

Coastlands II Retaining Wall

On State Route 1 in Monterey County at post mile 44.34, 1.1 miles south
of Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge near Big Sur

05-MON-01-PM 44.34

Project ID Number 0521000188

State Clearinghouse Number 2023040738

Initial Study with Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

October 2023



General Information About This Document

Document prepared by: Damaris Wyatt, Environmental Scientist

The Initial Study circulated to the public for 31 days between April 27, 2023, and May 28, 2023. Comments received during this period are included in Appendix E. 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.

Accessibility Assistance

Caltrans makes every attempt to ensure our documents are accessible. Due to variances between assistive technologies, there may be portions of this document that are not accessible. Where documents cannot be made accessible, we are committed to providing alternative access to the content. Should you need additional assistance, please contact us at the phone number in the box below.

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document can be made available in Braille, in large print, on audiocassette, or on computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please write to or call Caltrans, Attention: Lara Bertaina, District 5 Environmental Division, California Department of Transportation, 50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93401; phone number 805-779-0792 (Voice), or use the California Relay Service 1-800-735-2929 (Teletype to Voice), 1-800-735-2922 (Voice to Teletype), 1-800-855-3000 (Spanish Teletype to Voice and Voice to Teletype), 1-800-854-7784 (Spanish and English Speech-to-Speech), or 711.

Replace a failed retaining wall on State Route 1 at post mile 44.34 in
Monterey County

**INITIAL STUDY
with Negative Declaration**

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation
and
Responsible Agency: California Transportation Commission



Lara Bertaina
Branch Chief
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

October 10, 2023

Date

The following individual can be contacted for more information about this document:

Lara Bertaina, Environmental Branch Chief, 50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California
93401; 805-779-0792; lara.bertaina@dot.ca.gov



Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: 2023040738

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 05-MON-01-PM-44.34

EA/Project Number: EA 05-1P210 and Project ID Number 0521000188

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will replace the failed Coastlands II Retaining Wall and add barrier systems for traveler safety on State Route 1. Other work will include the removal of the existing soil nail wall, reconstruction of the drainage inlet and culvert located near the southern terminus of the existing wall, restoration of the roadway, and removal of vegetation and trees within the area where the wall and rails will be constructed. Project activities will occur on State Route 1 at post mile 44.34 in Monterey County, roughly 1.1 miles south of Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge near Big Sur.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 5. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the action with the incorporation of the identified avoidance and minimization measures will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The project will have no effect on agriculture and forest resources, cultural resources, energy, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, tribal cultural resources, and wildfire.

In addition, the project will have less than significant effects on aesthetic resources, air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, noise, transportation, and utilities and service systems.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads 'Lara Bertaina'.

Lara Bertaina
Branch Chief
California Department of Transportation

October 10, 2023

Date

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Proposed Project	1
1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	Purpose and Need.....	1
1.2.1	Purpose.....	1
1.2.2	Need	2
1.3	Project Description.....	2
1.4	Project Alternatives.....	6
1.4.1	Build Alternatives	6
1.4.2	No-Build (No-Action) Alternative	10
1.5	Identification of a Preferred Alternative.....	10
1.6	Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Discussion Prior to the “Draft” Initial Study.....	12
1.7	Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives.....	12
1.8	Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion	14
1.9	Permits and Approvals Needed	14
Chapter 2	CEQA Evaluation	15
2.1	CEQA Environmental Checklist	15
2.1.1	Aesthetics	15
2.1.2	Agriculture and Forestry Resources.....	19
2.1.3	Air Quality	20
2.1.4	Biological Resources.....	22
2.1.5	Cultural Resources.....	35
2.1.6	Energy.....	36
2.1.7	Geology and Soils	37
2.1.8	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	40
2.1.9	Hazards and Hazardous Materials	45
2.1.10	Hydrology and Water Quality	48
2.1.11	Land Use and Planning.....	49
2.1.12	Mineral Resources	50
2.1.13	Noise.....	50
2.1.14	Population and Housing.....	53
2.1.15	Public Services	53
2.1.16	Recreation	54
2.1.17	Transportation.....	54
2.1.18	Tribal Cultural Resources	56
2.1.19	Utilities and Service Systems.....	56
2.1.20	Wildfire.....	58
2.1.21	Mandatory Findings of Significance	59
Appendix A	Title VI Policy Statement.....	63
Appendix B	Coastal Policy Analysis	65
Appendix C	Required Consultation Documentation	89
Appendix D	Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Summary	91

Appendix E Comment Letters and Responses.....101

Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration, is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (known as NEPA). Caltrans is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (known as CEQA). As NEPA lead, Caltrans is preparing a separate Categorical Exclusion for the project. As CEQA lead, Caltrans has prepared this Initial Study with Negative Declaration document for the project.

Caltrans will replace the failed Coastlands II Retaining Wall and add barrier systems for traveler safety on State Route 1. Project activities will occur on State Route 1 at post mile 44.34 in Monterey County, roughly 1.1 miles south of Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge near Big Sur. The project limits are within the coastal zone, and the project area falls within the Big Sur Coast Land Use Planning Area of Monterey County. State Route 1 through the project area is a two-lane Designated National Scenic Byway and All-American Road with one lane of travel in each direction. Figure 1-1 shows the project vicinity, and Figure 1-2 shows the location where improvements will be completed.

The project is programmed in the 2023 State Highway Operation and Protection Program with funding from the Major Damage – Permanent Restoration Program to address the failure of the existing retaining wall. Other elements, such as the connecting barrier system, were assessed throughout the project limits and added to the project as feasible. Project construction is slated to begin in 2026 and span approximately nine months. [The following sentence has been changed since the draft environmental document to update the current construction cost estimate.] The current programmed cost for the construction of the Build Alternative is \$3,997,000.

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this project is to stabilize a failing slope that is threatening the highway facility and improve safety for motorists and cyclists traveling along State Route 1 near Big Sur. Excess water from large rain events can degrade the steep embankment slopes that are characteristic of the Big Sur region. Slope failure due to oversaturation can lead to instability of the roadway surface, which undermines the functional use of the southbound travel lane. The project will minimize the potential for future rain events to compromise the stability of State Route 1 through the project limits. Installing continuous

barrier rails throughout the project limits next to the southbound shoulder will improve safety for travelers by reducing the risk of running off the road due to collision, road alignment, or operating conditions.

1.2.2 Need

The project is needed to address the failure of the existing retaining wall. As a result of the January 27, 2021, storm that passed over the Big Sur Coast, the soil behind the mechanically stabilized embankment wall on State Route 1 at post mile 44.34 became oversaturated and caused the retaining wall to fail. The slope has continued to degrade after the failure of the mechanically stabilized embankment wall, which threatens the paved highway and the private water line located just below the wall. There are no permanent barrier rails installed along the seaward side of the highway through the project limits, and district traffic safety guidance recommends closing the gap between the installations of barrier rails at the Coastlands and Coastlands II Retaining Walls.

1.3 Project Description

Earth Retaining Systems

Caltrans will build a soldier pile wall at post mile 44.34 on the seaward side of the highway. The existing mechanically stabilized earth wall, located at post mile 44.34, is approximately 150 feet in length. The replacement retaining wall will be approximately 190 feet long. ST-75B Bridge Rails will be installed along the top of the soldier pile wall, and crash cushions will be installed on the end blocks of the wall.

The retaining wall will feature 24 steel soldier piles sank vertically into concrete backfilled holes, with timber boards serving as horizontal lagging between the piles. The visible height (partially viewed from the roadway) of the exposed soldier piles will vary from approximately 0 to 23 feet, and the depth of the backfilled holes will vary between approximately 5 feet and 25 feet, depending on the elevation of the hillslope at the base of the wall. The timber lagging acts as a wall that holds the slope in place and transfers the pressures of the confined soil to the soldier piles. Construction of the new soldier pile wall will require the removal of the existing wall and the excavation of excess soil from the slope.

The wall will be constructed using a top-down method, with vertical drilling to create holes for the emplacement of the steel soldier piles. Temporary access will be established during construction from the southbound shoulder of State Route 1, extending to the bottom of the failed retaining wall. This temporary access location will be used to allow construction equipment to remove the existing failed wall once the roadway is stabilized with piles during

reconstruction and will also facilitate the completion of other work items, such as final grading and drainage construction that will be performed at the bottom of the wall.

Other work pertaining to the installation of the new retaining wall will include the removal of vegetation and trees within the area where the wall and rails will be constructed. Native nonornamental trees removed as part of the project will be replanted using the same species as those removed onsite at a 1-to-1 replacement ratio. A temporary signal for one-way traffic control will be used during project construction.

Barrier Systems

The Coastlands Retaining Wall, which is currently under construction at post mile 44.45, lies approximately 225 feet to the north of the project on the seaward side of the highway. This retaining wall is a soldier pile wall featuring an ST-75B Bridge Rail with a length of 80 feet. Crash cushions extend approximately 22 feet beyond the bridge rails on both sides for a total length of approximately 124 feet of barrier system at post mile 44.45.

If crash cushions are installed along the southern terminus of the Coastlands Retaining Wall and the northern terminus of the Coastlands II Retaining Wall, there will be a gap of approximately 175 feet where there will be no rails between the two retaining walls. Safety regulations recommend that gaps of less than 200 feet between guardrail installations should be avoided. Caltrans proposes to close the gap between the barriers associated with the new retaining wall and the northern Coastlands Retaining Wall with barrier rails to protect the traveling public. The closure of this gap with barrier rails eliminates the need for crash cushions between the southern terminus of the Coastlands Retaining Wall and the northern terminus of the Coastlands II Retaining Wall.

There are two build alternatives: Build Alternative 1 proposes ST-75B Barrier Rail as the connecting rail, and Build Alternative 2 proposes the Midwest Guardrail System as the connecting rail. The design and construction of the soldier pile retaining wall, pavement rehabilitation, and drainage improvements will remain the same in both build alternatives. Both alternatives feature a total of 225 feet of barrier rails to close the gap between the two retaining walls. More information about the two build alternatives is included in Section 1.4, Project Alternatives.

Pavement Rehabilitation

The existing damaged asphalt concrete pavement next to the retaining wall will be restored by grinding and overlaying with new pavement. The pavement type that will be used will be appropriate for temperature conditions in Monterey County.

Drainage Improvements

An existing drainage system on the southern end of the failed retaining wall will be replaced during the construction of the new wall.

Two drainage inlets will be placed along the top of the new soldier pile wall, and the existing headwall inlet system next to the northbound shoulder will remain in place. All three inlet systems will direct flow to the same downdrain, which will be replaced with a new 24-inch corrugated steel pipe. If possible, the new downdrain will maintain the well-established existing outlet location below the base of the new retaining wall. The culvert located beneath the southbound travel lane of State Route 1 that connects the existing headwall inlet system to the new downdrain will be replaced within the southbound section of the road using a 36-inch corrugated steel pipe culvert. The existing portion of the culvert, located beneath the northbound travel lane, will be connected to the new section of the culvert with a concrete collar.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

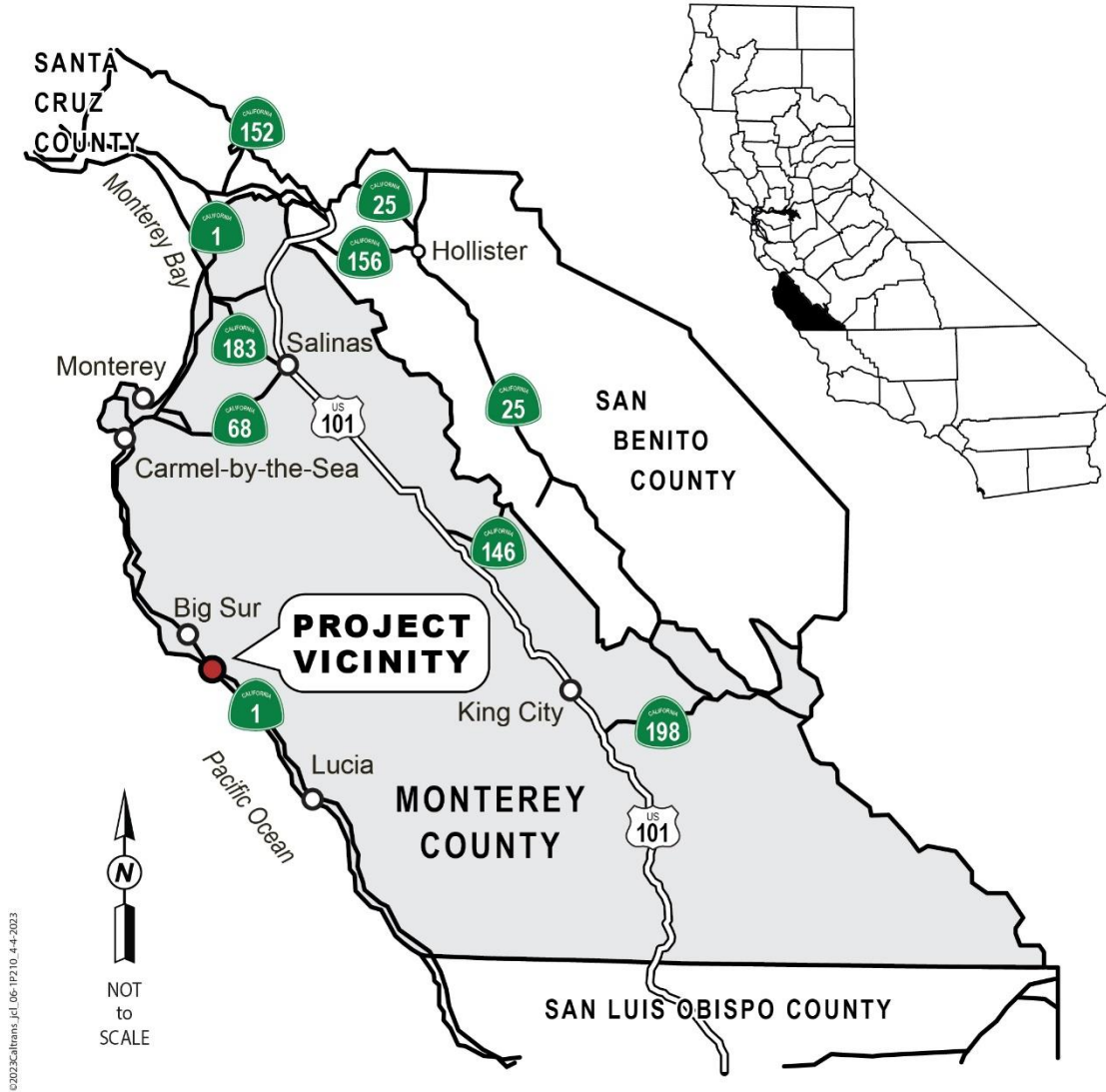
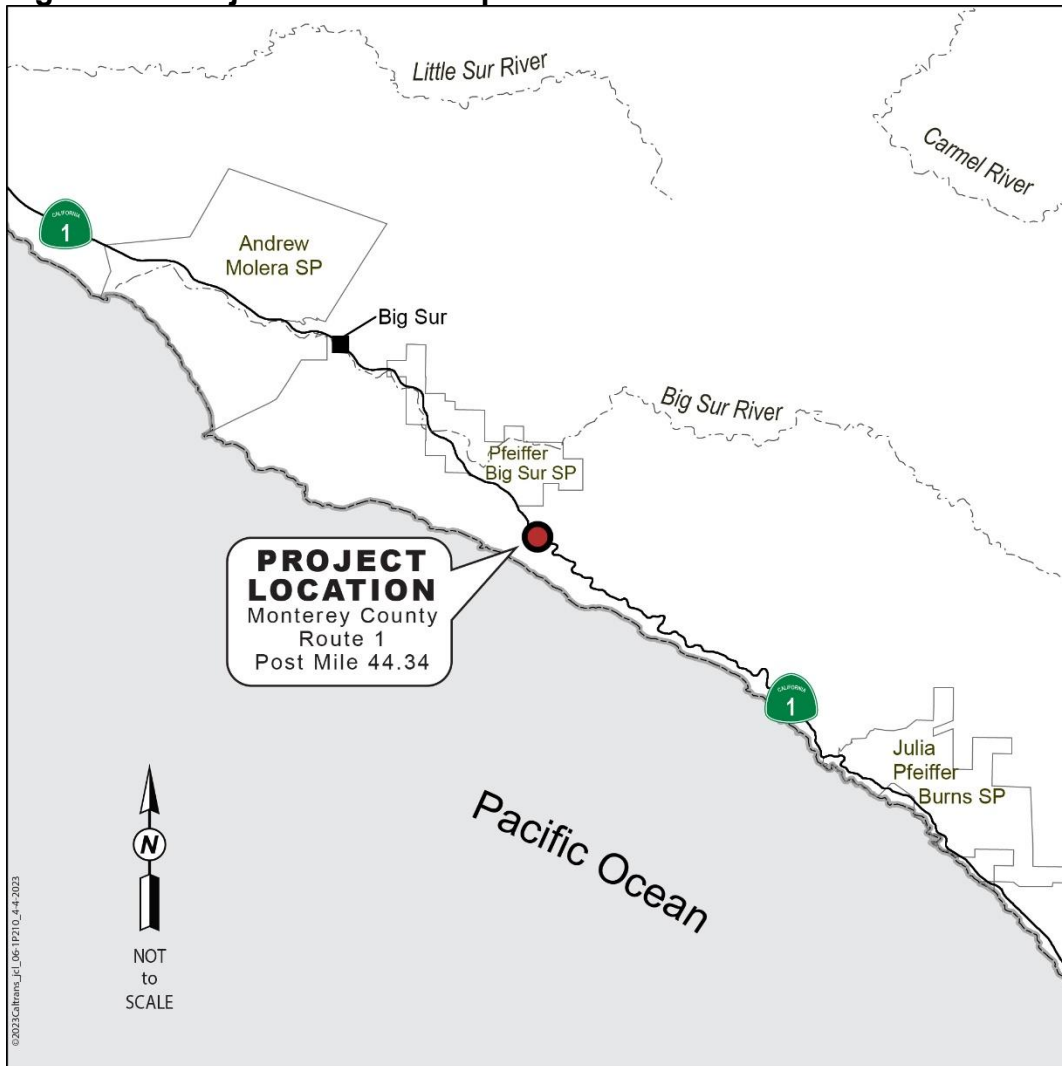


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.4 Project Alternatives

Three alternatives are under consideration for the project: Two Build Alternatives featuring different kinds of barrier systems and a No-Build Alternative.

An interdisciplinary team developed the alternatives. Several criteria were taken into consideration when evaluating the various alternatives for the project, including the project's purpose and need, cost, design, construction strategies, and environmental impacts.

1.4.1 Build Alternatives

Under the Build Alternatives, the project will result in temporary and permanent impacts on environmental resources. Temporary impacts will

result from the various construction activities required to complete the project. Permanent impacts will result from the new highway features and elements that will be constructed.

The Build Alternatives will meet the purpose and need of the project by replacing the failed retaining wall and addressing the lack of a barrier system through the project limits while also providing additional improvements to drainage and paving rehabilitation. The work will be done in stages, with construction occurring over a period of about nine months.

There are two Build Alternatives: Build Alternative 1 proposes ST-75B Barrier Rail as the connecting rail, and Build Alternative 2 proposes the Midwest Guardrail System as the connecting rail.

