation Plan

Together, these documents guide active transportation planning throughout the region.

The latest multimodal priority for State Route 246 would be the Santa Ynez Valley Active Transportation Regional Connector Project proposed by the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, in coordination with the County of Santa Barbara, and the Cities of Buellton and Solvang. This project proposes a 10-mile-long shared-use-path along portions of State Route 246 to provide locals with safe access to schools, grocery stores, medical facilities, employment opportunities, and other vital destinations, while filling critical gaps in the Santa Ynez Valley's active transportation network and adapting the region to expand bike-tourism. Caltrans has also provided funding for this project as part of the Caltrans' Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program.

The location of the proposed work under this project falls within a transition point of where the existing trail will connect with the proposed alignment under the Santa Ynez Valley Active Transportation Regional Connector Project. It is critical that the work proposed under this project is in conformity with the regional priorities and planned improvements, along with the Santa Ynez Valley Active Transportation Regional Connector Project, and what is currently proposed for the Class 1 Path under this project will be consistent. Throughout the life of this project, Caltrans has made a concerted effort to coordinate with the agencies who have proposed these plans and projects and will continue to do so as the project advances to its next phase.

## Comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife

### Comment 1:

Crotch's Bumble Bee. Various Project activities prior to and during ground disturbance may result in permanent and temporal impacts to this California Endangered Species Act candidate species. Herbicide use reduces foraging opportunities for pollinators. The spraying of herbicide on flowering plants may also have indirect impacts to pollinators occupying the flowers at the time the herbicide is sprayed, resulting in their death or a reduced physiological functionality.

Crotch's bumble bee may move nesting/foraging locations from year to year, and it is therefore important to survey for the species in the same calendar year that Project activities are set to start. If the Project proceeds without appropriate focused surveys, the Project may result in mortality and/or injury of undetected individual Crotch's bumble bee that may be present during Project activities. Accurate detection of Crotch's bumble bee is difficult due to their small size, similar appearance to related bee species, and their ability to move quickly across the landscape. Therefore, conducting surveys according to tested and established protocols is critical to ensuring that the species is adequately surveyed for prior to the initiation of Project activities. If a Crotch's bumble bee is identified within the Project area during focus surveys, California Department of Fish and Wildlife should be notified immediately so that they may provide input and advice to Caltrans on how Project activities may best proceed in order to limit the potential impact to the species.

The California Fish and Game Commission accepted a petition to list the Crotch's bumble bee as endangered under California Endangered Species Act , determining the listing "may be warranted" and advancing the species to the candidacy stage of the California Endangered Species Act listing process. The Project may substantially reduce and adversely modify habitat as well as reduce and potentially impair the viability of populations of Crotch's bumble bee. The Project may also reduce the number and range of the species without considering the likelihood that special status species on adjacent and nearby natural lands may rely upon the habitat that occurs on the proposed Project site. In addition, Crotch's bumble bee has a State Ranking of S1/S2. This means that the Crotch's bumble bee is considered critically imperiled or imperiled and is extremely rare (often 5 or fewer populations). Crotch's bumble bee is also listed as an invertebrate of conservation priority under the California Terrestrial and Vernal Pool Invertebrates of Conservation Priority3. Accordingly, Crotch's bumble bee meets the California Environmental Quality Act definition of rare, threatened, or endangered species (California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, § 15380). Therefore, take of Crotch's bumble bee could require a mandatory finding of significance by the District (California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, § 1565).

California Department of Fish and Wildlife proves the following recommended measures:

Measure #1 Herbicide and Pesticide Use - To avoid impacts to pollinators, including Crotch's bumble bee, Caltrans or their contractors shall ensure that herbicides and pesticides are not sprayed at any time in the Project area on or near flowering plants.

Measure #2 Crotch's Bumble Bee Measures – To reduce potential Project impacts on Crotch's bumble bee to a less-than-significant level, California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends that Caltrans implement Mitigation Measures BIO-26 and BIO-27 as revised below.

BIO-26: During the design phase, a Crotch's bumblebee habitat assessment would be conducted following the California Department of Fish and Wildlife "Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act Candidate Bumble Bee Species," dated June 6, 2023. If Crotch's bumblebee habitat is determined to be present within the project site:

- ~~A~~ At a minimum three focused non-invasive surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist before ground disturbance for the Crotch's bumblebee and its nests, following California Department of Fish and Wildlife guidance. Each survey should be ideally spaced 2 to 4 weeks apart during the Colony Active Period to ensure that the surveys cover a range of dates within the same calendar year. A survey report shall be submitted to the lead agency and California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 30 days of completion.

- A Worker Environmental Awareness Training course would be provided for all construction personnel before the start of any ground disturbance or vegetation removal to discuss Crotch's bumblebee identification, ecology, habitat, and avoidance and minimization measures.

- Before starting any ground-disturbing activities, the qualified biologist shall identify and flag Crotch's bumblebee feeding and nesting habitat to be avoided. Environmentally sensitive area fencing shall be installed around these areas, inspected weekly, and maintained for the duration of the construction. Environmentally sensitive areas to be avoided shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field before the start of construction activities.

BIO-27: If a Crotch's bumblebee is identified in the project area, Caltrans would immediately halt any Project activities and coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, to determine whether and, if necessary, a Section 2081 Incidental Take Permit would be necessary pursuant to Fish and Game Code §2080 et seq. Caltrans shall comply with

conditions set forth in Incidental Take Permit and shall obtain a fully executed take authorization prior to implementing or continuing Project ground-disturbing activities.