Build Alternative 1: ST-75B Barrier Rail

The ST-75B Barrier Rail is a steel post and beam style bridge rail on a concrete curb that would be connected to a concrete anchor slab with reinforcing anchor bolts and anchor bars. ST-75B Barrier Rail is a standard variant of an ST-75B Bridge Rail with an independent 2 foot 2 inch wide by 2 foot 6 inch minimum height foundation. Figure 1-3 shows ST-75B Bridge Rail installed atop the Coastlands Retaining Wall, which would be similar in appearance to ST-75B Barrier Rail. The maximum height of the ST-75B Barrier Rail is 3 feet 6 inches. The spacing of the beams of the ST-75B Barrier Rail allows viewers to see through the structure. If the ST-75B Barrier Rail design option is selected, there would be about 500 feet of nearly continuous ST-75B Bridge Rail variants on southbound State Route 1 from post miles 44.34 to 44.45.

Figure 1-3 Stained ST-75B Bridge Rail



Build Alternative 2: Midwest Guardrail System

The Midwest Guardrail System is made up of “W-shaped” metal beam rail elements mounted on wood or plastic blocks fastened to wood or galvanized steel posts. Figure 1-4 features an example of a stained Midwest Guardrail System installed near the Cow Creek Viaduct in the Big Sur Region. The maximum height of the Midwest Guardrail System is 2 feet 8 inches. Two Midwest Guardrail System Transition Railings would be used to connect the Midwest Guardrail System to the bridge rails installed along the nearby Coastlands and Coastlands II Retaining Walls. If the Midwest Guardrail System build alternative is selected, there would be approximately 500 feet of mixed barrier rail systems, including ST-75B Bridge Rails and Midwest Guardrail System, on southbound State Route 1 from post miles 44.34 to 44.45.

Figure 1-4 Stained Midwest Guardrail System



Common Design Features of the Build Alternatives

All exposed steel elements of the guardrail for both alternatives would be darkened or stained to reduce glare, visually recede, and appear more consistent with the natural character of the Big Sur setting, as shown in Figures 1-3 and 1-4. Both alternatives feature a total of 225 feet of barrier rails to close the gap between the two retaining walls. As previously stated, the design of all other project elements is the same in both build alternatives. [The following four sentences regarding the barrier rail footing for both alternatives have been added since the draft environmental document.] Both alternatives will feature posts anchored into a reinforced concrete barrier slab. The reinforced footing of the connecting barrier rail will cause parts of the roadway between the Coastlands and Coastlands II Retaining Walls that previously drained off the southbound shoulder to instead drain toward the two drainage inlets along the Coastlands II Retaining Wall. District 5 Hydraulics has determined the drainage system will have enough capacity for the increased flow and channelization of stormwater flow through drainage systems would prevent unwanted erosion of the slope below the roadway. The reinforced concrete barrier slab would also make the barrier rail stronger and more resistant to collision.

Unique Features of the Build Alternatives

[Since the draft environmental document was published, a subsection about drainage was removed from this section because it applies to both alternatives.]

Railings

[The following subsection has been changed since the draft environmental document to improve clarity.] The ST-75B Barrier Rail is a see-through-style rail with three horizontal beams and a bicycle rail at the top. The Midwest Guardrail System has one W-shaped horizontal metal beam.

Post Spacing

[Information regarding the footings of the barrier rail types was removed from this subsection because it applies to both build alternatives.] The ST-75B Barrier Rail features a reinforced concrete footing with 10-foot maximum post spacing. The Midwest Guardrail System has evenly spaced posts at 6 feet 3 inches.

Height

The ST-75B Barrier Rail used in Build Alternative 1 would reach a height of 3 feet 6 inches above the finished southbound shoulder. The Midwest Guardrail System in Build Alternative 2 would be 2 feet 7 inches above the finished southbound shoulder.

The project contains a number of 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 project. These measures are listed later in this chapter under “Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives.”

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, State Route 1 would stay as it is within the project limits. The work in this project would not be done. The No-Build Alternative would not address the purpose and need of the project. The slope behind the failed retaining wall would continue to deteriorate, which could lead to degradation of the roadway. While routine maintenance would continue under the No-Build Alternative, no improvements to the roadway would occur.

1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative

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

The only aspect that differentiates Build Alternative 1 from Build Alternative 2 is the type of rail that closes the gap between the Coastlands and Coastlands II Retaining Walls. All other project features will remain the same under both Build Alternatives.

While Build Alternative 1 was selected, the rail type that is ultimately constructed to connect the gap between the two retaining walls will be subject to approval by Monterey County during the coastal permitting process. Both Build Alternatives will address the purpose and need of the project. Under both Build Alternatives, the failed retaining wall will be replaced, and a barrier system through the project limits will be installed. Additional improvements to drainage and paving rehabilitation will also be made as part of both Build Alternatives.

The project development team selected Build Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative. The team chose Build Alternative 1 because it will address the purpose and need of the project in addition to the other benefits listed below:

Maintenance Needs

ST-75B Barrier Rail requires less overall maintenance than the Midwest Guardrail System because it is more resistant to collision. Due to the width of the shoulder and the curvilinear nature of State Route 1 through the project limits, any maintenance to this section of connecting rail will require the closure of the southbound lane to protect maintenance workers. Thus, the use of ST-75B Barrier Rail under Build Alternative 1 will minimize disruptions to traffic flow.

Given the importance of State Route 1 to public coastal access throughout the project area, reducing the number of lane closures needed to repair or replace the rail would help to maintain the public's ability to travel to Coastal Access areas with minimal delays.

Structure Style

The ST-75B Barrier Rail is taller than the Midwest Guardrail System and is a see-through style of rail. The Midwest Guardrail System's W-shaped beam is not a see-through style of rail. If the Midwest Guardrail System is used between the two retaining walls, it must interface with the ends of the ST-75B Barrier Rails at the walls by using opaque concrete anchor block transitions. If ST-75B Barrier Rail is used between the two retaining walls, it will not require opaque concrete anchor block transitions.

Bicycle Safety

The ST-75B Barrier Rail that is installed in areas where bicycles are allowed features a small safety balustrade affixed to the uppermost rail designed to enhance cyclist safety. State Route 1 is part of the Pacific Coast Bike Route and is frequently used by touring cyclists. This rail enhances bicycle safety through the site and helps prevent cyclists from falling down the steep embankment slope in the event of a collision.

Visual Attributes

Both the Coastlands and Coastlands II Retaining Walls feature ST-75B Barrier Rails. The selected barrier type along the southbound shoulder closing the gap between Coastlands and Coastlands II Retaining Walls will be either ST-75B Barrier Rail or the Midwest Guardrail System. If ST-75B Barrier Rail is used along this length, it would be experienced as one long, continuous structure barrier contributing to a slightly more urbanized character. If the Midwest Guardrail System is used along this length, while it would be more consistent with the rural, eclectic character of the corridor and subordinate to the overall landscape, it may increase an element of visual clutter due to the transition connections to the ST-75B Barrier Rail.

1.6 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Discussion Prior to the “Draft” Initial Study

Build Alternative 3, which featured the construction of a soldier pile retaining wall with no barrier systems to connect the Coastlands and Coastlands II Retaining Walls, was considered. However, this build alternative did not address the project’s purpose and need and did not satisfy the recommendation from district traffic safety. This alternative was eliminated from further discussion during a project development team meeting on October 18, 2022.

1.7 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives

This project includes 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. Caltrans standard measures allow for little discretion regarding their implementation, just as other Caltrans standards requirements. The measures listed here are related to environmental resources and are applicable to the project. These measures can be found in Caltrans' 2018 Standard Specifications document.

- 7-1 Legal Relations and Responsibility 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
- 14-8 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
- 20-3 Planting
- 20-4 Plant Establishment Work
- 21-2 Erosion Control Work
- 36-4 Residue Containing Lead from Paint and Thermoplastics
- 84-9 Removing Existing Marking

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

1.8 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).

1.9 Permits and Approvals Needed

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

[The following table has been revised and updated since the draft environmental document was circulated. The project is located within the jurisdiction of Monterey County’s Local Coastal Plan, so the Coastal Development Permit from the California Coastal Commission was removed. The project is subject to a Federal Consistency Review by the California Coastal Commission, which has been added to the table. The status of the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the California red-legged frog was also updated].

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
Monterey County	Coastal Development Permit	Will be obtained before construction starts
California Coastal Commission	Federal Consistency Review	Will be completed before construction starts
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Programmatic Biological Opinion; California red-legged frog	Was obtained on September 29, 2023

Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the 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 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 February 23, 2023, 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 nonurbanized 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

The landform of the region is generally characterized by steep slopes and ravines forming a series of ridgelines and valleys as the mountains rise from the Pacific Ocean. The topography supports a mostly curvilinear roadway that produces views for the highway traveler, ranging from close-in views of the inland slopes to mid-range coastline views and wide-open panoramas. The Pacific Ocean is visible throughout much of the route and can be seen from the project site.

Throughout the region, vegetation is a primary component of visual character. Although native plant communities are the most visually prevalent, exotic plants such as pampas grass have established themselves at various locations along the highway corridor. Landscape planting is generally associated with the scattered residential and commercial development along the highway through the nearby Big Sur village area.

Throughout the project limits, built developments have a low visual presence in the landscape. In general, the scale and frequency of structures and other built amenities throughout this area are such that although visible, they do not dominate the views when seen in the context of the overall landscape. Due to the topography throughout much of the region, cut slopes are associated with the highway facility and can often be seen from the road.

Scenic vistas throughout the project area primarily include expansive mid-to-distant views of the Pacific Ocean, dramatic topography and hillsides, native vegetative patterns, and undeveloped landscapes.

State Route 1 has long been recognized for its scenic qualities, and the state and national scenic designations illustrate the heightened degree of sensitivity concerning the aesthetic character of the highway. Monterey County planning

policies emphasize the protection of visual resources along State Route 1 and underscore the concern and sensitivity regarding aesthetic issues along this route. The project is within the coastal zone, which emphasizes visual quality preservation. In addition, the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (Caltrans 2003), a comprehensive planning document developed with extensive community input, includes a section on identifying and preserving the scenic qualities of the route. The local communities have a history of active participation in projects involving potential changes to the visual environment.

Environmental Consequences

The most noticeable aspect of the project will be the addition of the ST-75B Bridge Rails on the southbound side of the highway, constructed along the length of the wall. Depending on the height of the viewing position, views from the roadway to the Pacific Ocean will be affected to some degree by the bridge rails. Because the retaining wall is below the roadway, the viewing opportunities are limited; however, the curvature of the roadway allows brief and partial views of the new wall. The wall will be stained or painted to reduce its reflectivity and noticeability in the landscape. Over time, the visibility of the wall will decrease as the site revegetates and becomes established. While the removal of trees from the project area may be noticeable, it will allow a larger viewing opportunity of the Pacific Ocean.

The project is also proposing to close the gap on the southbound shoulder between the Coastlands Retaining Wall and the Coastlands II Retaining Wall with either ST-75B Barrier Rail or the Midwest Guardrail System.

Although the ST-75B Barrier Rail is an open-style design, it is taller than the Midwest Guardrail System and will reduce the viewing opportunity of the Pacific Ocean from the roadway by approximately one additional foot.

As a result of these changes, the highway environment in the immediate project vicinity will be somewhat altered. While the project will not substantially degrade the existing visual quality or character of public views, there will be a minor reduction in character. Although the effect on the scenic vista will be minimal under either alternative, there will be more of an effect on the scenic vista if the ST-75B Barrier Rail is used to close the gap instead of the Midwest Guardrail System.

The existing scenic quality and character of the Big Sur Coast are based to a large degree on its undeveloped setting, rugged topography, sweeping ocean views, and native vegetation patterns. The wall itself is located below the roadway elevation and will be stained or painted to reduce its reflectivity and noticeability in the landscape. While the removal of trees may contribute to the reduction in vegetated character, trees located to the north and south of the wall will remain. After the site is revegetated, the completed wall will be generally unnoticed by highway travelers.

Although visual changes will occur, the same type of elements associated with this project are seen elsewhere along the Big Sur Coast and are not, by themselves, inconsistent with the rural roadway character of the region or throughout the state. The roadway north and south of the project site will remain curved and unwidened. As a result, the wall and associated section of the ST-75B Bridge Rails along the length of the wall will be secondary to the overall experience of traveling along the rugged and rural coast highway.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

With the implementation of the following avoidance and minimization measures, the project will be consistent with the aesthetic and visual resource protection goals along State Route 1, and potential visual impacts will be reduced:

VIS 1: Preserve as much existing vegetation as possible. Prescriptive clearing and grubbing and grading techniques that save the most existing vegetation possible should be used.

VIS 2: Revegetate all areas disturbed by the project, including but not limited to temporary access roads, staging, and other areas with native plant species appropriate to each specific work location.

VIS 3: Replacement planting shall include aesthetic considerations and inherent biological goals. Replanting shall include native trees and plants as determined by a Caltrans biologist and the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department. Replanting shall occur at the maximum extent horticulturally viable and be maintained until established.

VIS 4: Following construction, regrade and recontour any new construction access roads, staging areas, and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding natural topography along State Route 1 and avoid unnatural-appearing remnant landforms.

VIS 5: All visible concrete drainage elements, including, but not limited to, headwalls, drain inlet aprons, etc., should be colored to blend with the surroundings and reduce reflectivity. The specific colors of these concrete elements shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 6: All visible metal components related to downdrains and inlets, including but not limited to flared end sections, connectors, anchorage systems, safety cable systems, etc., should be darkened or colored to blend with the surroundings and reduce reflectivity. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 7: ST-75B Bridge Rails shall be colored and/or darkened to blend with the natural setting. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 8: [The following sentence has been changed to reflect that both the Midwest Guardrail System and ST-75B Barrier Rail will require a concrete slab footing.] The concrete barrier slab footing shall be colored and/or darkened to blend with the nearby shoulders. The exposed top surface of the barrier slab should have an overlay or be colored to match the color of the nearby asphalt roadway lanes. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 9: All metal roadside elements, including but not limited to the Midwest Guardrail System, guardrail transitions, and end treatments, should be stained or darkened to be visually compatible with the rural setting. The color shall be determined and approved by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 10: The vertical wall piles should be colored and/or darkened to be visually compatible with the rural setting. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 11: If timber lagging is not used, then concrete lagging should be colored and/or darkened to blend with the surrounding hillside. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 12: If whalers are used, they should be colored and/or darkened to be visually compatible with the rural setting. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

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.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest 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 nonagricultural use?	No Impact
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	No Impact
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 nonagricultural 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 Assessment Memorandum dated December 18, 2022, 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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
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?	Less Than Significant Impact

Affected Environment

Within the project limits, State Route 1 crosses through areas zoned for rural, low-density residential development and scenic conservation.

The project is in the North Central Coast Air Basin. The Monterey Bay Air Resources District regulates air quality in the project area. The North Central Coast Air Basin is considered in attainment for all federal ambient air quality standards, non-attainment transitional for state ambient air quality standards for ozone, and non-attainment for airborne particulate less than 10 microns in diameter. Additionally, this project is consistent with the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District’s state air quality attainment goals as stated in its State Implementation Plan, the *2012 to 2015 Air Quality Management Plan*, because it will not further degrade air quality in the basin.

Environmental Consequences

The project will not result in long-term impacts to air quality because the project will not alter the existing capacity of State Route 1.

Temporary construction-related activities are expected to generate minor amounts of aerial pollutants, emissions, and/or odors that could be noticeable or cause inconveniences to sensitive receptors and/or people close to the work site. 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. Because minor earthwork is expected to be required for this project, minimal dust generation will also be expected. In addition, the project will include Caltrans standard measures associated with minimizing impacts to air quality.

Due to the use of standard construction dust and emission minimization practices and procedures, it is expected that project emissions of particulate

matter and equipment emissions will be well within the daily thresholds of the Monterey Bay Air Resources District.

Construction emissions are further calculated and discussed in Section 2.1.8, Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The potential for air quality impacts generated by project construction will be minimized with the implementation of the following measure:

AIR 1: To minimize dust emissions from the project, Section 14-9.02 (Air Pollution Control) of the 2018 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). Incorporate appropriate engineering design and Stormwater Best Management Practices during construction.

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) dated February 27, 2023, 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
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?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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
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 Biological Study Area is defined as the area of land that may be directly, indirectly, temporarily, or permanently impacted by construction, construction-related activities, and vehicles. Caltrans defined the construction area, synonymous with the Area of Potential Impact, as the area where project-related work will affect the ground and vegetation. The Biological Study Area includes the Area of Potential Impact, a 50-foot buffer around the Area of Potential Impact, and the Caltrans right-of-way on State Route 1 at post mile 44.34. This buffer accounts for biological resources directly next to the Area of Potential Impact and for impacts that may result from inadvertent actions.

The project is next to the southbound lane of State Route 1, 3 miles south of Big Sur. The project's Biological Study Area encompasses the Caltrans right-of-way along State Route 1 and private property to the west of the right-of-way.

The land within the Biological Study Area consists of the paved travel way of State Route 1, ruderal/disturbed vegetation, and oak woodland habitat immediately next to the roadway. The project includes some natural plant communities with areas interspersed with disturbed soil. The elevation of the work location is about 970 feet above sea level. No tidally influenced or brackish areas are present within the Biological Study Area.

Queries and official species lists were used to develop a list of special-status species and natural communities that have the potential to occur within the Biological Study Area. Sensitive species and habitats with the potential to be present in the project impact area were further researched and prioritized for identification during field surveys.

General biological and botanical field surveys were conducted in April, May, July, and November 2022 to identify potential special-status species. Floristic surveys were conducted within a range of months when target special-status species were flowering and identifiable, following the guidelines of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. General reconnaissance-level wildlife surveys coincided with the botanical, wildlife species, and habitat surveys and were documented in the Natural Environment Study.

Natural Communities

Natural communities identified within the Biological Study Area include coast live oak woodlands and ruderal/invasive communities.

Coast Live Oak Woodlands

The coast live oak woodland is mainly comprised of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) specimens and a lightly developed shrub and herb layer. The occurrence of coast live oak woodland encompasses most of the Biological Study Area. Dominant plant species present in coast live oak woodland within the project area include California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), orange bush monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), in addition to coast live oaks.

Ruderal/Disturbed Communities

Ruderal/disturbed areas are dominated by non-native weedy and invasive species tolerant of disturbed conditions like compacted soils and roadsides subjected to vehicle disturbances. The edges of State Route 1 are mostly vegetated with ruderal/disturbed species. Representative species include red brome (*Bromus madritensis ssp. rubens*), slender oat (*Avena barbata*), and various other weedy species and annual grasses.

Invasive Species

A total of 10 invasive plant species were found within the Biological Study Area, as shown in Table 2.1. Of these, two have an invasive rating of “high,” six have an invasive rating of “moderate,” and two have an invasive rating of “limited,” based on the California Invasive Plant Council Database. The distribution of the most invasive plant species is sparsely scattered throughout the Biological Study Area and most commonly located in ruderal/disturbed areas along the edges of the highway facility.