**Response to Comment 1:** Thank you for the feedback. Measure BIO-26 and BIO-27 will be revised as recommended. Due to the amount of invasive plant species that occur within the project area and Caltrans' commitment to restore or improve the project area compared to pre-project conditions, the use of herbicide may be necessary to control highly invasive species such as giant reed *(Arundo donax*) and poison hemlock *(Conium maculatum*). Per measure BIO-36, the select use of herbicide may be used to target highly invasive species that are difficult to control with mechanical techniques alone. Application will be limited to spot spraying and only in periods of dry weather with wind speeds less than 3mph. Caltrans will consider ways to minimize the use of herbicide as feasible, including requirements to control these invasive species before they reach the flowering stage. Herbicide use will be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve restoration goals.

**Comment 2:**

Special Status Species Observation Protocol. Per Fish and Game Code section 1802, California Department of Fish and Wildlife serves as a Trustee agency over the protection of biological resources. Therefore, to ensure timely and accurate documentation of special-status species observation and facilitate effective protection of these species, California Department of Fish and Wildlife requests that Caltrans revise Mitigation Measure BIO-2 to incorporate the underlined language and omit the language in strikethrough:

BIO-2: Caltrans will immediately notify California Department of Fish and Wildlife of any observations of any special-status plant and animal species. Observations of any special-status plant and animal species will also be documented on California Natural Diversity Database forms and submitted to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife within one month of observation during Project activities.

**Response to Comment 2:** Thank you for the feedback. Measure BIO-2 will be revised as recommended.

**Comment 3:**

Nesting Bird. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 prohibits the take of protected migratory bird species. To avoid impacts on nesting migratory birds and raptors, CDFW requests Caltrans revise Mitigation Measure BIO-24 to incorporate the underlined language and omit the language in strikethrough:

BIO-24: Before construction starts, vegetation removal shall be scheduled to occur from October 1 to January 31, outside the typical nesting bird season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds and raptors. If tree

removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 500 ~~100~~ feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 30), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than five calendar days before the start of construction. If an active nest is identified, a qualified biologist shall establish a buffer between the construction activities and the nest so that nesting activities are not interrupted. Standard buffers are 300 feet for highly sensitive birds and 500 feet for raptors. The buffer shall be delineated by temporary fencing and remain in effect as long as construction occurs. No Project construction shall occur within the fenced nest zone until the young have fledged, are no longer being fed by the parents, have left the nest, and will no longer be impacted by the Project. Any reductions to the nest buffer distance require written approval from California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**Response to Comment 3:** Thank you for the feedback. Measure BIO-24 will be revised as recommended.

**Comment 4:**

Staging, Parking, and Refueling of Equipment. Per Fish and Game Code section 5650, no deleterious materials (including oil, gas, etc.) may be allowed to enter a stream channel. To avoid this, California Department of Fish and Wildlife requests that Caltrans revise Mitigation Measure BIO-10 to incorporate the underlined language and omit the language in strikethrough:

BIO-10: Staging, parking, and refueling of equipment and vehicles must occur at least 100 feet from jurisdictional areas. If staging of equipment and materials must occur closer than 100 feet from jurisdictional areas, the staging areas must have adequate Best Management Practices to prevent discharges from leaving the staging area and entering jurisdictional areas.

**Response to Comment 4:** Thank you for the feedback. Caltrans does not intend to allow oil, gas, or other deleterious substances to enter the stream and will clarify the measure to better ensure these substances do not enter the waterway. Due to the configuration of the stream and the site, it is not feasible to require that all staging, parking, and refueling of equipment be at least 100 feet from streams. The creek flow path approximately parallels the north edge of State Route 246 east of the bridge, and almost all of the Area of Potential Impact for bridge construction is within 100 feet of the stream corridor measured from the edge of the riparian canopy/top of bank. Bridge construction requires heavy equipment that cannot be readily moved in and out of the work area, such as excavators, loaders, cranes, vibratory hammers, and drills used to construct the bridge and place rock slope protection. Refueling more than 100 feet from the stream will require demobilizing and trucking equipment offsite to refuel, remobilizing and setting back up, which is impractical and will result in significant time delays, increased trips, and impacts on traffic patterns and detours during construction. Caltrans will

clarify the measure to require refueling of street-legal vehicles must occur offsite at least 100 feet from waterways. Caltrans will further clarify that for heavy equipment, refueling areas must be fully isolated from the stream system such that refueling will not occur within the wetted channel and no deleterious materials will enter the channel. Measure BIO-10 will be revised to indicate that all refueling must be conducted outside the wetted channel, fully isolated from the streambed, in a designated area within secondary containment adequate to contain the full volume of material.

**Comment 5:**

Qualified Biologist Duties. Given that there are several special-status species within the Project footprint, biological monitors may assist a qualified biologist in relocation efforts but may not conduct relocation efforts independent of the qualified biologist. Additionally, any surveys which require appropriate handling permits must be conducted by a California Department of Fish and Wildlife approved biologist who possesses these permits.

BIO-19: During in-stream work, a qualified biologist would be retained with experience in steelhead biology and ecology, aquatic habitats, biological monitoring (including diversion/dewatering), and capturing, handling, and relocating fish species. During in-stream work, a qualified biologist would continuously monitor placement and removal of any required stream diversions and would capture stranded fish species and relocate them to suitable habitat, as appropriate.