Table 2.1 Exotic, Invasive Plant Species as Identified by the California Invasive Plant Council Observed Within the Biological Study Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	California Invasive Plant Council Database Rating
French broom	<i>Genista monspessulana</i>	High
pampas grass	<i>Cortaderia selloana</i>	High
red brome	<i>Bromus rubens</i>	High
Bermuda buttercup	<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Moderate
Italian thistle	<i>Carduus pycnocephalus</i>	Moderate
black mustard	<i>Brassica nigra</i>	Moderate
purple false brome	<i>Brachypodium distachyon</i>	Moderate
slender oat	<i>Avena barbata</i>	Moderate
sticky snakeroot	<i>Ageratina adenophora</i>	Moderate
pride of Madeira	<i>Echium candicans</i>	Limited
rattlesnake grass	<i>Briza maxima</i>	Limited

Special-Status Species

Special-status species include 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 is potential for 19 special-status plant species and 15 special-status animal species to occur within the Biological Study Area and surrounding areas.

Special-Status Plant Species

Within the project area are 19 documented special-status plant species that include federally and state-listed plants, as listed in Table 2.2. None of these special-status plant species are expected to occur within the Biological Study Area due to a lack of potential habitat, and specimens were not observed during appropriately timed studies; therefore, they are not discussed any further in this document.

Table 2.2 Federally and State-Listed Special-Status Plant Species Not Expected To Occur Within the Biological Study Area

Common Name	Scientific Name
Adobe sanicle	<i>Sanicula maritima</i>
Arroyo Seco bush-mallow	<i>Malacothamnus palmeri</i> var. <i>lucianus</i>
Blasdale's bent grass	<i>Agrostis blasdalei</i>
Bristlecone fir	<i>Abies bracteata</i>
Compact cobwebby thistle	<i>Cirsium occidentale</i> var. <i>compactum</i>
Cone Peak bedstraw	<i>Galium californicum</i> ssp. <i>lucianense</i>
Dudley's lousewort	<i>Pedicularis dudleyi</i>
Fragrant fritillary	<i>Fritillaria liliacea</i>
Hutchinson's larkspur	<i>Delphinium hutchinsoniae</i>
Jolon clarkia	<i>Clarkia jolonensis</i>
Little Sur manzanita	<i>Arctostaphylos edmundsii</i>
Maple-leaved checkerbloom	<i>Sidalcea malachroides</i>
Muir's tarplant	<i>Carlquistia muirii</i>
San Luis Obispo sedge	<i>Carex obispoensis</i>
Santa Lucia bedstraw	<i>Galium clementis</i>
Talus fritillary	<i>Fritillaria falcata</i>
Tear drop moss	<i>Dacryophyllum falcifolium</i>
Toren's grimmia	<i>Grimmia torenii</i>
Umbrella larkspur	<i>Delphinium umbraculorum</i>

Special-Status Animal Species

Within the project area are 16 documented special-status animal species that include federally and state-listed species. Fourteen of the possible 16 special-status animal species are not expected to occur within the Biological Study Area due to a lack of potential habitat, as listed in Table 2.3. These species were not observed during appropriately timed studies and are not discussed further in this document.

Table 2.3 Federally and State-Listed Special-Status Animal Species Not Expected To Occur Within the Biological Study Area

Common Name	Scientific Name
Dolloff Cave spider	<i>Meta dolloff</i>
Globose dune beetle	<i>Coelus globosus</i>
Monarch – California overwintering population	<i>Danaus plexippus</i> pop. 1
Pinnacles optioservus riffle beetle	<i>Optioservus canus</i>
Smith's blue butterfly	<i>Euphilotes enoptes smithi</i>
Steelhead – South Central California Coast Distinct Population Segment	<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus</i> pop. 9
Coast Range newt	<i>Taricha torosa</i>
Foothill yellow-legged frog	<i>Rana boylei</i>
Western pond turtle	<i>Emys marmorata</i>
Black swift	<i>Cypseloides niger</i>
Double-crested cormorant	<i>Nannopterum auritum</i>
Prairie falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>
American badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>

The presence of one special-status animal species—the California red-legged frog—was inferred during field surveys, and potential habitat was documented for nesting birds and bats.

The California Natural Diversity Database species list does not include any special-status communities or habitats that occur within the U.S. Geological Survey quadrangles of Pfeiffer Point, Big Sur, Ventana Cones, and Partington Ridge.

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. This frog historically ranged from Marin County southward to northern Baja California. Currently, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties support the largest remaining California red-legged frog populations in California. No protocol surveys were conducted for the California red-legged frog, and the species was not seen during general wildlife surveys. There are known occurrence records for the California red-legged frog within 1 mile of the Biological Study Area, and the presence of the species in the Biological Study Area is inferred.

The project's Biological Study Area is located entirely within the federally designated California red-legged frog Critical Habitat Unit Monterey County 3, "Big Sur Coast." This unit stretches from Little Sur River south to McWay Canyon and encompasses about 27,542 acres. The Big Sur Coast unit includes locations in and around the Big Sur River drainage and includes the following watersheds: Point Sur, Big Sur River, Ventana Creek, Sycamore Canyon, and Partington Creek. This unit is considered essential for the conservation of the species because it contains the largest coastal habitat within the Monterey Bay region and provides connectivity to more interior units farther north. This unit contains permanent and ephemeral aquatic habitats for breeding, nonbreeding, and upland and dispersal habitats.

Nesting Birds and Bats

No federally or state-listed bird species were identified as having the potential to occur in the project area, and none were found during surveys. However, trees, shrubs, and crevices within the project area provide potential nesting habitats for various bird species. No nesting birds were seen in the Biological Study Area during surveys but there is potential for future nesting activity. Any migratory birds that may be present within the Biological Study Area are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code Section 3503.

While roosting habitat was evaluated, focused surveys for bats were not performed. No evidence of roosting or maternal colonies of bats was found in the project area. Some of the older trees in the Biological Study Area could potentially serve as roosting habitat for Townsend's big-eared bat. However,

the trees slated for removal are not of great enough size to create the cavernous habitat essential for this species. No other species of bats are expected to occur within the project area, and no other species were observed.

Environmental Consequences

Natural Communities

To access the project site during construction, a total of eight trees under 15 inches in diameter at breast height must be removed: five Monterey cypresses, one California buckeye, and two coast live oaks, as shown in Table 2.4. One Monterey cypress and one coast live oak planned for removal have a diameter at breast height of less than 6 inches. Those trees requiring removal with a diameter at breast height greater than 6 inches will be replaced at a 1-to-1 ratio, as space allows.

Table 2.4 Trees Slated for Removal Within the Biological Study Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	Diameter at Breast Height (Inches)
Monterey cypress	<i>Hesperocyparis macrocarpa</i>	13.5
Monterey cypress	<i>Hesperocyparis macrocarpa</i>	13
Monterey cypress	<i>Hesperocyparis macrocarpa</i>	10
Monterey cypress	<i>Hesperocyparis macrocarpa</i>	7.75
Monterey cypress	<i>Hesperocyparis macrocarpa</i>	4
California buckeye	<i>Aesculus californica</i>	10
coast live oak	<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	9
coast live oak	<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	5

Invasive Species

Ground disturbance and other construction-related activities associated with the project could potentially spread or introduce invasive species within the Biological Study Area. The project will include avoidance and minimization measures that will help reduce the spread or introduction of invasive species within the areas disturbed by the project.

Special-Status Plant Species

Large portions of the project area contain ruderal/disturbed habitat that is mostly unsuitable for the special-status plant species identified in the literature search. No federally or state-listed plant species were identified as having the potential to occur in the project area, and none were found during surveys.

Special-Status Animal Species

The Biological Study Area is located within the designated critical habitat for the California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) and has the potential to support Smith’s blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*).

Smith's blue butterfly is a federally endangered species that uses seacliff buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*) and seaside buckwheat (*Eriogonum latifolium*) as host plants for all life stages. Appropriately timed surveys indicated no presence of buckwheat species within the Biological Study Area, and Smith's blue butterfly is not expected to occur in the project area.

California red-legged frog

The California red-legged frog is a federally threatened species and a state species of special concern. No individuals were observed during reconnaissance surveys. Additionally, no physical or biological features for California red-legged frogs exist within the Biological Study Area to provide suitable aquatic breeding or aquatic nonbreeding habitat. Marginal habitat for dispersal exists within the Biological Study Area and consists of the paved roadway, steep slopes with patches of bare ground and pampas grass clumps, with a few pockets of willows and a poison oak understory. The nearest aquatic feature to the project limits is Post Creek, located about 350 feet northeast of the project area, with no records of California red-legged frog observations. Two ponds at the Post Ranch Inn are about 1,000 feet north of the project area, and both ponds have observations of various life forms of the species as recently as 2006. The habitat within the Biological Study Area is unlikely to support individuals. However, given the proximity of the Biological Study Area to a known breeding pond and since protocol-level surveys were not possible due to the steepness of the terrain and poor night safety, this project may affect, likely to adversely affect, the California red-legged frog.

[The following sentence has been changed since the draft environmental document to reflect approval of the use of the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the California red-legged frog.]

On September 29, 2023, Caltrans Biologists Shelby Sanchez and Jennifer Moonjian received concurrence via email from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the use of the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program for California red-legged frog (81440-2010-F-0382).

Nesting Birds and Bats

The federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects native North American migratory birds, nests, and eggs. The California Fish and Game Code Sections 3503, 3513, and 3800 also protect migratory birds. Five native trees have a diameter at breast height greater than 4 inches that must be removed to gain necessary construction access to the site. These trees have the potential to support native birds for nesting, foraging, and cover.

The project is not expected to impact potential nesting habitat for the Townsend's big-eared bat due to the lack of signs indicating the presence of individuals or their roosts. Tree removal for this project is not expected to

impact Townsend's big-eared bat because the trees slated for removal are not large enough to provide the cavernous conditions required by the species.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Natural Communities

BIO 1: [The following sentence has been changed to reflect that all impacts associated with project activities were found to be less than significant under CEQA and do not require mitigation.] Native, nonornamental trees removed that have a diameter at breast height of greater than 6 inches may be replanted, as required, at a 1-to-1 ratio.

Invasive Species

Executive Order 13112 directs federal agencies to combat the introduction or spread of invasive plant species in the U.S. The following avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented to reduce potential impacts associated with invasive species:

BIO 2: During construction, Caltrans will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible.

BIO 3: When practicable, invasive exotic plants in 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 the soil from weedy areas must be removed offsite, the top 6 inches of soil containing the seed layer in areas with weedy species shall be disposed of at a landfill.

BIO 4: If necessary, wash stations onsite shall be established for construction equipment under the guidance of Caltrans to avoid and minimize the spread of invasive plants and/or seeds within the construction area.

Special-Status Plant Species

While no special-status plant species were found within the project area, the following avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented to reduce potential impacts to unlisted trees and other vegetation within the Biological Study Area as a result of construction-related activities:

BIO 5: Before any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing will be installed around trees and other vegetation designated to be protected within the project limits. Protection limits will be noted on design plans and delineated in the field before the start of construction activities.

California red-legged frog

[The following sentence has been changed since the draft environmental document to reflect approval of the use of the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the California red-legged frog.]

The project qualifies for the Federal Endangered Species Act incidental take coverage under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Programmatic Biological Opinion (81440-2010-F-0382). The following applicable measures from the Programmatic Biological Opinion will be implemented for this project to reduce potential impacts to the California red-legged frog:

BIO 6: Only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologists will participate in activities associated with the capture, handling, and monitoring of California red-legged frogs. Biologists authorized under this biological opinion do not need to resubmit their qualifications for subsequent projects conducted pursuant to this biological opinion unless we have revoked their approval at any time during the life of this biological opinion.

BIO 7: Ground disturbance will not begin until written approval is received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the biologist is qualified to conduct the work unless the individual(s) has/have been approved previously and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has not revoked that approval.

BIO 8: A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will survey the project site no more than 48 hours before the start of work activities. 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 will be allowed sufficient time to move them from the site before work begins. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will relocate the California red-legged frogs to the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and that will not be affected by project construction activities. The relocation site should be in the same drainage to the extent practicable. Caltrans will coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the relocation site before the capture of any California red-legged frogs.

BIO 9: Before any activities begin on the project, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training will include a description of the California red-legged frog and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the California red-legged frog for the current project, and the boundaries within which the project may be accomplished. Brochures, books, and briefings may be used in the training session, provided that a qualified person is on hand to answer any questions.

BIO 10: A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will be present at the work site until all California red-legged frogs have been relocated out of harm's way, workers have been instructed, and disturbance of habitat has

been completed. After this time, the state or a local sponsoring agency will designate a person to monitor onsite compliance with all minimization measures. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will ensure that this monitor receives the training outlined in Measure BIO 8 above and in the identification of California red-legged frogs. If the monitor or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist recommends that work be stopped because California red-legged frogs will be affected in a manner not expected by Caltrans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during a review of the proposed action, they will notify the resident engineer (the engineer that is directly overseeing and in command of construction activities) immediately. The resident engineer will either resolve the situation by eliminating the adverse effect immediately or require that all actions causing these effects be stopped. If work is stopped, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be notified as soon as possible.

BIO 11: During project activities, all trash that may attract predators will be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and construction debris will be removed from work areas.

BIO 12: All refueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment and vehicles will occur at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies and in a location where a spill will not drain directly toward aquatic habitat (e.g., on a slope that drains away from the water). The monitor will ensure contamination of habitat does not occur during such operations. Before the start of work, Caltrans will ensure that a plan is in place for a prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. All workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

BIO 13: Habitat contours will be returned to their original configuration at the end of project activities. This measure will be implemented in all areas disturbed by project activities 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.

BIO 14: The number of access routes, the size of staging areas, and the total area of the activity will be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project goals. Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be delineated to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction and minimize the impact to California red-legged frog habitat; this goal includes locating access routes and construction areas outside of wetlands and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable.

BIO 15: Caltrans will attempt to schedule work activities 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 in maintaining 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. Habitat assessments, surveys, and coordination between Caltrans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during project planning will be used to assist in scheduling work activities to avoid sensitive habitats during key times of the year.

BIO 16: To control sedimentation during and after project implementation, Caltrans and the sponsoring agency will implement the best management practices outlined in any authorizations or permits issued under the authority of the Clean Water Act that it receives for the specific project. If best management practices are ineffective, Caltrans will attempt to remedy the situation immediately in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

BIO 17: 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. Alteration of the streambed will be minimized to the maximum extent possible; any imported material will be removed from the streambed upon project completion.

BIO 18: 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.

BIO 19: A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will permanently remove any individuals of non-native species, such as bullfrogs (*Rana catesbeiana*), signal and red swamp crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*; *Procambarus clarkii*), and centrarchid fishes from the project area to the maximum extent possible. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will be responsible for ensuring his or her activities comply with the California Fish and Game Code.

BIO 20: If Caltrans demonstrates that disturbed areas have been restored to conditions that allow them to function as habitat for the California red-legged frog, these areas will not be included in the amount of total habitat permanently disturbed.

BIO 21: To ensure that diseases are not transported between work sites by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist, the fieldwork code of practice, developed by the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force, will be followed at all times. A copy of the fieldwork code of practice is enclosed.

BIO 22: Project sites will be revegetated with an assemblage of native riparian, wetland, and upland vegetation suitable for the area. Locally collected plant materials will be used to the extent practicable. Invasive, exotic plants will be controlled to the maximum extent practicable. This measure will be implemented in all areas disturbed by project activities unless the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Caltrans determine that it is not feasible or practical.

BIO 23: Caltrans will not use herbicides as the primary method to control invasive, exotic plants. However, if Caltrans determines the use of herbicides is the only feasible method for controlling invasive plants at a specific project site, it will implement the following additional protective measures for the California red-legged frog:

- a. Caltrans will not use herbicides during the breeding season for the California red-legged frog;
- b. Caltrans will conduct surveys for the California red-legged frog immediately before the start of any herbicide use. If found, California red-legged frogs will be relocated to suitable habitat far enough from the project area that no direct contact with herbicides will occur;
- c. Giant reed and other invasive plants will be cut and hauled out by hand and painted with glyphosates or glyphosate-based products, such as AquaMaster® or Rodeo®.
- d. Licensed and experienced Caltrans staff or a licensed and experienced contractor will use a hand-held sprayer for foliar application of AquaMaster® or Rodeo® where large monoculture stands occur at an individual project site;
- e. All precautions will be taken to ensure that no herbicide is applied to native vegetation.
- f. Herbicides will not be applied on or near open water surfaces (no closer than 60 feet from open water).
- g. Foliar applications of herbicide will not occur when wind speeds are in excess of 3 miles per hour.
- h. No herbicides will be applied within 24 hours of forecasted rain.
- i. Application of all herbicides will be done by qualified Caltrans staff members or contractors to ensure that overspray is minimized, that all application is made in accordance with label recommendations, and with the implementation of all required and reasonable safety measures. A safe dye will be added to the mixture to visually denote treated sites. Application of herbicides will be consistent with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's

Office of Pesticide Programs and Endangered Species Protection Program county bulletins.

BIO 24: Upon project completion, Caltrans shall ensure that a Project Completion Report is completed and provided to the Ventura Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, following the template provided with the Programmatic Biological Opinion. Caltrans shall include recommended modifications of the protective measures if alternative measures will facilitate compliance with the provisions of this consultation.

Nesting Birds

The following measures apply to all birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code. The list of birds protected by these regulatory laws is extensive, and not all birds protected by these laws are likely to occur within the Biological Study Area.

BIO 25: Within 30 days before initiation of site disturbance and/or construction, a qualified biologist should conduct a preconstruction survey for nesting birds if vegetation disturbance or tree removal cannot be scheduled outside of the typical nesting bird season (February 14 to September 30).

BIO 26: Active bird nests will not be disturbed, and eggs or young birds covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code will not be killed, destroyed, injured, or harassed at any time (harassment includes noise from construction activities). If an active bird nest is found in or near a location that will be disturbed, a Caltrans biologist will determine an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species. An Environmentally Sensitive Area will be established, and the nest area will be avoided until the nest is vacated and the juveniles have fledged.

BIO 27: If roosting bats are discovered within the project area, the resident engineer shall immediately contact the project biologist on how to proceed. The biologist will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife if necessary.

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Cultural Resources Screened Undertaking Memorandum dated January 9, 2023, the significance determinations summarized below have been made.

The project will not have the potential to affect cultural resources within the project limits. The project area has been studied several times for archaeological and tribal cultural resources as part of several highway projects along the State Route 1 corridor. A records search, review of photo documentation taken of the project site, aerial mapping, and tribal

consultation did not reveal the presence of any areas of concern or resources.

The project site is within the Carmel-San Simeon Highway Historic District, which extends about 75 miles along State Route 1, between post mile 71.34 in San Luis Obispo County and post mile 72.28 in Monterey County. The district consists of 241 contributing resources, including 234 rustic-style rubble masonry features (158 culvert headwalls, 61 parapet walls, 10 retaining walls, and five fountains), in addition to seven concrete arch bridges.

The period of significance for the Carmel-San Simeon Highway Historic District is 1922 through 1938, spanning from the date that highway construction began near San Simeon in 1922 until the highway was completed with the construction of the concrete arch bridge over Big Creek in 1938. The Carmel-San Simeon Highway Historic District was previously determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 (updated in 2006). The district is a noncontiguous area that consists only of these masonry structures and concrete bridges—the highway itself is not included as a contributing resource due to alterations that occurred after the period of significance.

The failed retaining wall at this location was built in 2003, outside the period of significance for the Carmel-San Simeon Highway Historic District. The drainage system being replaced as part of the project does not contain a historic headwall and is not a contributor to the historic district. No other resources that are considered part of the Carmel-San Simeon Highway Historic District are within the project area.

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?	No Impact
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	No Impact

2.1.6 Energy

Caltrans incorporates energy efficiency, conservation, and climate change measures into transportation planning, project development, design, operations, maintenance of transportation facilities, fleet, equipment, and buildings to minimize the use of fuel supplies and energy resources and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The project will not alter the existing vehicle capacity on State Route 1 or alter the existing alignment of State Route 1. Therefore, the project will not alter existing energy use on the State Highway System. Some energy use will be required during project construction but will be minimized whenever possible through the implementation of greenhouse gas reduction strategies during project construction. The amount of energy that will be used to construct this project will help reduce future energy use by decreasing the number of required preventive and scheduled maintenance operations.

The project will not alter or conflict with any existing local, regional, or state plans for energy management.

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 Geotechnical Design Report dated May 11, 1998, the Geotechnical Assessment and Recommendations dated May 21, 2021, Structure Preliminary Geotechnical Report dated March 16, 2022, and the Paleontological Identification Report dated December 19, 2022, the significance determinations shown in the following table have been made. The Geotechnical Design Report was prepared in support of Caltrans project 05-39850, which constructed the original retaining wall at this location in 2003. There have not been any changes to the geologic setting of the project area since 1998.

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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	Less Than Significant Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	No Impact
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	No Impact
iv) Landslides?	Less Than Significant Impact
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	No Impact
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that will become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in onsite or offsite 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 limits lie within the Sur Region of the San Gregorio Fault System, which may be potentially active according to archived documentation on the California Geological Survey's Alquist-Priolo Site Investigation Reports online database and U.S. Geological Survey's online Quaternary Fault and Fold Database of the U.S.

California Geological Survey records indicate all faults within the project limits are not within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone nor within 1,000 feet of any mapped fault that is Late Pleistocene (up to 15,000 years old) or younger.

The U.S. Geological Survey's online Interactive Fault Map indicates that the project limits lie about 500 feet and 850 feet southwest of strands of the San Gregorio Fault System that last experienced seismic activity in the Late Quaternary period (less than 130,000 years ago) and Quaternary period (less than 1.6 million years ago), respectively. Therefore, the structures are not

considered susceptible to surface fault rupture hazards per Caltrans standards.

The regional geologic map of the area based on California Geological Survey Special Report 185 shows that the project site is on a mapped Quaternary landslide deposit overlaying shale and greywacke associated with the Franciscan Complex. The overall Franciscan Complex is relatively unstable due to a mixture of stronger rocks surrounded or embedded within a weak, finer-grained matrix. The rock exposed in the cut slope above the project location is composed of shale. The bedrock at the project location is covered by 20 to 23 feet of gravelly clay weathered from the underlying shale and silty sand that was added as roadway embankment fill. Evidence of the regionally mapped landslide was not encountered in the test borings or observed at the site.

The project site is not considered susceptible to liquefaction or related seismic hazards like lateral spreading due to the dense composition of the shale and greywacke bedrock underlying the project site and the depth of groundwater (24 to 27 feet).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Web Soil Survey data also shows the soil within the project limits to be composed of members of the Millsholm-Gazos complex. This loamy soil type is well-draining and does not contribute to the risk of liquefaction. Unified Soil Classification System data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's soil survey database also show the Millsholm-Gazos complex soils feature relatively low plasticity, which indicates minimal expansive clay content. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's soil survey data also indicates that the Millsholm-Gazos complex soils are considered "very limited" for the use of septic tanks and other alternative wastewater disposal systems, which indicates the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable for the specified use. There are no septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems included in the project, so no impacts are expected.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Web Soil Survey data discloses that the soil at the project location is rated severe for erosion hazards. Monterey County's online Geologic Hazards Map also rated the entire area along the project limits as a high risk for erosion.

The project is in a landslide-prone corridor along State Route 1 and is mapped as being located on Quaternary landslide deposits, according to California Geological Survey Special Report 185. The Geologic Hazards Map application from Monterey County's Geographic Information Systems Department webpage also identifies the areas within the project limits to be at risk for landslides. Both seismic and/or heavy rainfall events will also contribute to the landslide hazards.

Environmental Consequences

While the project is in an area that is prone to landslides and rated as a high risk for erosion, this project is not expected to further exacerbate these risks. The purpose of this project is to stabilize a failing slope that is threatening the highway facility, and project completion will make State Route 1 through the project limits more resilient to future erosion and landslides.

The design and construction of the soldier pile retaining wall, barrier systems, and drainage improvements are supported by numerous geotechnical investigations of the area performed since 1996 and as recently as 2022, and no deficiencies in the quality or nature of the soil and bedrock have been identified.

No unique paleontological resource, site, or unique geologic feature will be destroyed during project construction. Project earthwork will be limited to areas that have been previously disturbed or to geologic units with no paleontological potential or low paleontological potential that are unlikely to contain fossils.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures related to geology and soils are required.

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Climate Change Technical Report dated February 8, 2023, 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?	No Impact

Affected Environment

Regulatory Setting

A greenhouse gas emissions inventory estimates the amount of greenhouse gases discharged into the atmosphere by specific sources over a period of time, such as a calendar year. Tracking annual greenhouse gas emissions allows countries, states, and smaller jurisdictions to understand how emissions are changing and what actions may be needed to attain emission reduction goals. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for

documenting greenhouse gas emissions nationwide, and the California Air Resources Board does so for the state, as required by Health and Safety Code Section 39607.4. Cities and other local jurisdictions may also conduct local greenhouse gas inventories to inform their greenhouse gas reduction or climate action plans.

The California Air Resources Board sets regional greenhouse gas reduction targets for California's 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations to achieve through planning future projects that will cumulatively achieve those goals and report how they will be met in the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. Targets are set at a percent reduction of passenger vehicle greenhouse gas emissions per person from 2005 levels.

The applicable Metropolitan Planning Organization for the project location is the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments' regional reduction target is to reduce emissions by 6 percent by 2035. The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments' Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy for the project area is the *2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy: Moving Forward Monterey Bay 2045*. Implementation of the Plan and Strategy is expected to achieve a 4 percent per capita reduction by 2020 and a nearly 7 percent per capita reduction by 2035. The project, however, is not included in the Plan.

The regional transportation planning agency for the project is the Transportation Agency for Monterey County. The Transportation Agency for Monterey County's 2022 Regional Transportation Plan identifies three primary approaches to practicing environmental stewardship:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the regional targets for greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 and 2035 set by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments.
- Avoid or minimize impacts to local, state, and federally defined sensitive areas.
- Conserve farmland resources.

Environmental Setting

The project is on State Route 1 in the rural Big Sur area of Monterey County, a rugged and mountainous section of the Central Coast of California between Carmel-by-the-Sea and San Simeon.

State Route 1 through the project limits is a north-south oriented, two-lane conventional highway with 12-foot lanes. State Route 1 serves local and interregional traffic, including predominately recreational users, some local

commuters, and limited commercial users. State Route 1 has a posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour through the project limits. Public transit in the region is limited, but Monterey-Salinas Transit provides bus service from Monterey and Carmel-by-the-Sea to Big Sur. Most of the region is owned by governmental or private agencies, which do not allow any development, including in the Los Padres National Forest, Ventana Wilderness, Silver Peak Wilderness, and Fort Hunter Liggett. The climate in Big Sur is mild Mediterranean climate characterized by sunny, dry conditions in the summer and fall and cool, wet winters. Morning coastal fog near the shore is typical in all seasons except winter, and temperatures in Fahrenheit can range anywhere from the low 40s to the high 70s throughout the year. Meanwhile, temperatures inland and at higher elevations can reach the 80s. The Big Sur region remains relatively isolated and sparsely populated, with about 2,000 year-round residents clustered near the coast and a largely uninhabited interior.

Project Adaptation Analysis

While climate change risk analysis involves uncertainties regarding the timing and intensity of potential risks, it can be used to consider project-level adaptations to respond to potential negative effects associated with the project.

The project is not expected to be vulnerable to the effects of sea level rise, including inundation, cliff retreat, wave impacts, and coastal flooding. The project location is about 0.45 mile northeast and 780 feet higher in elevation than the height of coastal inundation expected from 10 feet of sea level rise under extreme climate change scenarios.

The project area is also projected to experience increased precipitation due to climate change. Indications of increased precipitation in the project area mean that Caltrans must assume higher rainfall and associated flooding and must expect more extreme storm events. The purpose of the project is to prevent future rain events from potentially compromising the stability of State Route 1 through the project limits, which will also help minimize risks posed by increased precipitation due to climate change.

The post mile location of the project is in an area of “very high” wildfire hazard severity, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Fire Hazard Severity Zone Mapping Tool. These risk levels are expected to increase under future climatic conditions. The timber lagging component of the retaining wall will be treated with fire-retardant paint rated to 350 degrees Fahrenheit, and barrier rails will use fire-resistant materials when possible. The project is not expected to exacerbate the impacts of wildfires intensified by climate change or be more susceptible to wildfire damages than under the current conditions.

The project area is subject to rising average maximum and minimum temperatures compared to historical averages. The expected increases across the span of the project's design life are expected to fall within the acceptable temperature ranges for the "Central Coast" pavement type used in Monterey County. Therefore, no adaptive changes in pavement design or maintenance practices will be required.

Environmental Consequences

Operational Emissions

The purpose of the project is to stabilize a failing slope that is threatening State Route 1 in Monterey County and to improve safety for motorists and cyclists by replacing a failed retaining wall and installing barrier rails. 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 1, 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, onsite 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.

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 about 175 working days. Construction-generated greenhouse gas emissions were quantified based on project-specific construction data using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool (CAL-CET), which largely models the emissions from construction equipment. Greenhouse gas emissions will total about 125 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent during the estimated 175 days of project construction. 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, black carbon, 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. Section 7-1.02A and 7-1.02C, Emissions Reduction, requires 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.

While the project will result in greenhouse gas emissions during construction, the project is not expected to increase operational greenhouse gas emissions. The project will not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. With the implementation of construction greenhouse gas reduction measures, the impact will be less than significant.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The potential for greenhouse gas impacts generated by project construction will be reduced to less than significant under CEQA with the implementation of the following minimization measures:

GHG 1: Limit idling to five minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment when not in active operation.

GHG 2: Use alternative fuels such as renewable diesel or solar power for construction equipment when available.

GHG 3: For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment:

- Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition
- Use right sized equipment for the job
- Use equipment with new technologies

GHG 4: Use recycled materials in the construction of new project features onsite when possible. This may include processing waste to create usable fill

and maximizing the use of recycled materials that meet Caltrans specifications for incorporation into new work.

GHG 5: Reduce construction waste when possible. For example, reuse or recycle construction and demolition waste to reduce consumption of raw materials, reduce waste and transportation to landfills, and save costs.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information in the Hazardous Waste Initial Site Assessment Memorandum dated December 19, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made.

The Hazardous Waste Memorandum indicated that some potentially hazardous wastes and materials could be generated by or encountered during project construction, including lead paint found in traffic striping and aerially deposited lead-contaminated soils next to the roadway.

No project construction activities will occur within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school or within 2 miles of an airport.

Based on the California Department of Toxic Substances Control Hazardous Waste and Substances Site List online database, there are no known hazardous waste issues or hazardous materials sites pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 within the project limits.

During project construction, State Route 1 within the project limits will remain open, and access for emergency responses and/or evacuations will not be affected.

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?	No 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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
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, will it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	No 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, will 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?	No Impact
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	Less Than Significant Impact

Affected Environment

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. The Aerially Deposited Lead Agreement outlines which soils can be safely reused within the project limits and which soils must be exported and disposed of as hazardous waste.

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 wastes when they are removed.

A review of past projects in the vicinity of this project did not find any projects since the early 2000s where the yellow centerline traffic paint had been removed and replaced with lower or lead-free traffic paint. In addition, a review of the project location on Google Earth and Google Street View

imagery revealed the yellow centerline stripe appeared to be old and in poor condition.

Wildland Fires

Based on the 2007 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map in State Responsibility Areas for Monterey County, the project limits are next to areas that are considered a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in a State Responsibility Area.

Environmental Consequences

Aerially Deposited Lead

Aerially deposited lead is not expected to be present within the project limits because ongoing soil erosion on the failing slope will prevent lead from accumulating in the soil during years of exposure. Further, excavation for the emplacement of the soldier piles will be deep enough that the total volume of soil will be nonhazardous since the uncontaminated subsurface soil will be most of the material excavated.

During the project design phase, the nature of project earthwork will be further evaluated, and a site-specific Aerially Deposited Lead Study will be completed if required. The purpose of the study will be to document lead concentrations in soil to ensure appropriate management of soils per the terms of the 2016 Aerially Deposited Lead Agreement between Caltrans and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control.

Standard Special Provisions for the management of potentially aerially deposited lead-contaminated soils will be included in the construction contract, including the development and implementation of a Lead Compliance Plan by the construction contractor.

Yellow Thermoplastic or Traffic Stripe

Traffic paint in the project limits must be assumed to contain elevated levels of lead, so residue from the removal of the existing traffic paint and thermoplastic within the project limits will have to be handled as hazardous waste. The appropriate Standard Special Provisions for the removal of traffic stripes and pavement markings will be determined during the project design phase once the removal method is known. Removal of traffic striping in the project limits will also require the development and implementation of a Lead Compliance Plan by the project contractor.

Wildland Fires

The Big Sur region is prone to high-severity wildland fires. The timber lagging component of the retaining wall will be treated with fire-retardant paint rated to 350 degrees Fahrenheit, and barrier rails will use fire-resistant materials when possible. These design practices will reduce the risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires as a result of the structure.

Construction activities have the potential to unintentionally ignite nearby vegetation. However, the project will incorporate precautions to prevent fire-related incidents during construction as part of the code of safety practices in accordance with the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health Fire Protection and Prevention Guidance.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The potential for impacts generated by project construction will be reduced to less than significant under CEQA with the implementation of the following minimization measures.

HAZ 1: The project will include Caltrans Standard Specifications related to fire prevention and fire safety to minimize the potential for igniting nearby vegetation during construction activities, along with implementing the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health Fire Protection and Prevention Guidance.

HAZ 2: When handling and applying fire-retardant paint, the construction contractor must follow the manufacturer's safety protocols for workers and observe cleanup protocols in the event of an accidental spill.

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

The receiving water bodies for the project are Mule Canyon and the Pacific Ocean, which are not impaired. The project does not expect any long-term water quality impacts because the replacement retaining wall, barrier system, and drainage improvement aspects of the project will not alter the existing drainage pattern of the site. The project will involve earthwork related to retaining wall replacement that may lead to an increase in sediment-laden water, resulting in short-term water quality impacts. By incorporating appropriate engineering design and robust water Best Management Practices during construction, minimal short-term water quality impacts are expected. Additionally, the project contractor will prepare a site-specific Water Pollution Control Plan approved by Caltrans. Therefore, the project will not result in significant, long-term impacts on water quality. The project will not encroach into any 100-year base floodplain, and there will be no significant flooding risks associated with project implementation. The project will not constitute a significant floodplain encroachment, as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 23, Section 650.105(q).

Considering the information in the Air Quality, Noise, and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memorandum dated December 18, 2022, 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?	No 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: (i) result in substantial erosion or siltation onsite or offsite;	No Impact
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;	No 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	No Impact
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	No Impact
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	No Impact
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	No Impact

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

Project activities will occur mostly on the existing Caltrans right-of-way and highway easements on State Route 1. Therefore, the project will not divide an established or planned community.

The project limits lie within the Coastal Zone. The project is not expected to conflict with or affect any existing Coastal Zone-related plans, policies, or regulations. Applicable California Coastal Act, Monterey County Local Coastal Plan, and Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan policies and consistency analyses are provided in Appendix B.

The project is not expected to conflict with any other existing land use plan, policy, or regulation in the region.

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

Project activities will involve work on highway features already located on the existing highway alignment on State Route 1. The project will have no involvement in the removal or extraction of mineral resources.

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, Noise, and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memorandum dated December 18, 2022, 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

Within the project limits, State Route 1 crosses through areas zoned for rural, low-density residential development and scenic conservation by Monterey County. The closest private residence to the project limits is about 200 feet to the southwest and about 450 feet from the nearest structure on the Alila Ventana Big Sur Hotel property north of the project limits.

Environmental Consequences

Since no capacity will be added to the highway and because the highway will not be realigned, local noise levels will be the same after project completion as they were before. Long-term noise abatement measures are not expected for this project.

Local noise levels in the vicinity of the project location will inevitably experience a short-term increase due to construction activities. The amount of construction noise will vary with the particular activities associated with retaining wall replacement, barrier system installation, and drainage system improvements. Construction noise is also dependent on the models and types of equipment used by the contractor. Caltrans’ policy states that noise levels from construction equipment should not exceed 86 A-weighted decibels at 50 feet from the source.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Noise Abatement Measures

The potential for noise impacts generated by project construction will be minimized with the implementation of the following measures:

NOISE 1: Each internal combustion engine, used for any purpose on the job or related to the job, shall be equipped with a muffler of a type recommended by the manufacturer. No internal combustion engine shall be operated on the job site without an appropriate muffler.

NOISE 2: Notify the public in advance of the construction schedule when construction noise and upcoming construction activities likely to produce an adverse noise environment are expected. This notice shall be given two weeks in advance. Notice should be published in local news media of the dates and duration of the construction activity. The District 5 Public Information Office posts notice of construction and potential community impacts after receiving notice from the resident engineer.

NOISE 3: Shield especially loud pieces of stationary construction equipment.

NOISE 4: Locate portable generators, air compressors, etc., away from sensitive noise receptors.

NOISE 5: Limit grouping major pieces of equipment operating in one area to the greatest extent feasible.

NOISE 6: Place heavily trafficked areas such as the maintenance yard, equipment, tools, and other construction-oriented operations in locations that will be the least disruptive to surrounding sensitive noise receptors.

NOISE 7: 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 8: Consult District noise staff if complaints are received during the construction process.

The following Caltrans Standard Specification for noise control will also be implemented:

NOISE 9: To minimize impacts on residents' normal nighttime sleep activities, it is recommended that, whenever possible, construction work be done during the day. If nighttime construction is necessary, the noisiest construction activities will be done as early in the evening as possible. Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02 Noise Control will be implemented. This standard specification 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 alignment of State Route 1, so the project will not change the population or housing needs in the region.

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
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	No Impact

2.1.15 Public Services

Project activities will be limited to the existing alignment of State Route 1. The project will not be involved with any planned or existing governmental facilities and is not expected to affect any planned or existing governmental facilities close to the project. The project will maintain public access on State Route 1 during project construction, and access to any existing governmental facilities near the project sites will be maintained.

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
<p>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:</p> <p>a) Fire protection?</p>	No Impact
b) Police protection?	No Impact
c) Schools?	No Impact
d) Parks?	No Impact

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
e) Other public facilities?	No Impact

2.1.16 Recreation

Project activities will be limited to the existing alignment of State Route 1. The project will not have a considerable effect on existing recreational patterns in the region. The project will not be involved in the construction, removal, or alteration of access points or routes used for recreation. Also, the project will not create, expand, alter, or remove recreational facilities. Public access on State Route 1 will be maintained during project construction.

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 project will not change the existing alignment or capacity of State Route 1 and will not change existing vehicle miles traveled on State Route 1. The project will not conflict with any existing or planned transportation-related programs or facilities in the region. See Appendix B for the coastal policy analysis completed for this project.