**Response to Comment 5:** Thank you for the feedback. Measure BIO-19 will be revised as recommended.

**Comment 6:**

Burrow Inspections. American badgers are protected as a California Species of Special Concern. To reduce potential Project impacts on American badgers, to a less-than-significant level, California Department of Fish and Wildlife requests that Caltrans revise Mitigation Measure BIO-28 to incorporate the underlined language and omit the language in strikethrough:

BIO-28: No rodent control pesticides shall be used in the Project area, including anticoagulant rodenticides such as brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone, and difenacoum. This is necessary to minimize the possibility of primary or secondary poisoning of American badgers or other special-status species. A qualified biologist shall inspect all burrows within the Project area for American badgers and other wildlife which may use these burrows as refugia. Inspections shall be conducted within three days prior to ground-disturbing or clearing activities. If an active burrow is identified, California Department of Fish and Wildlife shall be notified, and a protective buffer shall be established around the burrow with California Department of Fish and

Wildlife concurrence. No construction or clearing shall occur within the buffer until the burrow is no longer active or until written approval is obtained from California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Inspection results, buffer locations, and any follow-up actions shall be documented and submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 14 days of the inspection. Inspection results, buffer locations, and any follow-up actions shall be documented and submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife within 14 days of the inspection.

**Response to Comment 6:** Thank you for the feedback. Measure BIO-28 will be revised as recommended.

**Comment 7:**

Bat Maternity Roost. Several bat species are identified to have potential to be impacted by the Project. To protect bat hibernation and maternity roost during Project activities, California Department of Fish and Wildlife requests that Caltrans revise Mitigation Measure BIO-30 and BIO-31 to incorporate the underlined language and omit the strikethrough language. This revision is requested to reduce potential Project impacts on bats to a less-than-significant level and ensure protection of day roosts, maternity colonies, and hibernating bats, reducing the risk of disturbance, abandonment, or mortality. A minimum 150-foot buffer around active day roosts is recommended to minimize stress from noise, vibration, and light, consistent with Caltrans' internal Bat Mitigation guidance document4 and guidance from California Department of Fish and Wildlife and regional habitat conservation plans, which suggest buffers ranging from 50 to 200 feet depending on species sensitivity. The final buffer may be adjusted by a qualified biologist based on species-specific behavior, roost type, and site conditions, while larger buffers (for example, 500 feet) are applied to maternity colonies due to the increased vulnerability of pups.

BIO-30: If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 100 feet of potential habitat during the bat maternity roosting season (February 1 to September 1), a bat roost survey shall be conducted by a biologist determined qualified by Caltrans within 14 days before construction. The biologist conducting the preconstruction survey would also identify the nature of the bat utilization (in essence, no roosting, night roost, day roost, hibernation roost, or maternity roost) and determine if passive bat exclusion would be necessary and feasible. If an exclusion is necessary, Caltrans shall consult with California Department of Fish and Wildlife on design and implementation of the exclusion. If an active day roost is found, a qualified Caltrans biologist shall determine, in consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area shall be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that roosting activity has stopped or exclusionary methods have successfully evicted roosting bats.

BIO-31: If bats are found by a qualified biologist to be maternity roosting, active bat maternity roosts shall not be disturbed or destroyed until pups are capable of flight. Caltrans should establish a 500-foot buffer around the colony where no construction activities may take place during the bat maternity season (April 1 – August 31). This will reduce the disturbance to the colony and therefore reduce the risk that the bats will abandon the colony and/or young. The final buffer may be adjusted by a qualified biologist, with written California Department of Fish and Wildlife approval, based on species-specific behavior, roost type, and site conditions, while larger buffers (for example, 500 feet) are applied to maternity colonies due to the increased vulnerability of pups. To protect hibernating bats, no construction or tree removal shall occur within 100 feet of known or potential hibernacula between October 1 and January 31 unless a qualified biologist determines that bats are absent. All survey results, buffer locations, and exclusion activities shall be documented and submitted to Caltrans within 14 days of completion. Survey results shall be available to California Department of Fish and Wildlife upon request.

**Response to Comment 7:** Thank you for the feedback. Measures BIO-30 and BIO-31 will be revised as recommended.

**Comment 8:**

Mitigation and Monitoring Plan. California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends the Project's environmental document include mitigation measures recommended in this letter. California Department of Fish and Wildlife has provided comments via a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan to assist in the development of feasible, specific, detailed (in essence, responsible party, timing, specific actions, location), and fully enforceable mitigation measures (California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, § 15097; Public Resources Code, § 21081.6). The Lead Agency is welcome to coordinate with California Department of Fish and Wildlife to further review and refine the Project's mitigation measures. Per Public Resources Code section 21081.6(a)(1), California Department of Fish and Wildlife has provided a summary of our suggested mitigation measures and recommendations in the form of an attached Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (Attachment A).

**Response to Comment 8:** Thank you for providing the recommended revisions to the mitigation measures. We will incorporate the revisions as feasible, and all avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures will be included within our own Environmental Commitments Record. Caltrans will determine the timing and responsibility of all project-related measures and include this information within our Environmental Commitments Record.

**Comment from Bridget Paris**

**Comment 1:**

Explore providing a center turn lane east bound traffic to wait safely before merging or turning left onto High Meadow Rd.