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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	No Impact
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?	Less Than Significant Impact

Affected Environment

The project is along State Route 1 in Monterey County at post mile 44.34. State Route 1 through the project limits is a north-south oriented, two-lane conventional highway with 12-foot lanes and shoulder widths varying from 1 to 4 feet. State Route 1 serves local and interregional traffic, including predominately recreational users, some local commuters, and limited commercial users. State Route 1 has a posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour through the project limits.

Environmental Consequences

The project will improve highway reliability by minimizing the potential for future rain events to compromise the stability of State Route 1 at post mile 44.34. There will be traffic delays for motorists and cyclists during construction due to temporary lane closures and one-way traffic control. The implementation of a Traffic Management Plan that includes changeable message signs, construction area signs, and a One-Way Reversible Lane Traffic Signal will minimize and manage any potential delays to highway users.

Emergency services will be notified of potential disruptions, delays, or detours in advance to minimize impacts to emergency access.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following avoidance and minimization measure will further reduce the potential for impacts on transportation:

TRAFFIC-1: A Traffic Management Plan is required to address any potential traffic delays on State Route 1 that may occur during project construction due to temporary lane closures. This will ensure that coastal access via State Route 1 will be maintained at all times throughout the construction period and will account for emergency access while limiting delays.

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Cultural Resources Screened Undertaking Memorandum dated January 9, 2023, the significance determinations summarized below have been made. The Memorandum prepared for the project found that there are no archaeological or tribal cultural resources within the project’s area of direct impact.

Despite the lack of evidence that there is any specific cultural sensitivity at this location or in the vicinity, the Salinan Tribe of San Luis Obispo and Monterey Counties has requested that construction for the project be monitored by a member of their tribe. This request for monitoring falls under a tribal consultation request and is not due to archaeological sensitivity.

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	No 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.	No Impact

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Based on currently available information and preliminary site investigations conducted by the project development team, 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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
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?	No Impact
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	No Impact

Affected Environment

Three utilities have been identified within the project limits:

- An overhead Pacific Gas and Electric Company electrical line south of the retaining wall that is not in conflict with the project and will remain in place.
- An overhead American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) telecommunication line that runs parallel to State Route 1 that is not in conflict with the project and will remain in place.
- A private waterline belonging to Coastlands Mutual Water Company is located along the west side of the failed retaining wall.

Environmental Consequences

Removal and replacement of the failed retaining wall will require removal and replacement of an existing drainage system also located at post mile 44.34. The project will not install new culvert structures at new locations or relocate any existing culvert alignments. Additionally, the project will not change existing wastewater treatment or drainage patterns in the region. The project will not change the existing functions of electrical, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities in the region. The existing private waterline located along the west side of the failed wall will be relocated by the owner of the nearby property in a manner consistent with all state and federal requirements.

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

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures related to utilities and service systems are required.

2.1.20 Wildfire

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection provides a Fire Hazard Severity Zone mapping tool that helps in assessing 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. There are three levels of hazard used in this mapping tool: moderate, high, and very high. The post mile location of the project is in an area of “very high” fire hazard severity. These risk levels are expected to increase under future climatic conditions.

Considering this information, along with the information in the Climate Change Technical Report dated February 8, 2023, 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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
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
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 along State Route 1 in Monterey County at post mile 44.34. State Route 1 through the project limits is a north-south oriented, two-lane conventional highway with 12-foot lanes and shoulder widths varying from 1 to 4 feet.

The project location is next to low-density rural residential development, and the Pacific Ocean can be seen from the project site.

The biological environment of the area is predominantly composed of coast live oak woodlands, with a minor ruderal/disturbed component within the project area, as explained in Section 2.1.4 Biological Resources. As explained in Section 2.1.5 Cultural Resources and Section 2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources, project work will occur outside of culturally significant areas. As explained in Section 2.1.7, Geology and Soils, paleontological resources will not be impacted by the project.

Environmental Consequences

In response to checklist item a) above, the project was evaluated for potential impacts on biological resources, as explained in Section 2.1.4 Biological Resources. Two land cover types and vegetation communities occur in the Biological Study Area: ruderal/disturbed and coast live oak woodland. While the project may affect the California red-legged frog and its critical habitat, the impact is considered less than significant with the implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures outlined in Section 2.1.4 Biological Resources. The project will not 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, or substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal.

In addition, the project was evaluated for potential impacts on cultural resources, tribal cultural resources, and paleontological resources in Section 2.1.5 Cultural Resources, Section 2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources, and Section 2.1.7 Geology and Soils. It was determined that the project will have no impact on cultural or paleontological resources and, therefore, will not eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.

In response to item b) above, the project was evaluated for potential cumulative impacts on the California red-legged frog and the State Route 1 viewshed in the project's Cumulative Impact Report. The Cumulative Impact Report follows the eight-step process for evaluating potential cumulative impacts. As part of this process, a resource study area was defined for each of the resources. The current health of the two resources was evaluated, and the current and reasonably foreseeable projects that could contribute to impacts on the biological resources were considered. It was determined that,

although the project will contribute to an existing adverse cumulative impact, the project's contribution will not be cumulatively considerable.

Implementation of all avoidance and minimization measures outlined in Section 2.1.1 Aesthetics and Section 2.1.4 Biological Resources will help to ensure the project's impact is less than significant and not cumulatively considerable.

In response to item c) above, the project intends to replace the failed Coastlands II Retaining Wall and add barrier systems for traveler safety on State Route 1.

Completion of the project will help maintain a quality transportation corridor for use by the public and minimize the potential for future rain events to compromise the stability of State Route 1. The project provides avoidance and minimization measures for aesthetics and standard specifications for hazardous waste and noise. No significant impacts will result on the human environment.

The project will include Caltrans standard measures for hazardous waste testing and monitoring to protect the general public from hazards that could arise from the project's construction activities. The project will not generate hazards or expose the general public to hazards that could result in substantial adverse effects. Therefore, the project will not result in considerable impacts on the general public due to hazardous waste.

The project includes avoidance and minimization measures to reduce the impact it may have on the aesthetic environment. The wall, bridge rails, and barrier system included in the project are seen elsewhere along the Big Sur Coast and are not, by themselves, inconsistent with the rural roadway character of the region or throughout the state. As a result, the project elements will be secondary to the overall experience of traveling along the rugged and rural coast highway.

Construction will also require the removal of vegetation in some areas. With revegetation and implementation of measures listed in Section 2.1.1, Aesthetics, to minimize the noticeability of new highway features, the project will marginally affect scenic vistas in the area and will be consistent with the aesthetic and visual protection goals for State Route 1. Therefore, these visual changes will cause a minor reduction of visual quality in the immediate project area.

Finally, the project will inevitably generate noise during the construction process. The increase in noise levels as a result of construction activities will not be substantial because construction activities will be temporary and intermittent. In addition, the project includes Caltrans Standard Specifications for noise control to minimize potential noise-related disturbances caused by construction activities.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

A complete list of standard specifications and avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for the project can be found in Section 1.6 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives, Section 2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist, and Appendix C Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures Summary.

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

California Department of Transportation

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 942873, MS-49 | SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
(916) 654-6130 | FAX (916) 653-5776 TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov



September 2022

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

The California Department of Transportation, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensures “No person in the United States shall, on the ground 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.”

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. In addition, Caltrans will facilitate meaningful participation in the transportation planning process in a non-discriminatory manner.

Related federal statutes, remedies, and state law further those protections to include sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and age.

For information or guidance on how to file a complaint, or obtain more information regarding Title VI, please contact the Title VI Branch Manager at (916) 639-6392 or visit the following web page: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi>.

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille or in a language other than English, please contact the California Department of Transportation, Office of Civil Rights, at PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; (916) 879-6768 (TTY 711); or at Title.VI@dot.ca.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Tavares', is written over a horizontal line.

TONY TAVARES
Director

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

Appendix B Coastal Policy Analysis

The project is within the coastal zone and could potentially affect resources protected by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. The Coastal Zone Management Act is the main federal law enacted to preserve and protect coastal resources. The Coastal Zone Management Act set up a program under which coastal states are encouraged to develop coastal management programs. States with an approved coastal management plan are able to review federal permits and activities to determine if they are consistent with the state's management plan.

California has developed a coastal zone management plan and has enacted its own law, the California Coastal Act of 1976, to protect the coastline. The policies established by the California Coastal Act are similar to those for the Coastal Zone Management Act and include the protection and expansion of public access and recreation; the protection, enhancement, and restoration of environmentally sensitive areas; the protection of agricultural lands; the protection of scenic resources; and the protection of property and life from coastal hazards. The California Coastal Commission is responsible for implementation and oversight under the California Coastal Act.

Just as the federal Coastal Zone Management Act delegates power to coastal states to develop their own coastal management plans, the California Coastal Act delegates power to local governments to enact their own local coastal programs. The project is subject to the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan, one of four Coastal Land Use Plan documents for Monterey County. These land use plan documents, combined with the Coastal Implementation Plan, make up the Monterey County Local Coastal Program. The project is within the Big Sur Coast Land Use Planning Area, which was adopted and certified in 1988 and was last updated in 2010. Local coastal programs contain the ground rules for the development and protection of coastal resources in their jurisdiction consistent with the California Coastal Act goals. The Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan contains goals, objectives, and policies to protect the coastal resources in the Big Sur Planning Area. The Big Sur Coastal Implementation Plan is its companion document that establishes regulations for development (i.e., development standards) within the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan area.

In Monterey County, a Coastal Development Permit will be required for the project to ensure compliance with the county's Local Coastal Program and the California Coastal Act. A Federal Consistency Certification will also be needed from the California Coastal Commission to ensure compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act. The Coastal Development Permit process will start near the final design stage of the project. [The following sentence has been changed since the draft environmental document to correct the timing of the Federal Consistency Certification process]. The Federal Consistency Certification process will begin after the approval and

issuance of the Coastal Development Permit and will be completed before construction.

The Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan was prepared for the State Route 1 corridor along the Big Sur Coast by Caltrans, with guidance from a 19-member steering committee and participation by other stakeholders who shared a vision for the corridor and came together to evaluate problems and craft solutions. Together, they committed to creating a management framework for the continued safe and efficient operation of State Route 1 in a manner that preserves, protects, and restores the scenic, natural, and cultural character and qualities of the highway corridor. The Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan consists of a Corridor Management Plan and a series of management guidelines. The Corridor Management Plan summarizes the inventory of corridor resources and qualities, describes the issues and challenges investigated by the five working groups, and presents an action plan for addressing the issues with a framework for implementation. The three guidelines address:

- Corridor Aesthetics
- Landslide Management and Storm Damage Response
- Vegetation Management.

For the project, the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan Guidelines on Corridor Aesthetics will apply.

The following is a list of the relevant policies and development standards from the California Coastal Act, the County of Monterey's Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan and Big Sur Coastal Implementation Plan, and the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan—Guidelines for Corridor Aesthetics. The relevant policies or development standards from each have been grouped together by subject, and an analysis of the project's consistency with each is provided below. Policies for resources that will not be affected by the project have not been included.

Visual and Scenic Resources

Relevant Policies

California Coastal Act:

Section 30251 - Scenic and Visual Qualities

The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural landforms, to be visually

compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas, such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by the local government, shall be secondary to the character of its setting.

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan:

3.2 Scenic Resources

3.2.1 Key Policy

Recognizing the Big Sur Coast's outstanding beauty and its great benefit to the people of the state and nation, it is the county's objective to preserve these scenic resources in perpetuity and to promote the restoration of the natural beauty of visually degraded areas wherever possible. To this end, it is the county's policy to prohibit all future public or private development visible from State Route 1 and major public viewing areas (the critical viewshed) and to condition all new development in areas not visible from State Route 1 or major public viewing areas on the siting and design criteria set forth in Sections 3.2.3, 3.2.4, and 3.2.5 of this plan. This applies to all structures, the construction of public and private roads, utilities, lighting, grading, and removal or extraction of natural materials.

3.2.3 Critical Viewshed

4. New roads, grading, or excavations will not be allowed to damage or intrude upon the critical viewshed. Such road construction or other work shall not start until the entire project has completed the permit and appeal process. Grading or excavation shall include all alterations of natural landforms by earthmoving equipment. These restrictions shall not be interpreted as prohibiting the restoration of severely eroded water course channels or gulying, provided a plan is submitted and approved before starting work.

5. Where it is determined that a proposed development cannot be resited, redesigned, or in any other way made to conform to the basic critical viewshed policy, then the site shall be considered environmentally inappropriate for development.

7. The general policy concerning the replacement of structures shall be to encourage resiting or redesign to conform to the Key Policy. Replacement or enlargement of existing structures or structures lost in a fire or natural disaster within the critical viewshed shall be permitted on the original location on the site, provided no other less visible portion of the site is acceptable to the property owner and provided the replacement or enlargement does not increase the visibility of the structure. Replacement or enlargement of structures outside the critical viewshed shall be permitted as long as such

replacement or enlargement does not cause the structure to intrude into the critical viewshed.

3.2.5 Exceptions to the Key Policy

C. State Route 1 Facilities

1. Public Highway Facilities

Road capacity, safety, and aesthetic improvements shall be allowed, as set forth below, provided they are consistent with Sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2, and 4.1.3 of this plan. Signs, guardrails, and restrooms shall be of a design complementary to the rural setting and character of Big Sur, with a preference for natural materials. Protective barriers constructed by Caltrans should use boulders or walls of rock construction. Public agency permanent highway signs should be framed with unpainted redwood. All highway signs should be reviewed once every three years by Caltrans to determine the need for their continued use. All unnecessary signs should be removed.

Section 4. State Route 1 and County Roads

4.1.1 Key Policy

Monterey County will take a strong and active role in guiding the use and improvement of State Route 1 and land use development dependent on the highway. The county's objective is to maintain and enhance the highway's aesthetic beauty and to protect its main function as a recreational route. The highway shall remain a two-lane road and shall include walking and bicycle trails wherever feasible. To protect and enhance public recreational enjoyment of Big Sur's unique natural and scenic resources, recreational traffic should be regulated during congested peak use periods.

4.1.2 General Policies

2. A principal objective of management, maintenance, and construction activities within the State Route 1 right-of-way shall be to maintain the highest possible standard of visual beauty and interest.

4.1.3 Specific Policies

A. Road and Capacity Improvements

1. The county requests that, to maximize vehicular access to the Big Sur Coast, the width of State Route 1 be upgraded to a standard of 12-foot lanes and 2-to-4-foot shoulders where physically practical and consistent with the preservation of other coastal resources values. A program of constructing left-turn lanes and other improvements shall be undertaken to improve traffic capacity and safety.

B. Aesthetic Improvements

4. The county requests that an overall design theme for the construction and appearance of improvements within the State Route 1 right-of-way be developed by Caltrans in cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the U.S. Forest Service, and local citizens. Design criteria shall apply to roadway signs, fences, rails, access area improvements, bridges, restrooms, trash receptacles, etc. The objective of such criteria shall be to ensure that all improvements are unnoticeable and are in harmony with the rustic natural setting of the Big Sur Coast. The special report by local citizens entitled "Design Standards for the Big Sur Highway" on file at the Monterey County Planning Department should serve as a guide and point of departure for Caltrans and other public agencies in developing a design theme for State Route 1 and in making improvements within the state right-of-way.

Big Sur Coastal Implementation Plan:

20.145.030 Visual Resources Development Standards

A. Development Within the Critical Viewshed

1. Critical Viewshed Determination

b. Development shall be considered to be within the critical viewshed if any portion of the proposed development is visible from State Route 1, including pullouts, rights-of-way, and walkways at the highway's edge, or the major public viewing areas identified in the "critical viewshed" definition, as contained in Section 20.145.020.V. Visibility will be considered in terms of normal, unaided vision in any direction for any amount of time at any season. Also, visibility shall be considered in terms of what portions of the development will be visible under the existing conditions, regardless of landscaping or other techniques that could be later used to screen the development. As such, development shall be considered to be within the critical viewshed if it will be visible from State Route 1 or major public viewing areas given existing conditions. The critical viewshed does not include areas visible from the hiking trails shown on the Trails Plan contained in the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan.

Ocean views from State Route 1 shall not be obscured by artificial berming, mounding, or landscaping. Distant development, although technically within the line of sight from State Route 1 or other major public viewing areas, shall not be considered to be within the critical viewshed if it has been designed and sited so as not to be seen from State Route 1 or other major public viewing areas as defined in Section 20.145.020.V. Exterior light sources shall be prohibited if such light sources will be directly visible from State Route 1 or other major public viewing areas as defined in Section 20.145.020.V.

All new developments not in conformance with the approved representations shall be removed (Reference Policy 3.2.3.B.1).

2. Development Standards

e. Development of new roads, improvement to an existing road requiring more than 100 cubic yards of grading, or development of grading or excavations which require a coastal development permit, including all alterations of natural landforms by earth-moving equipment, will not be allowed to damage or intrude upon the critical viewshed. Such road construction or other work shall not start until the entire project has completed the permit and appeal processes. These restrictions shall not be interpreted as prohibiting the restoration of severely eroded watercourse channels or gulying, provided a plan is submitted and approved before starting work (Reference Policy 3.2.3.A.4).

f. When a structure is to be replaced, resiting or redesign should be required, as necessary, to better conform with the intent of this section. Replacement or enlargement of existing structures, or structures lost in a fire or natural disaster within the critical viewshed shall be permitted on the original location on the site, provided no other less visible portion of the site is acceptable to the property owner, and provided the replacement or enlargement does not increase the visibility of the structure. Replacement or enlargement of structures outside the critical viewshed shall be permitted as long as such replacement or enlargement does not cause the structure to intrude into the critical viewshed (Reference Policy 3.2.3.A.7).

B. Exceptions for Development in Critical Viewshed

3. State Route 1 Facilities

a. Public Highway Facilities

Road capacity, safety, and aesthetic improvements shall be allowed, as set forth below, provided they are consistent with Section 20.145.130 of this chapter.

Signs, guardrails, and restrooms shall be of a design complementary to the rural setting and character of Big Sur, with a preference for natural materials or natural-appearing materials, where feasible. Protective barriers constructed by Caltrans should use boulders or walls of rock construction. Public agency permanent highway signs should be framed with unpainted redwood. The design of all structures shall be subject to the approval of the planning director as a condition of project approval, subject to consultation with Caltrans. Caltrans shall consider any recommendations by the planning director concerning signing and structure design. While an application for a public highway improvement is incomplete, Caltrans shall review all highway signs within the area encompassed by the project to determine the need for

each sign's continued use. The information on each sign, including location, type, and necessity, shall be submitted to the planning department before the application can be considered complete. As a condition of project approval, the signs determined to be unnecessary shall be removed before the issuance of building or grading permits (Reference Policy 3.2.5.C.1).

Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan—Guidelines for Corridor Aesthetics:

Section 3.2 Roadway Elements

Pavements

1. Paved surfaces should retain relative continuity of pavement color (i.e., dark gray/black asphalt concrete). Any new materials used for paving should match the existing pavement for basic color and reflectivity to the extent practical.

Travel Lanes and Shoulders- 1, 2, 3, 5

1. Support the concept for consistent 12-foot travel lanes and 4-foot paved shoulders, consistent with the Transportation Concept Report for the Big Sur Coast portion of State Route 1, and strive for continuity in paved shoulder widths to the extent practicable. In supporting this concept, acknowledge the need for case-by-case review for safety and environmental impacts and require approval of a design exception to allow a combined roadbed width of less than 40 feet.

5. Material for shoulder backing necessary to maintain a smooth transition from the paved to the unpaved surface at the edge of the pavement should be visually compatible with the site. Imported materials should be selected to match the site to the extent possible.

3.3 New Construction and Rehabilitation

Sidehill Structures and Retaining Systems

2. Newly constructed retaining walls, guardrails, sidehill structures, or any other highway safety features should be designed for visual compatibility with the rural character; the use of natural-appearing materials, such as stone and timber, should be considered where appropriate to the local setting.

3. New structures should be non-replicative. In keeping with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's preservation principles, new retaining walls, parapet walls, or culvert headwalls should be visually distinguishable from those that make up the historic district.

4. New retaining walls visible from the highway or other public viewing areas should be designed and constructed for visual compatibility with the rural character. The use of natural-appearing materials, such as stone and timber, will be preferred when appropriate to the local setting.

5. Evaluate visible sidehill structures that appear incompatible with the setting and consider the potential for the application of aesthetic treatments for blending better into the landscape.

Drainage Facilities

3. In cases where headwalls, inlet/outlet features, overside drains, or downdrains are visible from the highway, the selection of type and materials must be visually compatible to the highest degree reasonable. Visible galvanized metal elements (highly reflective, giving a shiny appearance) should be avoided by choosing alternative materials or treating them to reduce reflectivity.

3.4 Guardrail, Bridge Rail, Rock Walls, and Fences

Bridge Rail and Guardrail

2. Newly constructed guardrails or any other roadside safety features should be designed for visual compatibility with the rural character. Natural-appearing materials, such as stone and timber, are preferred where they are appropriate to the local setting. Metal beam guardrail is commonly used along State Route 1 and is visually acceptable in most situations. Wood rather than steel elements are generally more consistent with the overall rustic character. Further options should be considered for the application of alternative guardrail designs that are more compatible with the rural character. New guardrails should incorporate natural or natural-appearing materials such as stone, timber, or textured and stained concrete. Where steel elements are required based on other considerations, treatments that limit the overall visibility and effect of galvanized steel elements should be integrated to the maximum extent practicable. Treatments include minimizing the overall profile of the feature and etching or painting the steel elements.

4. Where new locations for guardrails are identified, alternative guardrail types should be considered for installation that may be more visually compatible with the rural and historic context of the corridor. Specifically, applications of the following rail types should be considered in the corridor (Figure 20).

- Steel-backed timber guardrail (a timber rail backed with steel plate): compatible with the forested character typical of the Big Sur Valley and Carmel Highlands

- Stone masonry guardrail: a constructed image that may be more appropriate to areas of settlement and to special locations such as vista points and scenic pullouts
- Textured and stained or colored concrete guardrail

5. Finish treatments that call special attention to guardrails are not recommended. Treatments that tone down the reflectivity of standard galvanized metal are preferred.

6. End treatments for guardrails and bridge rails are also important visual elements. Where possible, barriers should be terminated with buried end sections, such as a nearby slope or an earthen berm. The height of berms used for buried end sections must not exceed the height of the rail. Alternative end treatments, such as barrels or crash cushions, should be avoided unless site-specific conditions require them.

Landscaping

1. For existing trees along the State Route 1 corridor:

- Stands of native (indigenous) trees along State Route 1 should be protected and preserved where their presence is consistent with highway safety and operational needs.
- Restoration of native stands of trees should be encouraged where they may have been impacted by highway development, where such restoration can be accomplished consistent with highway safety and operational needs.
- Introduced (non-indigenous) trees along State Route 1 should be managed according to the cultural value they may provide. For example, trees associated with areas of human settlement may provide cultural value. Where no such association is made, removal of non-native trees should be considered.
- Diseased trees should be removed in accordance with vegetation management best practices to avoid the spread of disease.
- When and where appropriate, the removal of trees greater than 4 inches in diameter at breast height should be offset with native vegetation.

2. For planting new trees along the State Route 1 corridor:

- Trees may be a component of habitat restoration or proposed to mitigate for or enhance an existing use (such as screening or providing shade).
- Planting non-native trees is discouraged.

- Generally, trees should not be planted on the oceanside of State Route 1, where they could interfere with open views.
- Genotype and precise source of plant material should be considered, and the use of locally propagated stock is encouraged.

[The following policies regarding the 1982 General Plan of Monterey County have been added since the draft environmental document]

1982 General Plan of Monterey County

Policy 40.2.1 Additional sensitive treatment provisions shall be used within the scenic corridor, including placement of utilities underground, where feasible; architectural and landscape controls; outdoor advertising restrictions; encouragement of area native plants, especially on public lands and dedicated open spaces; and cooperative landscape programs with adjoining public and private open space lands.

Policy 40.3.1 The agencies involved in establishing the scenic highway or route, whether they have jurisdiction over the corridor or the right-of-way, shall coordinate their efforts for the integrated design and implementation of the project; this same "team" approach shall also be required for new or relocated roads and highways within all scenic corridors.

Policy 40.3.2 The County shall promote special scenic treatment and design within the right-of-way, to include highway directional signs, guardrails and fences, lighting and illumination, provision of scenic outlooks, road lanes, frontage roads, vegetation, grading, and highway structures.

Policy 7.2.1 Landowners and developers shall be encouraged to preserve the integrity of existing terrain and natural vegetation in visually sensitive areas such as hillsides and ridges.

Policy 56.2.2. The County shall seek to place existing utility lines underground whenever feasible.

Consistency Analysis

As discussed in greater detail in Section 2.1.1, Aesthetics, there is a potential for visual impacts to occur as a result of the project due to the introduction of built elements and removal of roadside vegetation. The overall effect of these changes will be a slightly more engineered-looking highway facility in the immediate area. This character change, however, will be minor and secondary to the surrounding high-quality viewshed.

The project proposes a "see-through-type" bridge rail atop the retaining wall itself, which will be darkened to visually recede and appear more consistent with the natural, wooded character of the Big Sur setting. The same type of

bridge rail has also been used at the Coastlands Retaining Wall located about 0.1 mile north of this location. The project is also proposing to close the gap on the southbound shoulder between the Coastlands Retaining Wall and the Coastlands II Retaining Wall with either ST-75B Barrier Rail or the Midwest Guardrail System. The highway environment in the immediate project vicinity will be somewhat altered by the introduction of barrier rails. However, it will not substantially degrade the existing visual quality or character of public views regardless of what alternative is selected. Furthermore, the project will include aesthetic treatment of visible metal drainage structures, bridge rails, concrete barrier slabs, the posts and beams of all new or replaced guardrails, barrier rail and approach rail, vertical pile wall, and any concrete lagging. Efforts will be made to minimize visual intrusion upon the natural landscape. The new soldier pile wall will be non-replicative, meaning it will be visually distinguishable from any that make up the historic district. Trash generated during the construction process will be contained and removed from the project site.

The project will not alter existing lanes or shoulder widths, and any shoulder backing will be visually compatible. Consistency in pavement color and striping will be considered during construction, and the area will be graded and contoured upon completion of construction.

To access the project site, a total of eight trees under 15 inches in diameter at breast height must be removed: five Monterey cypresses (diameter at breast height of 4 inches, 7.75 inches, 10 inches, 13 inches, and 13.5 inches), one California buckeye (diameter at breast height of 10 inches), and two coast live oaks (diameter at breast height of 5 inches and 9 inches). One Monterey cypress and one coast live oak planned for removal have a diameter at breast height of less than 6 inches. However, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing will be placed to protect trees and other plants which are to remain. After construction, the project site will be revegetated with an assemblage of native vegetation suitable for the area. Revegetation will include native trees planted in onsite locations that will minimize interference with ocean views when fully mature to the greatest extent possible. An appropriate vegetation control area will be maintained. After the site is revegetated, the completed project will be largely unnoticed by highway travelers. [The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document] Undergrounding of utility lines that run along the shoulder of the northbound lane of State Route 1 is not included in the project because no overhead utility lines will be affected as a result of project activities, as stated in Section 2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems. It has been determined that with the implementation of the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures listed in Section 2.1.1, the potential visual impacts of this project can be reduced and will not result in substantial adverse impacts on the existing visual environment. Therefore, the project will be consistent with these policies.

Historical Resources

Relevant Policies

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan:

Section 3.10 Historical Resources

3.10.1 Key Policy

It is the policy of the county to protect, maintain, and, where feasible, enhance and restore the cultural heritage of the county and its human-made resources and traditions.

Section 3.10.2 General Policies

2. The county shall provide for the mitigation of site and artifact disturbance in county-approved projects through the careful surveying of project sites and the consideration of project alternatives to preserve significant cultural resources.

Consistency Analysis

The project will have no impact on cultural or historic resources because no cultural or historic resources are known to exist within or next to the project limits. The failed existing retaining wall was constructed in 2003 and is not historic. In addition, the culvert within the project limits does not contain a historic headwall and is not a contributor to a historic district. Therefore, the project will be consistent with these policies.

Archaeological and Paleontological Resources

Relevant Policies

California Coastal Act:

Section 30244 - Archaeological or Paleontological Resources

Where development would adversely impact archaeological or paleontological resources as identified by the State Historic Preservation Officer, reasonable mitigation measures shall be required.

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan:

Section 3.11 Archaeological Resources

3.11.1 Key Policy

Big Sur's archaeological resources, including those areas considered to be archaeologically sensitive but not yet surveyed and mapped, shall be maintained and protected for their scientific and cultural heritage values. New land uses and development, both public and private, should be considered compatible with this objective only where they incorporate all site planning and design features necessary to avoid or mitigate impacts on archaeological resources.

3.11.2 General Policies

2. When developments are proposed for parcels where paleontological resources or archaeological or other cultural sites are located, project design that avoids or substantially minimizes impacts to such cultural sites shall be required. To this end, emphasis should be placed on preserving the entire site rather than on the excavation of the resource, particularly where the site has potential religious significance.

4. Whenever development is to occur in areas having a probability of containing archaeological sites, the Site Survey Office or a professional archaeologist shall be contacted to determine whether the property has received an archaeological survey. If not, such a survey shall be conducted to determine if an archaeological site exists.

Consistency Analysis

There are no known archaeological resources located within or next to the project area, and the area has a low potential for the presence of paleontological resources.

While archaeological and paleontological resources are not expected to be encountered, standard specifications that cover appropriate handling of these resources if they are to be inadvertently discovered have been included in the project. Furthermore, though the project site is not archeologically sensitive, the Salinan Tribe of San Luis Obispo and Monterey Counties have requested that construction for the project be monitored by a member of their tribe. Therefore, the project will be consistent with these policies.

Coastal Hazards

Relevant Policies

California Coastal Act:

Section 30253 - Minimization of adverse impacts

New development shall do all of the following:

(a) Minimize risks to life and property in areas of high geologic, flood, and fire hazards.

(b) Assure stability and structural integrity, and neither create nor contribute significantly to erosion, geologic instability, or destruction of the site or surrounding area or in any way require the construction of protective devices that would substantially alter natural landforms along bluffs and cliffs.

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan:

Section 3.7 Hazardous Areas

3.7.1 Key Policy

Land use and development shall be carefully regulated through the best available planning practices to minimize risk to life and property and damage to the natural environment.

3.7.2 General Policies

3. All development shall be sited and designed to minimize risk from geologic, flood, or fire hazards to a level generally acceptable to the community. Areas of a parcel that are subject to high hazard(s) shall generally be considered unsuitable for development. For any development proposed in high-hazard areas, an environmental or geotechnical report shall be required before county review of the project.

3.7.3 Specific Policies

A. Geologic Hazards

1. All development shall be sited and designed to conform to site topography and to minimize grading and other site preparation activities. Applications for grading, building permits, and subdivisions shall be reviewed for potential impacts to onsite and offsite development arising from geologic and seismic hazards and erosion. Mitigation measures shall be required as necessary.

4. Critical facilities, such as major transportation links, communications and utility lines, and emergency shelter facilities, shall be located, designed, and operated in a manner that maximizes their ability to remain functional after a major earthquake.

7. All structures should be designed and constructed to: a) resist minor earthquakes with epicenters on the closest potentially active fault without damage; b) resist moderate earthquakes without structural damage, but with some nonstructural damage allowable; c) resist a major earthquake of the intensity or severity of the strongest experienced in California without collapse, but with some structural as well as nonstructural damage allowable.

8. Structures and roads in areas subject to landslides are prohibited; a certified engineering geology report indicates mitigations exist to minimize risk to life and property. Mitigation measures shall not include massive grading or excavation or the construction of protective devices that would substantially alter natural landforms.

9. Any proposed development within 50 feet of the face of a cliff or bluff or within the area of a 20-degree angle from the toe of a cliff, whichever is greater, shall require the preparation of a geologic report before consideration of the proposed project. The report shall demonstrate that (a) the area is stable for development; and (b) the development will not create a geologic hazard or diminish the stability of the area.

[The following policy regarding the 1982 General Plan of Monterey County has been added since the draft environmental document]

1982 General Plan of Monterey County

Policy 3.2.2 Lands having a prevailing slope above 30 percent shall require adequate special erosion control and construction techniques.

Consistency Analysis

[The following sentence has been changed to provide information about completed geologic testing and reports.] Geologic testing and geologic reports regarding the project area have been prepared to ensure the structural stability of the project and can be found in Volume 2 of the final environmental document. [The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document] Construction techniques appropriate for the steep slope will be used, and disturbed areas will be treated with permanent erosion control materials selected to best address the various conditions within the project site. Therefore, the project will be consistent with these policies.

Water Quality

Relevant Policies

California Coastal Act:

Section 30231 - Biological Productivity; Water Quality

The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes, appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health, shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored through, among other means, minimizing adverse effects of wastewater discharges and entrainment, controlling runoff, preventing depletion of groundwater supplies and

substantial interference with surface water flow, encouraging wastewater reclamation, maintaining natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats, and minimizing alteration of natural streams.

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan

Section 3. Resource Management

3.4 Water Resources

3.4.1 Key Policy

The protection and maintenance of Big Sur's water resources is a basic prerequisite to the protection of all other natural systems. Therefore, water resources will be considered carefully in all planning decisions and approvals. In particular, the county shall ensure that adequate water is retained in the stream system to provide for the maintenance of the natural community of fish, wildlife, and vegetation during the driest expected year.

Consistency Analysis

The project will not have any long-term water quality impacts. Replacement of the retaining wall, the new barrier system, and drainage improvements will not alter the existing drainage pattern of the site. The project will have no impact on riparian areas. The project will involve earthwork related to retaining wall replacement that may lead to an increase in sediment-laden water, resulting in short-term water quality impacts. However, by incorporating appropriate engineering design and robust water Best Management Practices during construction, the short-term impacts on water quality will be minimized to the maximum extent feasible. Additionally, a site-specific Water Pollution Control Plan will be implemented during project construction. [The following sentence has been changed to provide justification for the consistency determination]. The project will be consistent with these policies because the project will stabilize the failing slope and remove a source of erosion.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas

Relevant Policies

California Coastal Act:

Section 30240 Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas; Adjacent Developments

(a) Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas.

(b) Development in areas next to Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts that would significantly degrade those areas and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas.

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan:

Section 3.3 Environmentally Sensitive Habitats

3.3.1 Key Policy

All practical efforts shall be made to maintain, restore, and, if possible, enhance Big Sur's Environmentally Sensitive Habitats. The development of all categories of land use—both public and private—should be secondary to the protection of these critical areas.

3.3.2 General Policies

1. Development, including vegetation removal, excavation, grading, filling, and the construction of roads and structures, shall not be permitted in Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas if it results in any potential disruption of habitat value. To approve development within any of these habitats, the county must find that disruption of a habitat caused by the development is not significant.

9. The county shall require the use of appropriate native species in proposed landscaping.

Big Sur Coastal Implementation Plan:

Section 20.145.040 Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Development Standards

B. General Development Standards

All development, including vegetation removal, excavation, grading, filling, and the construction of roads and structures, shall be prohibited in Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas if it has been determined through the biological survey prepared for the project that the development's impact cannot be reduced to a level at which the long-term maintenance of the habitat is assured, (i.e., to an insignificant level). To approve any development within an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area, the decision-making body must find that the disruption of such habitat caused by the development would not be significant (Reference Policy 3.3.2.1).

4. Development on parcels containing or within 100 feet of Environmentally Sensitive Habitats, as identified on the current Big Sur Coast Environmentally Sensitive Habitat resource map, other resource information, or the planner's

onsite investigation, shall not be permitted to adversely impact the habitat's long-term maintenance, as determined through the biological survey prepared for the project. Proposals shall be modified for siting, location, bulk, size, design, grading, vegetation removal, and/or other methods, where such modifications will reduce impacts to an insignificant level and assure the habitat's long-term maintenance. Also, the recommended mitigation measures of the biological survey will be considered and made conditions of project approval (Reference Policy 3.3.2.4, Policy 3.3.2.7).

Consistency Analysis

The project will not have a significant impact on biological resources and is not located in or next to designated Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas. Avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented to minimize the effects of the project on plant and animal species within the project limits.

No federally or state-listed plant species were identified as having the potential to occur in the project area, and none were found during surveys. The Biological Study Area is located within the designated critical habitat for the California red-legged frog and also has the potential to support Smith's blue butterfly.

Smith's blue butterfly (a federally endangered species) uses seacliff buckwheat and seaside buckwheat as host plants for all life stages. Surveys indicated that buckwheat is not present within the Biological Study Area, and as such, Smith's blue butterfly is not expected to occur in the project area. Furthermore, the project's Biological Study Area is located entirely within the federally designated California red-legged frog Critical Habitat Unit Monterey County 3, "Big Sur Coast." However, the habitat within the Biological Study Area is unlikely to support California red-legged frogs. The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 Effects Determination concludes that the project "may affect, likely to adversely affect California red-legged frog." The Biological Study Area is close to a known breeding pond for the species; however, avoidance and minimization measures listed in Section 2.1.4 of this document and Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) will ensure that impacts on the species are minimized. With the implementation of these measures, the project will be consistent with these policies.

Tree Protection Policies

Relevant Policies

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan:

Section 3.5 Forest Resources

3.5.2 General Policies

2. All cutting or removal of trees shall be in keeping with the broad resource protection objectives of this plan.

Specific policies, criteria, and standards of other sections of this plan shall govern both commercial and noncommercial tree removal.

8. In addition to compliance with forestry and soil resources policies, all developments, forest management activities, and tree removal shall specifically conform to this plan's policies regarding water and marine resources, sensitive habitat areas, and coastal visual resources.

Section 5.4 Development Policies

5.4.2 General Policies

13. A coastal development permit must be obtained for the removal of trees and other major vegetation. However, in the Big Sur Coast area, the following will not be considered as removal of major vegetation:

- a. Removal of non-native or planted trees, except where this would result in the exposure of structures in the critical viewshed;
- b. Removal of hazardous trees that pose an imminent danger to life or property or threaten contagion of nearby forested areas, subject to verification by the county or California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection;
- c. Thinning of small (less than 12 inches in diameter) or dead trees from density forested areas, especially as needed to reduce unsafe fuel accumulations next to existing occupied buildings; and
- d. Prescribed burning, crushing, lopping, or other methods of brush clearing that do not materially disturb underlying soils.