**Response to Comment 1:** Thank you for your comment. The assumption is that the commentor is referring to west-bound traffic since east bound traffic would turn right out of High Meadow Road. Currently, there is no safety analysis, traffic study, or accident data that recommends adding lanes to State Route 246 (Mission Drive). The State Highway Operations and Preservation Program funding (SHOPP) program, where the majority of the funding for this project is coming from, is specific regarding the prohibition of use of that fund source for operational or capacity increasing improvements. In this case, the SHOPP funds are from a limited source and are directed at replacing a deteriorating structure. Local funds have been made available via a cooperative agreement executed between the City of Solvang and Caltrans specifically for multi-modal improvements. It should be noted that this project will not preclude future widening at this location should justification and a funding source become available.

**Comment from Catherine Streegan-Catani**

**Comment 1:**

Alternative Route. Dear Dianna, thank you for answering my question. Another concern is, will there be an alternative route from and to High Meadow Rd. if there is an issue during the bridge construction? Thank you.

**Response to Comment 1:** Thank you for attending the meeting, and for your comment. Caltrans intends to keep High Meadow Road open for access throughout construction of the project, so an alternate route or detour is not planned.

**Comments from Mr. Frank Redfern**

**Comment 1:**

Congestion. The Hwy 246/Alamo Pintado corridor is a main artery for the entire valley. It is maddening that the City of Solvang will not work on a solution to the traffic congestion.

**Response to Comment 1**: Thank you for attending the public meeting and submitting your comment. The purpose of this project is to address a deficient bridge structure, and not to address congestion. Please see comment response to Martha and Michael Nedegaard starting on page 134 of this document for more information regarding the reasoning behind the local funding contributions made for this project. Please also see the Santa Ynez Valley Traffic Circulation and Safety Study, prepared by the Santa Barbara

County Association of Governments and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, for details regarding long term suggestions and solutions for congestion in the area.

**Comment 2:**

Congestion. A 4-year bike lane and bridge project will significantly impact all areas of the Santa Ynez Valley due to limited ability to travel between towns. This roadway already has severe congestion.

**Response to Comment 2:** During construction, stage construction will maintain the existing conditions of having a lane open for each direction of travel. However, there may be limited times during construction where flagging may be present to aid in the construction operations and safety of the traveling public. This will be determined during the project's next phase, when the Traffic Management Plan is prepared. The Project Development Team is also currently looking at options to shorten the duration of construction and will continue to do so during the project's next phase.

**Comment 3:**

Bike Path. A 17 ft. professional bike lane is the last concern of the residents of the area. This is a poor City decision based upon wishing to host bike races several times a year. This is not what the residents need or require. Any wider bike lane could be added to the existing bike path.

**Response to Comment 3**: The shared use path is the City of Solvang's plan to help reduce congestion by providing a multi modal community that is interconnected along the Santa Ynez Valley. Bike tours/races are most often in the travel lanes of the state right of way accompanied by permit obtained from the state to hold such events and would be too large of an event for the existing and proposed shared use path.

Caltrans would also like to clarify regarding the width of the bike lanes; the bike lane will not be 10 feet wide with 2-foot shoulders on each side for a total of 14 feet in width. The 10 feet width provides 5 feet in either direction. Professional riders are not the intended user as speeds for this facility are low and shared with other uses such as pedestrians. Further, professional riders are comfortable using the existing roadway shoulder.

**Comment 4:**

High Meadow Road. Residents would prefer turn lanes into the High Meadow Road, and Hill Haven Road, as a measure to improve traffic flow and safety.

**Response to Comment 4**: Hill Haven Road is not within the project limits and therefore will not be considered part of this project. Further, the existing traffic

data does not show the need for turn lanes at High Meadow Road. High Meadow Road is also outside of Caltrans right-of-way.

**Comment 5**:

Turn Lanes. Area needs proper turn lanes at Alamo Pintado (from Hwy. 246 turning north onto Alamo Pintado Road) of 8- or 10-foot width to improve safety and traffic flow.

**Response to Comment 5**: There are currently turn lanes for each direction at the intersection of a path from the existing path to the Alamo Pintado Road intersection. The right turn lane will be delineated (striped) as part of this project.

**Comment 6:**

Flooding. The bridge really needs to be raised to reduce the flooding risk from log jams. It is too low for creek to push through all the water coming from the upper Alamo Pintado Creek drainage.

**Response to Comment 6**: The hydraulic analysis done for this project has demonstrated that raising the bridge elevation and adjacent roadway would create a new obstruction to flood waters that currently escape the creek channel and would increase floodwater depth at nearby insurable structures. This is not allowed by federal flood control agencies.

**Comment 7:**

Flooding. Eliminating a center span will not improve the flow of water during floods without raising the bridge. It is critical the Flood Control be on top of clearing out the creek.

**Response to Comment 7**: This project is not eliminating a center span in the bridge, with the proposed new bridge having 3 spans, matching what is currently existing. The proposed center span will be wider than the two outside spans creating more room for debris to pass.

**Comment 8:**

Nearby Development. The projected development at Wildwood (corner of Alamo Pintado Rd and Old Mission Drive) is going to severely impact the traffic and increase accidents in this area even more. This needs to be addressed with a wider bridge, more lanes, and better turn lanes.

**Response to Comment 8**: The purpose of this project is to address a deficient bridge structure and not address congestion. Local funds have been added specifically for bicycle and pedestrian connectivity.