Selective removal of trees may be permitted where consistent with the forest resources policies of this Plan, provided that no impairment of the critical viewshed or degradation of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat will result. Where the removal of trees is part of a stand improvement project or similar long-term management effort, the submission of a Forest Management Plan for the site will be encouraged by the county; approval of such a plan pursuant to a coastal development permit will remove the need for multiple permit requests on the same site.

Big Sur Coastal Implementation Plan:

Section 24.145.060 Forest Resources Development Standards

D. Development Standards

2. Removal of any trees that would result in the exposure of structures in the critical viewshed shall not be permitted, subject to the provisions of Section 20.145.030.A. A condition of project approval shall be that the applicant grants a scenic easement to the county over existing vegetated areas without which the approved development would be located in the critical viewshed. The easement shall be required in accordance with the provisions of Section 20.142.130.

3. Removal of native trees shall be limited to that which is necessary for the proposed development and/or justified in the Forest Management Plan as being necessary to improve unhealthy forest conditions. The proposed development shall be modified for siting, location, size, bulk, and/or design where such modifications will result in less removal of healthy trees in a healthy forest condition or as otherwise meeting the objectives of the Forest Management Plan.

4. Removal of native trees other than those directly necessary for the proposed development shall be limited to that required for the overall health and long-term maintenance of the forest, as verified in the Forest Management Plan.

[The following policies and ordinances from the 1982 General Plan of Monterey County and Monterey County Code have been added since the draft environmental document.]

1982 General Plan of Monterey County

Policy 7.2.2 Native and native compatible species, especially drought-resistant species, shall be utilized to the extent possible in fulfilling landscaping requirements imposed as conditions of discretionary permits.

Monterey County Code

16.60.030 - Preservation Of Oak And Other Protected Trees- Regulations.

Except as provided in Section 16.60.060 of this Chapter, the following regulations apply:

D. No oak tree may be removed in any other area of the County of Monterey designated in the applicable area plan as Resource Conservation, Residential, Commercial, or Industrial (except Industrial, Mineral Extraction) without the approval of the permit(s) required in Section 16.60.040 of this Chapter. 16.60.060 - Exemptions.

The following tree removal activities are exempt from the provisions of this Chapter:

A. Timber operations that are in accordance with a timber harvesting plan submitted pursuant to the provisions of the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practices Act of 1973 (commencing with Section 45110 of the Public Resources Code).

B. Tree removal pursuant to Public Utilities Commission General Order 95 or by governmental agencies within public rights-of-way.

C. Tree removal for construction of structures, roads, and other site improvements included in an approved subdivision, Use Permit, or similar discretionary permit.

Consistency Analysis

To access the project site, a total of eight trees under 15 inches in diameter at breast height must be removed: five Monterey cypresses (diameter at breast height of 4 inches, 7.75 inches, 10 inches, 13 inches, and 13.5 inches), one California buckeye (diameter at breast height of 10 inches), and two coast live oaks (diameter at breast height of 5 inches and 9 inches). One Monterey cypress and one coast live oak planned for removal have a diameter at breast height of less than 6 inches. Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing will be placed to protect trees and other plants that are not slated for removal. After construction, the project site will be revegetated with an assemblage of native vegetation suitable for the area. Native trees will be replanted at a 1-to-1 ratio unless it is determined that the replacement ratio will result in overcrowding. To the extent feasible, onsite replanting locations will be sited to attempt to minimize interference with ocean views from State Route 1 when trees are fully grown. [The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document.] All trees removed as part of the project are located within the state right-of-way and are exempt from Monterey County Code ordinances regarding Tree Preservation. Therefore, the project will be consistent with these policies.

Public Access

Relevant Policies

California Coastal Act, Chapter 3:

Section 30211 - Development Not To Interfere With Access

Development shall not interfere with the public's right of access to the sea, where acquired through use or legislative authorization, including, but not limited to, the use of dry sand and rocky coastal beaches to the first line of terrestrial vegetation.

Section 30252 -Maintenance and Enhancement of Public Access

The location and amount of new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by (1) facilitating the provision or extension of transit service, (2) providing commercial facilities within or adjoining residential development or in other areas that will minimize the use of coastal access roads, (3) providing nonautomobile circulation within the development, (4) providing adequate parking facilities or providing substitute means of serving the development with public transportation, (5) assuring the potential for public transit for high intensity uses such as high-rise office buildings, and by (6) assuring that the recreational needs of new residents will not overload nearby coastal recreation areas by correlating the amount of development with local park acquisition and development plans with the provision of onsite recreational facilities to serve the new development.

Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan:

Section 4. State Route 1 and County Roads

4.1.2 General Policies

1. Improvements to State Route 1 shall be undertaken to increase its service capacity and safety, consistent with its retention as a scenic two-lane road.

4.1.3 Specific Policies

A. Road Capacity and Safety Improvements

1. The county requests that, to maximize vehicular access to the Big Sur Coast, the width of State Route 1 be upgraded to standard 12-foot lanes and 2-to-4-foot shoulders where physically practical and consistent with the preservation of other coastal resource values. A program of constructing left-turn lanes and other improvements shall be undertaken to improve traffic capacity and safety.

6. Public Access

6.1.3 Key Policy

The rights of access to the shoreline, public lands, and along the coast, and opportunities for recreational hiking access shall be protected, encouraged, and enhanced.

[The following ordinances from the Monterey County Code have been added since the draft environmental document.]

Monterey County Code

Chapter 12.08 - Highway Use Restrictions

12.08.010 - Closing or restricted use—Authorized.

A. The Director of Transportation of the County of Monterey may restrict the use of, or close, any County highway whenever he considers such closing or restriction of use necessary:

1. For the protection of the public;
2. For the protection of such County highways from damage during storms;
3. During construction, improvement, or maintenance operations on the highway.

B. Any such action of the Director of Transportation may be reviewed and modified by the Board of Supervisors of this County.

12.08.020 - Closing or restricted use—Notice.

A. To notify the public that a County highway is closed or its use restricted, the Director of Transportation may:

1. Erect suitable barriers or obstructions upon such highway;
2. Post warnings and notices of the condition of any such highway;
3. Post signs for the direction of traffic upon such highway or to or upon any other highway or detour open to public travel;
4. Place warning devices on such highways;
5. Assign a flagman to warn, detour, or direct traffic on such highway.

B. No person shall willfully remove or fail to observe any sign, marker, warning, notice, or direction placed or given under this Section.

Consistency Analysis

Traffic delays on State Route 1 may occur during project construction due to temporary closures on the southbound lane of the highway. [The following sentence has been added since the draft environmental document.] As detailed in the Transportation Management Plan, all temporary closures will use suitable signs, barriers, and/or flaggers to ensure proper notice to the public. The Transportation Management Plan will ensure that coastal access via State Route 1 will be consistent throughout project construction. Ultimately, by replacing the failed retaining wall, the project will ensure continued and consistent coastal access via State Route 1. Therefore, the project will be consistent with these policies.

Appendix C Required Consultation Documentation

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

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 through the release and review of the Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration. This appendix summarizes the results of Caltrans' efforts to identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

Biology Coordination:

- On January 7, 2022, Shelby Sanchez submitted online requests through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation website (IPaC 2022) and via email to the National Marine Fisheries Service for updated official species lists for the project area. The official U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Marine Fisheries Service species lists were received that day.
- On November 8, 2022, Shelby Sanchez submitted online requests through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation website (IPaC 2022) and via email to the National Marine Fisheries Service for updated official species lists for the project area. The official U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Marine Fisheries Service species lists were received that day.
- On September 11, 2023, Caltrans Biologists Shelby Sanchez and Jennifer Moonjian submitted a formal request via email to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for formal consultation for use of the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program.
- On September 29, 2023, Caltrans Biologists Shelby Sanchez and Jennifer Moonjian received concurrence via email from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the use of the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program for the California red-legged frog.

Appendix D Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Summary

Aesthetics (2.1.1)

With the implementation of the following avoidance and minimization measures, the project will be consistent with the aesthetic and visual resource protection goals along State Route 1, and potential visual impacts will be reduced:

VIS 1: Preserve as much existing vegetation as possible. Prescriptive clearing and grubbing and grading techniques that save the most existing vegetation possible should be used.

VIS 2: Revegetate all areas disturbed by the project, including but not limited to temporary access roads, staging, and other areas with native plant species appropriate to each specific work location.

VIS 3: Replacement planting shall include aesthetic considerations and inherent biological goals. Replanting shall include native trees and plants as determined by a Caltrans biologist and the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department. Replanting shall occur at the maximum extent horticulturally viable and be maintained until established.

VIS 4: Following construction, regrade and recontour any new construction access roads, staging areas, and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding natural topography along State Route 1 and avoid unnatural-appearing remnant landforms.

VIS 5: All visible concrete drainage elements, including, but not limited to, headwalls, drain inlet aprons, etc., should be colored to blend with the surroundings and reduce reflectivity. The specific colors of these concrete elements shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 6: All visible metal components related to downdrains and inlets, including but not limited to flared end sections, connectors, anchorage systems, safety cable systems, etc., should be darkened or colored to blend with the surroundings and reduce reflectivity. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 7: ST-75B Bridge Rails shall be colored and/or darkened to blend with the natural setting. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 8: [The following sentence has been changed to reflect that both the Midwest Guardrail System and ST-75B Barrier Rail will require a concrete slab footing.] The concrete barrier slab footing shall be colored and/or darkened to blend with the nearby shoulders. The exposed top surface of the barrier slab should have an overlay or be colored to match the color of the nearby asphalt roadway lanes. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 9: All metal roadside elements, including but not limited to the Midwest Guardrail System, guardrail transitions, and end treatments, should be stained or darkened to be visually compatible with the rural setting. The color shall be determined and approved by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 10: The vertical wall piles should be colored and/or darkened to be visually compatible with the rural setting. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 11: If timber lagging is not used, then concrete lagging should be colored and/or darkened to blend with the surrounding hillside. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

VIS 12: If whalers are used, they should be colored and/or darkened to be visually compatible with the rural setting. The specific color shall be determined by the Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture Department.

Air Quality (2.1.3)

The potential for air quality impacts generated by project construction will be minimized with the implementation of the following measure:

AIR 1: To minimize dust emissions from the project, Section 14-9.02 (Air Pollution Control) of the 2018 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). Incorporate appropriate engineering design and Stormwater Best Management Practices during construction.

Biological Resources (2.1.4)

Potential impacts to biological resources as a result of the project will be reduced to less than significant under CEQA with the implementation of the following avoidance and minimization measures:

BIO 1: [The following sentence has been changed to reflect that all impacts associated with project activities were found to be less than significant under CEQA and do not require mitigation.] Native, nonornamental trees removed

that have a diameter at breast height of greater than 6 inches may be replanted, as required, at a 1-to-1 ratio.

BIO 2: During construction, Caltrans will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible.

BIO 3: When practicable, invasive exotic plants in 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 the soil from weedy areas must be removed offsite, the top 6 inches of soil containing the seed layer in areas with weedy species shall be disposed of at a landfill.

BIO 4: If necessary, wash stations onsite shall be established for construction equipment under the guidance of Caltrans to avoid and minimize the spread of invasive plants and/or seeds within the construction area.

BIO 5: Before any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing will be installed around trees and other vegetation designated to be protected within the project limits. Protection limits will be noted on design plans and delineated in the field before the start of construction activities.

BIO 6: Only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologists will participate in activities associated with the capture, handling, and monitoring of California red-legged frogs. Biologists authorized under this biological opinion do not need to resubmit their qualifications for subsequent projects conducted pursuant to this biological opinion unless we have revoked their approval at any time during the life of this biological opinion.

BIO 7: Ground disturbance will not begin until written approval is received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the biologist is qualified to conduct the work unless the individual(s) has/have been approved previously and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has not revoked that approval.

BIO 8: A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will survey the project site no more than 48 hours before the start of work activities. 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 will be allowed sufficient time to move them from the site before work begins. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will relocate the California red-legged frogs to the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and that will not be affected by project construction activities. The relocation site should be in the same drainage to the extent practicable. Caltrans will coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the relocation site before the capture of any California red-legged frogs.

BIO 9: Before any activities begin on the project, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training will include a description of the California red-legged frog and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the California red-legged frog for the current project, and the boundaries within which the project may be accomplished. Brochures, books, and briefings may be used in the training session, provided that a qualified person is on hand to answer any questions.

BIO 10: A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will be present at the work site until all California red-legged frogs have been relocated out of harm's way, workers have been instructed, and disturbance of habitat has been completed. After this time, the state or a local sponsoring agency will designate a person to monitor onsite compliance with all minimization measures. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will ensure that this monitor receives the training outlined in Measure BIO 8 above and in the identification of California red-legged frogs. If the monitor or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist recommends that work be stopped because California red-legged frogs will be affected in a manner not expected by Caltrans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during a review of the proposed action, they will notify the resident engineer (the engineer that is directly overseeing and in command of construction activities) immediately. The resident engineer will either resolve the situation by eliminating the adverse effect immediately or require that all actions causing these effects be stopped. If work is stopped, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be notified as soon as possible.

BIO 11: During project activities, all trash that may attract predators will be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and construction debris will be removed from work areas.

BIO 12: All refueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment and vehicles will occur at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies and in a location where a spill will not drain directly toward aquatic habitat (e.g., on a slope that drains away from the water). The monitor will ensure contamination of habitat does not occur during such operations. Before the start of work, Caltrans will ensure that a plan is in place for a prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. All workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

BIO 13: Habitat contours will be returned to their original configuration at the end of project activities. This measure will be implemented in all areas disturbed by project activities 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.

BIO 14: The number of access routes, the size of staging areas, and the total area of the activity will be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project goals. Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be delineated to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction and minimize the impact to California red-legged frog habitat; this goal includes locating access routes and construction areas outside of wetlands and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable.

BIO 15: Caltrans will attempt to schedule work activities 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 in maintaining 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. Habitat assessments, surveys, and coordination between Caltrans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during project planning will be used to assist in scheduling work activities to avoid sensitive habitats during key times of the year.

BIO 16: To control sedimentation during and after project implementation, Caltrans and the sponsoring agency will implement the best management practices outlined in any authorizations or permits issued under the authority of the Clean Water Act that it receives for the specific project. If best management practices are ineffective, Caltrans will attempt to remedy the situation immediately in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

BIO 17: 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. Alteration of the streambed will be minimized to the maximum extent possible; any imported material will be removed from the streambed upon project completion.

BIO 18: 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.

BIO 19: A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist will permanently remove any individuals of non-native species, such as bullfrogs (*Rana catesbeiana*), signal and red swamp crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*; *Procambarus clarkii*), and centrarchid fishes from the project area to the maximum extent possible. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved

biologist will be responsible for ensuring his or her activities comply with the California Fish and Game Code.

BIO 20: If Caltrans demonstrates that disturbed areas have been restored to conditions that allow them to function as habitat for the California red-legged frog, these areas will not be included in the amount of total habitat permanently disturbed.

BIO 21: To ensure that diseases are not transported between work sites by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist, the fieldwork code of practice, developed by the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force, will be followed at all times. A copy of the fieldwork code of practice is enclosed.

BIO 22: Project sites will be revegetated with an assemblage of native riparian, wetland, and upland vegetation suitable for the area. Locally collected plant materials will be used to the extent practicable. Invasive, exotic plants will be controlled to the maximum extent practicable. This measure will be implemented in all areas disturbed by project activities unless the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Caltrans determine that it is not feasible or practical.

BIO 23: Caltrans will not use herbicides as the primary method to control invasive, exotic plants. However, if Caltrans determines the use of herbicides is the only feasible method for controlling invasive plants at a specific project site, it will implement the following additional protective measures for the California red-legged frog:

- a. Caltrans will not use herbicides during the breeding season for the California red-legged frog;
- b. Caltrans will conduct surveys for the California red-legged frog immediately before the start of any herbicide use. If found, California red-legged frogs will be relocated to suitable habitat far enough from the project area that no direct contact with herbicides will occur;
- c. Giant reed and other invasive plants will be cut and hauled out by hand and painted with glyphosates or glyphosate-based products, such as AquaMaster® or Rodeo®.
- d. Licensed and experienced Caltrans staff or a licensed and experienced contractor will use a hand-held sprayer for foliar application of AquaMaster® or Rodeo® where large monoculture stands occur at an individual project site;
- e. All precautions will be taken to ensure that no herbicide is applied to native vegetation.
- f. Herbicides will not be applied on or near open water surfaces (no closer than 60 feet from open water).

- g. Foliar applications of herbicide will not occur when wind speeds are in excess of 3 miles per hour.
- h. No herbicides will be applied within 24 hours of forecasted rain.
- i. Application of all herbicides will be done by qualified Caltrans staff members or contractors to ensure that overspray is minimized, that all application is made in accordance with label recommendations, and with the implementation of all required and reasonable safety measures. A safe dye will be added to the mixture to visually denote treated sites. Application of herbicides will be consistent with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Pesticide Programs and Endangered Species Protection Program county bulletins.

BIO 24: Upon project completion, Caltrans shall ensure that a Project Completion Report is completed and provided to the Ventura Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, following the template provided with the Programmatic Biological Opinion. Caltrans shall include recommended modifications of the protective measures if alternative measures will facilitate compliance with the provisions of this consultation.

Nesting Birds

The following measures apply to all birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code. The list of birds protected by these regulatory laws is extensive, and not all birds protected by these laws are likely to occur within the Biological Study Area.

BIO 25: Within 30 days before initiation of site disturbance and/or construction, a qualified biologist should conduct a preconstruction survey for nesting birds if vegetation disturbance or tree removal cannot be scheduled outside of the typical nesting bird season (February 14 to September 30).

BIO 26: Active bird nests will not be disturbed, and eggs or young birds covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code will not be killed, destroyed, injured, or harassed at any time (harassment includes noise from construction activities). If an active bird nest is found in or near a location that will be disturbed, a Caltrans biologist will determine an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species. An Environmentally Sensitive Area will be established, and the nest area will be avoided until the nest is vacated and the juveniles have fledged.

BIO 27: If roosting bats are discovered within the project area, the resident engineer shall immediately contact the project biologist on how to proceed. The biologist will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife if necessary.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The potential for greenhouse gas impacts generated by project construction will be reduced to less than significant under CEQA with the implementation of the following minimization measures:

GHG 1: Limit idling to five minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment when not in active operation.

GHG 2: Use alternative fuels such as renewable diesel or solar power for construction equipment when available.

GHG 3: For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment:

- Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition
- Use right sized equipment for the job
- Use equipment with new technologies

GHG 4: Use recycled materials in the construction of new project features onsite when possible. This may include processing waste to create usable fill and maximizing the use of recycled materials that meet Caltrans specifications for incorporation into new work.

GHG 5: Reduce construction waste when possible. For example, reuse or recycle construction and demolition waste to reduce consumption of raw materials, reduce waste and transportation to landfills, and save costs.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials (2.1.9)

The potential for impacts generated by project construction will be reduced to less than significant under CEQA with the implementation of the following minimization measures.

HAZ 1: The project will include Caltrans Standard Specifications related to fire prevention and fire safety to minimize the potential for igniting nearby vegetation during construction activities, along with implementing the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health Fire Protection and Prevention Guidance.

HAZ 2: When handling and applying fire-retardant paint, the construction contractor must follow the manufacturer's safety protocols for workers and observe cleanup protocols in the event of an accidental spill.