**Comment 9:**

Archaeological Resources. *Mr. Redfern also expressed concerns regarding archaeological or tribal resources that could exist within the project area. Due to confidentiality of archaeological site locations, the specifics regarding these resources have been omitted from the comment.*

**Response to Comment 9**: Caltrans Professionally Qualified Staff conducted cultural resources studies for this undertaking in a manner consistent with Caltrans' regulatory responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 800) and in accordance with the 2024 Federal Highway Administration and State Historic Preservation Office Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, and Public Resources Code 5024 and the 2024 Memorandum of Understanding between Caltrans and the State Historic Preservation Office. The project included the following: archaeological archival research, outreach to the Native American Heritage commission, a Sacred Lands File search, Caltrans Cultural Resources Database search, review of past archaeological records within 1/4-mile of the project area, conducted new archaeological surveys, preparation of an Archaeological Survey Report, and formal Native American consultation with Native American Heritage Commission listed federally recognized and local tribes. It was determined that no previously identified, or new archaeological resources exist in the project area. Caltrans is committed to continuing formal consultation with interested tribal parties for the duration of the project. Caltrans recognizes the Chumash peoples' cultural and geographic affiliation with the project vicinity; however, no evidence of archaeological resources was identified within the project area that was subject to studies. The State Historic Preservation Officer was consulted and concurred with Caltrans Finding of No Historic Properties Affected for the project (in accordance with the Section 106 PA Stipulation IX.A).

**Comments from the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG)**

**Comment 1:**

Purpose and Need Statement. I understand the majority of funding for this project is coming from the SHOPP and that drives the Project Purpose - bridge replacement due to scour and reactive aggregate -- but is there an ability to mention the community and regional desire for bike and pedestrian connectivity that spurred the local contribution and partnership with SBCAG and the City of Solvang. SBCAG made a similar comment to the Caltrans' recent EIR for the Robinson Bridge project in Lompoc. This would also seem to reinforce the desire of local funding going toward this improvement and not other improvements such as the High Meadow Intersection.

**Response to Comment 1**: Thank you for your comment and attending the open house public meeting. The project's Purpose and Need Statement has been revised to reflect the community and regional desires that sparked the local contributions and partnership with Santa Barbara County Association of Governments and the City of Solvang:

*Purpose:*

The purpose of this project is to address structural stability issues associated with the existing Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge (Bridge Number 51-0130), maintain traffic flow on State Route 246, and enhance bicycle and pedestrian access and connectivity.

*Need:*

The existing Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge is Scour Critical and during high flow events, may not have sufficient bearing capacity which could lead to bridge closure if not replaced. Cracking has been documented in the 1972 widening portion of the structure that is indicative of Alkali-Silica Reaction. Additionally, existing outdated curb ramps within the project limits do not meet current Americans with Disabilities Act standards, and the bridge lacks complete street elements that support multimodal access. Extending bicycle and pedestrian facilities from the existing class I bikeway to Alamo Pintado Road intersection has been identified as a need by the City of Solvang, County of Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, with a shared focus on improving safety and mobility for all users.

**Comment 2:**

Area of Potential Impact. On Figure 1-5, there is an additional area identified that is non-contiguous with the project area. Is this for direct project improvements or mitigation or something else?

**Response to Comment 2:** The area in question was identified as a potential area for a construction support site and stockpile area during construction in the Caltrans right-of-way. It is an existing pull out that has been previously disturbed and is close to the project site, so it may be used on a temporary basis during construction activities. As such, this area was included in the environmental analysis for the Initial Study.

**Comment 3:**

Railing and Barriers. SBCAG concurs with the public comment regarding railing and barrier choices and finishes that match the architectural style and character of the community which is rural in nature.

**Response to Comment 3:** As mentioned under Section 2.1.1 Aesthetics, bridge rails will not only be an open style to preserve views but also will be aesthetically treated to visually recede or appear consistent with the architectural character and community setting. These aesthetic treatments will be developed and approved by Caltrans District 5 Structure Design in conjunction with Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.

Bicycle and pedestrian railing will also be selected or treated to reduce glare and minimize contrast and noticeability, and the style and color should be consistent with local character and aesthetic goals, as well as compatible with the bridge's railing. Railing type and treatments will also be developed and approved by Caltrans District 5 Structure Design in conjunction with Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.

Depending on the final design, some metal elements, such as bridge railing, pedestrian railing, guardrail, posts, transitions, and end treatments attached to the proposed bridge, may require staining or darkening. The color or treatment, if any, shall be determined and approved by District 5 Landscape Architecture.

Lastly, the retaining wall will be textured or treated to reduce potential graffiti and the urbanizing effect. Proposed tie-back wall aesthetics should blend with the area's architectural character in style and color. Wall aesthetics will be selected by District 5 Landscape Architecture staff to complement community architecture guidelines in harmony with the natural environment.

**Comment from Gay Infanti**

**Comment 1:**

Noise and closures. I very much appreciated receiving the extra time to review the MND for the Alamo Pintado Bridge project. I thought the document was thorough and well-written. As a consequence, I have no substantial comments to make at this time. The mitigation measures seem reasonable and sufficient based on what we currently know about the project. The hours that will be allowed for the construction to take place are longer than Solvang allows in its municipal code, so those of us who live nearby will be subject to a lot more construction noise than we're used to experiencing. There is also concern about 246 closures, even though temporary during any given day. Consideration should be given, especially since work will be during the summers, to ensuring quick reopening of the road in case of evacuations due to fire. There are few roads out of town and we don't want another Paradise. Again, thanks for extending the review period, which allowed me time to review the MND.