Noise (2.1.13)

The potential for noise impacts generated by project construction will be minimized with the implementation of the following measures:

NOISE 1: Each internal combustion engine, used for any purpose on the job or related to the job, shall be equipped with a muffler of a type recommended by the manufacturer. No internal combustion engine shall be operated on the job site without an appropriate muffler.

NOISE 2: Notify the public in advance of the construction schedule when construction noise and upcoming construction activities likely to produce an adverse noise environment are expected. This notice shall be given two weeks in advance. Notice should be published in local news media of the dates and duration of the construction activity. The District 5 Public Information Office posts notice of construction and potential community impacts after receiving notice from the resident engineer.

NOISE 3: Shield especially loud pieces of stationary construction equipment.

NOISE 4: Locate portable generators, air compressors, etc., away from sensitive noise receptors.

NOISE 5: Limit grouping major pieces of equipment operating in one area to the greatest extent feasible.

NOISE 6: Place heavily trafficked areas such as the maintenance yard, equipment, tools, and other construction-oriented operations in locations that will be the least disruptive to surrounding sensitive noise receptors.

NOISE 7: 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 8: Consult District noise staff if complaints are received during the construction process.

The following Caltrans Standard Specification for noise control will also be implemented:

NOISE 9: To minimize impacts on residents' normal nighttime sleep activities, it is recommended that, whenever possible, construction work be done during the day. If nighttime construction is necessary, the noisiest construction activities will be done as early in the evening as possible. Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02 Noise Control will be implemented. This standard specification 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.

Transportation (2.1.17)

The following avoidance and minimization measure will further reduce the potential for impacts on transportation:

TRAFFIC-1: A Traffic Management Plan is required to address any potential traffic delays on State Route 1 that may occur during project construction due to temporary lane closures. This will ensure that coastal access via State Route 1 will be maintained at all times throughout the construction period and will account for emergency access while limiting delays.

Appendix E Comment Letters and Responses

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

This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from April 27, 2023, to May 28, 2023, retyped for readability. The comment letters are stated verbatim as submitted, with acronyms, abbreviations, and any original grammatical or typographical errors included. 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 notice was published in The Monterey Herald newspaper on April 27, 2023, and on the Caltrans website informing the public of the environmental document's availability for review and comment and to advertise an opportunity for a virtual public meeting. No virtual public meeting was requested.

Comment from Jackson Hurst of Kennesaw, Georgia

Comment 1:

I have reviewed the IS/PND Document for Caltrans Coastlands II Retaining Wall Project and I approve and support the build alternative because the build alternative will improve safety by repairing the failed retaining wall underneath CA-1 at PM 44.34.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your comment and interest in this project. Caltrans has noted your alternative preference.

Comments from Monterey County: Housing and Community Development Department:

Comment 1:

The project is within the Big Sur Land Use Plan, which comprises a Coastal area of unincorporated County of Monterey. Pursuant to Section 15063(d)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, this IS/MND shall include analysis of consistency with the relevant provisions of the Big Sur Land Use Plan (BSC LUP) and accompanied Coastal Implementation Plan (CIP), 1982 General Plan policies and of the ordinances of the Monterey County Code (MCC).

Response to comment 1: A consistency analysis of relevant provisions of the Big Sur Land Use Plan and accompanying Coastal Implementation Plan was performed for this project and is included in Appendix B, Coastal Policy Analysis. The Coastal Policy Analysis has been updated to include a consistency analysis of relevant 1982 General Plan policies and ordinances of the Monterey County Code.

Comment 2:

Chapter 1.8 of the IS/MND should be revised to require the County of Monterey to grant a Coastal Development Permit to allow repairs and improvements to an existing public road on slopes in excess of 30 percent and within the Critical Viewshed, and a Coastal Development Permit to allow removal of protected trees. The Coastal Development Permit will be appealable to the Coastal Commission. Although not part of the scope of the IS/MND, based on a review of County records, a Coastal Development Permit was not obtained for the Coastlands I guardrail. Caltrans should seek after-the-fact permitting.

Response to comment 2: Table 1.1 in Chapter 1, Section 1.9, Permits and Approvals Needed, has been updated to reflect that the only Coastal Development Permit required for this project will be issued by the County of Monterey. A Coastal Development Permit (PLN 200098) for the Coastlands Retaining Wall was obtained from the County of Monterey on April 29, 2021.

Comment 3:

As demonstrated in Appendix B of the IS/MND, BSC LUP Chapter 3.2 prohibits all future public or private development that is visible from State Route 1 and major public viewing areas (the critical viewshed). However, as accurately described in the IS/MND, BSCLUP Policy 3.2.5.C provides an exception to the Critical Viewshed policy for Public Highway 1 facilities. The County of Monterey appreciates that design alternatives were considered. Although the IS/MND's preferred alternative is the ST-75B Bridge Rail, the Stained Midwest Guardrail System is most consistent with the Big Sur Land Use Plan and Coastal Implementation Plan policies relating to public Highway

1 facilities being complementary to the rural setting and character of Big Sur. Additionally, the Stained Midwest Guardrail System is most consistent with the Big Sur Coast Highway

Management Plan's Guidelines for Corridor Aesthetics which states "steel-backed timber guardrail (a timber rail backed with steel plate): compatible with the forested character typical of the Big Sur Valley." The IS/MND determined that, with mitigation measures, the project would have a less than significant impact on visual resources. This section of the IS/MND should be revised to incorporate the Critical Viewshed policies and Visual Access policies of the Big Sur Land Use Plan. The visual resources policies of the BSC LUP and CIP are some of the strictest, if not the strictest, viewshed regulations along the California coastline. A guardrail currently does not exist along this segment of Highway 1 and with implementation of the project, ocean views will be partially blocked, and a new element will be introduced in the Critical Viewshed and along a Scenic Highway. A more thorough visual analysis should be prepared to determine potential aesthetic impacts. Given that the Coastlands I guardrail is under construction with the ST-75B Bridge Rail design, it is recognized that if the Stained Midwest Guardrail System was installed along the proposed section of Highway 1, there would be a lack of visual continuity between the two guardrails. Although the County of Monterey Planning staff consider the Stained Midwest Guardrail System to be the preferred alternative, the Monterey County Planning Commission is the appropriate authority to consider the project. As detailed in the IS/MND, Caltrans district traffic safety staff "recommend" closing the gap between the proposed Coastlands II guardrail and Coastlands I guardrail to increase public safety. Please provide the technical information needed to justify the impacts to the Critical Viewshed and substantiate Caltrans' proposal to construct 175 feet of additional barrier rail.

Response to comment 3: The draft Initial Study With Negative Declaration did not identify ST-75B Barrier Rail as the preferred alternative. The two rail types were both presented as Build Alternatives in the draft Initial Study With Negative Declaration, but the numbering of the Build Alternatives in the document is not indicative of Caltrans' preference. Build Alternative 1 featuring the ST-75B Barrier Rail was selected as the Preferred Build Alternative by the project development team. More information regarding the suitability of Build Alternative 1 can be found in Section 1.5 of the final environmental document. The rail type that is ultimately constructed to connect the gap between the two retaining walls will be subject to approval by the Monterey County Local Coastal Program via the Coastal Development Permit application process.

No visual mitigation measures are included as part of the draft Initial Study With Negative Declaration because all visual impacts associated with project activities were found to be less than significant, as shown in Section 2.1.1 Aesthetics. This determination was made based on the information provided

in the Visual Impact Analysis, which can be found in Volume 2 of the final environmental document. All measures included in the Visual Impact Analysis are considered avoidance and minimization measures because these measures are not intended to lessen significant environmental impacts.

Critical Viewshed policies and Visual Access policies of the Big Sur Land Use Plan were considered when preparing the Visual Impact Analysis and Section 2.1.1 Aesthetics of the final environmental document, and a full consistency analysis of these policies and other relevant policies can be found in Appendix B.

The Visual Impact Analysis prepared for the project fully considers all facets of both Build Alternatives. It is suitably complete and rigorous, and additional analysis is not required.

A technical design memo that details the justification of the closure of the gap on the basis of collision history, roadway alignment, site conditions, and the minimum length of guardrail installations needed was completed on July 28, 2023. Upon preparation and review of this technical justification memorandum, the Caltrans Department of Traffic Safety Systems has revised its recommendation to a requirement for the project. The technical justification memorandum is included in Volume 2 of the final environmental document, which is available upon request via email, phone, and mail. Further details and instructions for requesting Volume 2 can be found on the final page of the final environmental document.

Comment 4:

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines section 150701, the Initial Study includes mitigation measures to lessen potentially significant environmental impacts. Accordingly, the Initial Study should be adopted as Mitigated Negative Declaration with a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan, rather than just a Negative Declaration. As a responsible agency, the County of Monterey would rely on the adopted Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan when considering the project.

Response to comment 4: All impacts associated with project activities were found to be less than significant, as shown in Chapter 2.1. This determination was made based on the information provided in relevant technical reports, which can be found in Volume 2 of the environmental document. All measures included in the environmental document are considered avoidance and minimization measures, including all measures pertaining to Aesthetic and Biological Resources because these measures are not intended to lessen significant environmental impacts. A Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan are not required for this project. An internally coordinated Monitoring and Reporting Plan will be prepared for

the replacement planting and subsequent one year plant establishment period.

Comments from the California Coastal Commission:

Comment 1:

The IS/MND is unclear about the jurisdictional setting of the project as it relates to the need to obtain a Coastal Development Permit. However, based on a preliminary review, it appears that the proposed project is located entirely within the Local Coastal Program (LCP) jurisdiction of Monterey County, with no project elements within the Coastal Commission's original jurisdiction. As such, Caltrans must apply for a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) from Monterey County, which would be appealable to the Coastal Commission. The table on page 13 should be revised to reflect this information.

Response to comment 1: Table 1.1 in Chapter 1, Section 1.9, Permits and Approvals Needed, has been updated to reflect that the only Coastal Development Permit required for this project will be issued by the County of Monterey.

Comment 2:

We would like to inquire about the statement on page 65 that a Federal Consistency Certification would be required from the Coastal Commission in addition to the Coastal Development Permit from Monterey County. While it is accurate that a CDP issued by a local government does not serve as federal consistency review, the IS/MND does not state the basis on which Caltrans believes the project requires federal consistency review by the Coastal Commission. Please contact me at your earliest convenience with this information so that I can confirm with my colleagues in our Federal Consistency Division whether federal consistency review is required for this project. This coordination will ensure an efficient permitting process for Caltrans.

Response to comment 2: Senior Coastal Planner Marlene Alvarado confirmed via email on September 19, 2023, that a federal consistency review would be appropriate because the project is subject to the Coastal Zone Management Act. Caltrans will comply with all regulatory obligations under the federal Coastal Zone Management Act and the California Coastal Act.

Comment 3:

Visual Resources. We appreciate that Caltrans is proposing multiple measures to minimize the potential visual impact of the project, including staining or otherwise coloring the railing, soldier pile wall, and other project elements to blend with the surrounding landscape. While we recognize that Caltrans has determined that, with these measures, the project would have less than significant impacts on visual resources, we must clarify that this determination for the purposes of CEQA does not necessarily correlate to the

project being consistent with the visual resources protection policies of the Coastal Act and the Monterey County LCP.

As recognized in Appendix B of the IS/MND, Coastal Act Section 30251 requires that the scenic and visual resources of the coastal area around Highway 1 be protected as a resource of public importance, and that development be visually compatible with the character of the surrounding area, and sited and designed to minimize alteration of natural landforms. The policies of the Big Sur LUP and the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (BSCHMP) mirror these policies and provide additional policy direction for projects within the Big Sur. The visual resource policies of the Monterey County LCP—specifically the Big Sur LUP—and the BSCHMP are exceptionally protective, as Big Sur is widely considered one of the most unique and sensitive viewsheds in California. As such, conventional project features that may be consistent with Coastal Act and LCP policies in other jurisdictions may need to be approached differently or avoided altogether in order to be consistent with the Big Sur LUP.

The most significant visual impact of the proposed project would result from constructing a railing along the top of the proposed retaining wall and potentially extending northward. Caltrans proposes to construct approximately 190 feet of Type ST-75B bridge railing along the top of the retaining wall. As described in the document, there would be a 175-foot-long gap between the northern end of this railing and the southern end of the existing railing along the Coastlands Retaining Wall to the north. The IS/MND states that “safety regulations recommend that gaps of less than 200 feet between guardrail installations should be avoided.” For this reason, Caltrans proposes to either extend the ST-75B railing an additional 175 feet to connect it with the existing railing, or to construct an MGS guardrail to fill the gap between the two retaining wall railings.

Given the policy context summarized above, we suggest that the IS/MND (and future project materials) provide technical information to substantiate Caltrans’ proposal to construct 175 feet of additional barrier rail to close the gap between the existing barrier rail at the Coastlands Retaining Wall and the proposed barrier rail at the Coastlands II Retaining Wall. While we understand that Caltrans district traffic safety staff “recommend” closing the gap in order to increase driver safety, it is critical as part of the Coastal Development Permit process that Monterey County and Coastal Commission staff understand the technical basis upon which this recommendation is being made, and whether the recommendation is underpinned by any state/national safety standards or regulations. Depending on the additional information Caltrans staff provide, Coastal Commission staff may recognize and agree with the need to construct MGS guardrail along the gap. Given that the IS/MND establishes that such guardrail would be sufficient to address Caltrans’ safety concerns while also posing less visual impact, this approach is more likely to be found consistent with the visual resource policies of the

Big Sur LUP and the Coastal Act. In the meantime, without additional information, Coastal Commission staff recommend that Caltrans remove this feature from the project and minimize impacts to the Big Sur critical viewshed, as this will help minimize the likelihood of the project being appealed to the Coastal Commission.

We are also mindful that the project would have unavoidable visual impacts due to the railing above the proposed wall and, potentially, a railing extending northward to the Coastlands Retaining Wall. We suggest that Caltrans propose visual mitigation to compensate for these unavoidable impacts. One option might be to underground one or both of the overhead lines mentioned on page 57 of the IS/MND. Such mitigation will ensure that highway projects in the vicinity do not have an aggregate impact over time of substantially altering the scenic value of the highway.

Response to comment 3: All visual impacts associated with project activities were found to be less than significant under CEQA, as shown in Section 2.1.1 Aesthetics. The Coastal Policy Analysis presented in Appendix B provides a detailed analysis of why the project is consistent with the visual resources protection policies of the Coastal Act and the Monterey County Local Coastal Program, in addition to policies and ordinances found in the 1982 Monterey County General Plan and the Monterey County Code.

A technical design memo that details the justification of the closure of the gap on the basis of collision history, roadway alignment, site conditions, and the minimum length needed for guardrail installations was completed on July 28, 2023. Upon preparation and review of this technical justification memorandum, the Caltrans Department of Traffic Safety Systems has revised its recommendation to a requirement for the project. The technical justification memorandum is included in Volume 2 of the final environmental document, which is available upon request via email, phone, and mail.

Further details and instructions for requesting Volume 2 can be found on the final page of the final environmental document.

Build Alternative 1 featuring the ST-75B Barrier Rail was selected as the Preferred Build Alternative by the project development team. More information regarding the suitability of Build Alternative 1 can be found in Section 1.5 of the final environmental document. The rail type that is ultimately constructed to connect the gap between the two retaining walls will be subject to approval by the Monterey County Local Coastal Program via the Coastal Development Permit application process.

Undergrounding of utility lines that run along the shoulder of the northbound lane of State Route 1 is not included in the project because no reconstruction of the northbound lane or shoulder is required as a result of project activities.

Comment 4:

Tree Removal. As listed beginning on page 79 of the draft IS/MND, the Coastal Act and the Big Sur LUP contain policies protecting sensitive habitats. The Big Sur LUP also contains policies protecting native and mature trees, and requiring replacement planting to compensate for unavoidable tree removal. Caltrans proposes to remove eight trees, including five Monterey cypress, one California buckeye, and two coast live oak, within the area where the wall would be constructed. None of the trees are considered “landmark trees” under the County’s LCP, as none are greater than 24 inches in diameter breast height. Per Monterey County Implementation Plan Section 20.145.060.D.6, Caltrans would replace these trees at a 1:1 ratio unless this ratio would result in overcrowding. Please note that while Monterey cypress is native to the Monterey Peninsula, it is not native to the Big Sur area. In some locations in Big Sur, Monterey cypress can act as an invasive species, spreading beyond locations it is originally planted and blocking the sunlight and winds upon which native sensitive plant habitats depend. We suggest that Caltrans staff evaluate, in consultation with Monterey County staff, whether replacing the removed Monterey cypress with native trees would be appropriate at the site, particularly if native trees would pose less impact on the critical viewshed than mature Monterey cypress trees.

Response to comment 4: Caltrans staff will consult with Monterey County staff while developing replacement planting plans. Caltrans agrees that replacing the removed Monterey cypresses with native trees could provide benefits to the critical viewshed in this location. An arborist report will be prepared once limits of grading are finalized in the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase of the project delivery process, and information from this report will also be used in the preparation of planting plans.

Comment 5:

Coastal Access. As listed beginning on page 83 of the draft IS/MND, the Coastal Act and the Big Sur LUP contain policies protecting and promoting public coastal access. As the primary arterial through the Central Coast, Highway 1 is a critical resource for providing public access to and along the coast. Commission staff support the overall goal of the project to provide a safe and reliable roadway through the project area while minimizing environmental impacts. At the same time, we are mindful that lane closures and one-way traffic control (as mentioned on page 55) have the potential to temporarily impact public coastal access by constricting highway traffic. Given the importance of Highway 1 to public coastal access throughout the project area, we suggest that Caltrans schedule any traffic restrictions to avoid the summer season, when coastal visitorship is highest, particularly on weekends and holidays. We further suggest that Caltrans avoid locating construction staging and storage within existing highway pullouts that are commonly used

for public parking and coastal access, particularly during the summer. These measures will help avoid significant impacts to public access.

Response to comment 5: Adopting the Traffic Management Plan will minimize disruption to the greatest extent possible and will consider the holidays and weekends. The project is expected to begin construction in January 2026 and last nine months, so the bulk of project activities will be completed by summer 2026. Public parking is not authorized in the area identified for staging, and no public coastal access is available in the project area.

List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

- Air Quality, Noise, and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memorandum (December 18, 2022)
- Climate Change Technical Report (February 8, 2023)
- Cultural Resources Screened Undertaking Memorandum (January 9, 2023)
- Cumulative Impact Report (March 16, 2023)
- Geotechnical Reports
 - Geotechnical Design Report (May 11, 1998)
 - Geotechnical Assessment and Recommendations (May 21, 2021)
 - Structure Preliminary Geotechnical Report (March 16, 2022)
- Hazardous Waste Initial Site Assessment Memorandum (December 19, 2022)
- Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) (January 9, 2023)
- Paleontological Identification Report (December 19, 2023)
- Visual Impact Assessment (February 23, 2023)
- [The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Technical Justification for Barrier Gap Closure (July 28, 2023).

To obtain a copy of one or more of these technical studies/reports or the Initial Study, please send your request to:

Lara Bertaina
District 5 Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93401

Or send your request via email to: lara.bertaina@dot.ca.gov
Or call: 805-779-0792

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: Coastlands II Retaining Wall

General location information: On State Route 1 in Monterey County at post mile 44.34, 1.1 miles south of Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge near Big Sur

District number-county code-route-post mile: 05-MON-01-PM 44.34

Project ID number: 0521000188