**Response to Comment 1**: Thank you for your comment and attending the Open House Public Meeting. As part of the preparation of the Draft Report,

Caltrans has investigated ways to minimize the number of stages and seasons required for construction in an effort to limit the number of working days. Caltrans will continue to do so during the project's next phase as detailed construction methods are more known.

During the project's next phase, a Traffic Management Plan will be prepared for this project to address any potential traffic delays on State Route 246 that may occur during project construction; this plan will ensure that access via State Route 246 will be maintained at all times throughout the construction period and will account for emergency access and limit delays to the maximum extent feasible. This plan will also cover items such as flaggers, duration of any delays, holidays and special occasions, and any other applicable restrictions.

Once detailed construction methods and schedules are known, the contractor for this project will be required to develop a Noise Control Plan, which will include additional measures as needed, in addition to the measures proposed in Section 2.1.13 Noise of the environmental document.

**Comment from Santa Barbara County Flood Control District**

**Comment 1:**

Planting. Thanks for taking comments on this. County Flood Control does some drainage maintenance in this area of the creek. The MND mentions mitigation planting in and around the job site. We typically would request the chance to review the landscaping plan whenever it's ready. We request that new plantings of trees and such are not in the creek bed and lower banks so that the channels do not become obstructed with vegetation. There have been other bridge projects where other municipalities planted willows right down into to the channel and it can lead to thickets and obstructions near bridges, which can become a drainage/flood issue. The MND is not super specific about the planting areas, so my comment is not specific to the MND analysis but if you're amenable to sharing the landscaping plan, we'd appreciate it. Thank you.

**Response to Comment 1:** Thank you for your comments. We typically do not have landscape plans until the project's design phase, roughly around 60% Plans, Specifications and Estimates. When these are produced in mid-2026, Caltrans will gladly share with Santa Barbara County Flood Control District.

No planting is proposed in the creekbed. The rock slope protection below the Ordinary High-Water Mark will have void filler (with insitu material) with topsoil and erosion control, and no trees. The rock slope protection above the Ordinary High-Water Mark will have void filler (with insitu material) with

topsoil, erosion control and riparian trees; and additional planting on the upper banks.

**Comments from the Santa Ynez Valley Citizens Council**

**Comment 1**:

Capacity and Traffic Flow. It was noted at the meeting, with considerable amazement, that this project does not expand the capacity of the highway at a point that routinely appears to be a “bottleneck.” Traffic regularly backs up into this intersection, and often a mile towards Santa Ynez, when downtown Solvang is clogged. Many of us waiting on the bridge at this intersection have noted how useful a right-hand turn lane would be. So at least those desiring to turn north on Alamo Pintado Road could proceed and therefore shorten the line of waiting traffic. This project does widen the bridge, but the additional width is dedicated to the shoulders and the bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

At your public meeting it was explained that the funds being used to address the maintenance issues of the bridge could only be used to maintain existing capacity, not to expand it. Considering the effort being directed towards this project, this seems shortsighted. But if it is to go forward with that limitation, has Caltrans analyzed how an additional turn lane might be accommodated in the future? Could it be accommodated without impacting the pedestrian and bicycle facilities? Is it essential to have 8-foot-wide shoulders on both sides of the bridge? or could a turn lane be accommodated, now or in the future, if the shoulders were reduced?

In the past, installation of a roundabout has been proposed for the intersection of State Route 246 and Alamo Pintado Road. Obviously, the installation of ADA compliant sidewalk corners at this intersection are not consistent with a roundabout, but more importantly, will the new bridge and its bicycle/pedestrian component, be compatible with a future roundabout installation?

Although capacity will not be increased the document claims that one of the project’s purposes is to “maintain improved traffic flow on State Route 246.” How is this achieved? Residents know that the unimpeded flow of traffic on 246 is very important to the quality of life in the Santa Ynez Valley. It is a critical part of the circulation system relied upon by the entire community, visitors, businesses, and emergency vehicles. The Transportation section says that a “Traffic Management Plan” will address “traffic delays” and “ensure that access via State Route 246 would be maintained at all times.”

That plan would be prepared during the project’s next phase. When would that be?

**Response to Comment 1**:

Thank you for your comment. This project was initiated to address a deficient structure, and not to address congestion. The deficient structure was identified in annual bridge inspection reports as being scour critical and Alkali-Silica Reaction (ASR).

The project will not preclude future widening at this location under a different project, should justification and a funding source become available in the future. That effort would need to originate from a local effort aimed at regionally addressing congestion.

During the project's next phase, beginning in early 2026, the Traffic Management Plan will be prepared for this project to address any potential traffic delays on State Route 246 that may occur during project construction; this plan will ensure that access via State Route 246 will be maintained at all times throughout the construction period and will account for emergency access and limit delays to the maximum extent feasible. This plan will also cover items such as flaggers, duration of any delays, holidays and special occasions, and any other applicable restrictions.

**Comment 2:**

Aesthetics. Aesthetics are a very important concern for this area which serves as both a gateway to Solvang, which you correctly identify as a renowned tourist location, and to the East, the beginning of a heavily vegetated, less-developed, part of the highway that appears very much like a parkway lined with native vegetation. All the proposed "VIS" mitigation measures will be important for reducing the impacts of the project.

It is not entirely clear how much larger the new bridge will be, when compared to the existing bridge. Your description under the Build Alternative on page 4 suggests the new bridge will "maintain the current profile" but on page 18, the new bridge structure is described as "3 feet higher and just over 40 feet longer." If this is true, there is considerable potential for increased negative aesthetic impacts. This is further complicated when you discuss the height of the "bridge barrier and pedestrian railing" at the top of page 17, where they are described as "slightly taller than the existing ones." Are parts of these "slightly taller" structures actually sited 3 feet higher in many areas?

It certainly makes sense to incorporate any existing utilities that cross the creek into this project and conceal them as much as possible (VIS-9.) On page 17 it is noted that, "If overhead utilities are relocated to within the bridge structure, the scenic vistas of surrounding vegetation would be improved." This is definitely true but is an understatement. One way for the project to offset the impacts to Solvang's gateway and the parkway character of SR 246 to the east of the bridge, and the removal of existing vegetation, is to underground, or perhaps "under-bridge" all utilities.

As noted at the bottom of page 17 and the top of page 18 there is the potential to “degrade the visual character and quality of the site” by adding “visual clutter”, resulting in a “more engineered-looking highway facility.” The visual character of the retaining and tie-back walls, the bridge barrier/railing, and pedestrian railing/fencing will be very important for the mitigation of aesthetic impacts. Chain-link fencing would be totally inappropriate for this location. The design and “aesthetic treatment” of these should be “coordinated with the City of Solvang, other local partners, and the community” as noted on page 5. Surfaces should be non-reflective, except where safety requires otherwise, and toned to disappear as much as possible. Designs with both a rural and lightweight character may be more appropriate where feasible.

VIS-10 speaks to the importance of revegetation, presumably with appropriate, locally sourced, native species wherever possible. This mitigation measure needs to be coordinated with BIO-16. Both need to speak to the period of maintenance for the new plantings, and the period of invasive species control.

**Response to Comment 2:** Thank you for noting this discrepancy. To clarify, the new bridge will maintain the existing profile along the roadway but will be approximately 6 feet longer. The new railing will be slightly taller (several inches) than the existing railing to bring it to current safety standards. Section 2.1.1 Aesthetics has been revised accordingly.

Utilities requiring relocation will be undergrounded as much as feasible. During the project’s next phase, Caltrans Utility Engineering Workgroup will perform potholing to determine the positive location of any utilities within the project limits and prepare utility conflict mapping. Once the location and type of any utilities are determined, Caltrans Right of Way Agents will coordinate with the appropriate utility companies regarding the relocation of these utilities.

Caltrans Landscape Architecture and Biology have been in close coordination regarding the proposed replanting for this project and will continue to do so during the project’s next phase as this becomes more refined. Only native plants and vegetation suitable for the habitats within the project area will be used. Further measures BIO-34 to BIO-36 speak to the measures that will be conducted during construction and post construction for invasive species control. Long term maintenance and invasive control of the project site will be determined during the project’s next phase. The next phase is Plans, Specifications and Estimates, which consists of detailed project design and contract documents. That phase is scheduled to begin January 2026.

**Comment 3:**

Invasive Species. The Biological section correctly identifies the presence of certain non-native invasive species in the “ruderal” areas of the study area and the potential for these invasive species to become established in newly disturbed areas of the project is substantial. Hence the need for mitigation measures that identify and address the impact. Presumably if there are “pre-project conditions,” as described in BIO-16, that include invasive species, they will not be replaced.

**Response to Comment 3**: Non-native species (including invasives) will not be replaced and will not be included in seed mixes or planting plans. Only native species will be incorporated in the planting plans.

**Comment 4:**

Historic Resources. The description of the Biological Study Area on page 24 describes a “state historical museum” next to the south end of the study area. Rather than a “museum”, this is the State Historic Park that incorporates both the Grist Mill and the Fulling Mill associated with Mission Santa Ines. These are the historic “nearby resources” discussed on the bottom of page 58.

**Response to Comment 4:** Thank you for pointing out this discrepancy, Page 24 of the Initial Study has been updated to be consistent with what is discussed on Page 58.

**Comment 5:**

Steelhead. The steelhead analysis points out that during high flow periods this section of Alamo Pintado Creek meets “fish passage criteria.” The potential presence of steelhead, California red-legged frog, and Southwestern Pond turtle do warrant the limitation of inchannel construction to the dry period of the year. But it should be noted that the three phases of bridge construction (in order to maintain the flow of traffic) combined with an extended construction calendar, increases the potential to encounter wet weather where the specific direction of the mitigation measures will be invaluable.

**Response to Comment 5:** Thank you for your concern regarding steelhead. We agree that longer construction timelines increase the chances of encountering wet seasons, which makes following the minimization measures establishing work within the dry season only and working in dry conditions critical.

**Comment 6:**

Cooper’s Hawk. Although no Cooper’s hawks were seen during your surveys they are regularly seen in the surrounding area. Notably in the Oak woodland and grassland across Alamo Pintado Road from the Nielsen’s Shopping

Center that includes the Valley Fresh Market, and in the open fields adjacent to Alamo Pintado Creek just south of the study area.

**Response to Comment 6:** Thank you for the comment, we appreciate receiving knowledge about the local flora and fauna from the community to inform our potential impacts. All native birds, including Cooper's hawk, are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. As such, pre-construction surveys will be completed prior to the start of work to ensure there are no nests within, as well as in the vicinity of, the work area.

**Comment 7:**

Tree Removal. It is unfortunate that so many mature trees need to be removed for this project. It is particularly sad to see the larger specimens to be removed, including Valley Oaks. This will open areas of the creek to more sunlight and expose views of vehicular traffic and the new bridge. Many of the trees being removed are deciduous as you would expect in a riparian area. Presumably many of the replacements will therefore be deciduous and valuable biological and landscape assets. But there will be some Coast Live Oaks that will be incorporated in the revegetation. These evergreen trees can provide very important screening if carefully placed. They would be particularly valuable if they screened the highway and expanded bridge from the adjacent commercial shopping center and vice versa.

**Response to Comment 7:** Thank you for the comment. Tree removal will be minimized to the maximum extent feasible. Trees that will be replanted on-site to mitigate tree removal will be natives that replicate ecological function of the existing trees. The plant palette for restoration planting will be developed during the design stage of the project, and at a minimum will include replacement of locally native tree species impacted by the project. Coast live oaks are locally native and will be appropriate for inclusion in the planting plans.

**Comment 8:**

Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The mitigation measures focused on greenhouse gas emissions are valuable and GHG-1 attempts to limit idling. But we can't help but note that congestion on SR 246 contributes to an immense amount of idling and greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing that congestion by increasing capacity at bottlenecks or adding the aforementioned right-hand turn lane to this project would be even more valuable.

**Response to Comment 8:** The proposed project does not add capacity to the highway and will not change the horizontal or vertical alignment of the highway, hence there will be no difference in long-term air emissions with or without the project. As such, no further long-term analysis is required, and no

modeling of operational related greenhouse gas emissions was conducted for this project.

**Comment 9:**

Hazardous Waste. On page 69 it is noted that there are two underground plumes of contaminants in the area. "...It is not anticipated that project construction would encounter these residual...." But how can this be confirmed if there is no testing? You claim that, "During the project's next phase, these conclusions would be revaluated, and additional sampling would be completed if required." How will the reevaluation be informed if there is no sampling?

**Response to Comment 9:** Soil sampling will occur during the project design phase once the location and extent of ground disturbance is finalized. This sampling will collect data regarding the concentration of aerially deposited lead, toxic heavy metals, petroleum-related hydrocarbons, and compounds related to dry-cleaning related solvents and associated breakdown products in soils that will be excavated as part of this project. It is not Caltrans' responsibility to characterize the total extent of the contaminant plumes that extend into the State Right of Way because Caltrans is not responsible for the source contamination. However, this project will avoid contaminant areas to the maximum extent feasible.

**Comment 10:**

Alamo Pintado Creek. As noted on page 73, there are many beneficial uses of the water of Alamo Pintado Creek and the creek certainly warrants protection. It is very important that fueling and storage of vehicles and materials do not threaten the water quality of the creek. Mitigation measure HYDRO-11 attempts to address these issues but it should be noted that the designated distances may be totally inadequate in storm events such as the 2023 atmospheric river referenced above, where the entire floodplain was awash.

**Response to Comment 10:** The prescribed distances specified in measure HYDRO-11 come from the Caltrans Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual, which is referenced from the 2022 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit, a statewide agreement between the California State Water Resources Control Board and Caltrans. These distances are the minimum setback required for a project. To better prepare for these anomalous catastrophic events, Non-Standard Specifications may be required to specify where the above items may be stored relative to the statistically mapped flood hazard zones are.

**Comment 11:**

Noise. Although the noise impacts of this project are all “short-term” the demolition and phasing involved, suggests that many businesses, shoppers and residents will hear this construction project for many months. Loud noise can be very stressful. All the noise mitigation measures are valuable, particularly those that address nighttime construction.

**Response to Comment 11:** Local noise levels in the vicinity of the construction will experience a short-term increase due to construction activities. The avoidance and minimization measures proposed will reduce the noise impacts on nearby residents and businesses. To reduce traffic impacts, night work is planned for this project. Once detailed construction methods and schedules are known, the contractor will develop a Noise Control Plan with additional measures to ensure construction noise does not exceed our nighttime noise standard.

**Comment 12:**

Wildfire Risk and Emergency Access. Although this project is not anticipated to increase wildfire risk, the possibility of traffic control measures that interrupt emergency vehicles and/or evacuation must be taken seriously. Maintaining traffic flow on this critical circulation link is very important. When US 101 is closed, as it periodically is, it becomes even more important.

**Response to Comment 12:** The Traffic Management Plan that will be prepared for this project will ensure that access via State Route 246 will be maintained at all times throughout the construction period and will account for emergency access and limit delays to the maximum extent feasible.

# List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Noise Technical Memorandum

Climate Change Report

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Geologic Hazards Report

Hazardous Waste Initial Site Assessment

Historical Property Survey Report

- Historic Resource Evaluation Report
- Archaeological Survey Report (confidential, not publicly available)

Location Hydraulic Study

Natural Environment Study

Paleontological Identification Report

Stormwater Data Report

Structure Preliminary Geotechnical Report

Visual Impact Assessment

Water Quality Assessment Report

To obtain a copy of one or more of these technical studies/reports or the Initial Study, please send your request to:

Dianna Beck
District 5 Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93401

Or send your request via email to: dianna.beck@dot.ca.gov

Or call: 805-459-9406

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: Alamo Pintado Creek Bridge Replacement

General location information: On State Route 246, near the city of Solvang

District number-county code-route-post mile: 05-SB-246-PM 30.173-30.435

Project ID number: 0519000148