Highway 101 Rocks Road Tree Removal

San Benito County, California
05-SBt-101- Post Miles R1.28/2.01
Project Number 0524000159/EA 05-1S010

Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2

Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

May 2024

Caltrans

General Information About This Document

What's in this document:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has prepared this Initial Study, which examines the potential environmental impacts of alternatives being considered for the proposed project in San Benito County in California. The document explains why the project is being proposed, the alternatives being considered for the project, the existing environment that could be affected by the project, potential impacts of each of the alternatives, and proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures.

What you should do:

- Please read the document. Additional copies of the document are available for review at the Caltrans district office at 50 South Higuera Street in San Luis Obispo, California 93405, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., as well as the San Benito County Library at 470 5th Street, Hollister, California 95023, Monday through Friday, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. This document can also be downloaded at the following website: https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-5/district-5-current-projects/05-1s010

- Tell us what you think. If you have any comments regarding the proposed project, please send your written comments to Caltrans by the deadline. Submit comments via U.S. mail to: Sunny McBride, District 5 Environmental Stewardship Branch, California Department of Transportation, 50 South Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93405. Submit comments via email to: sunny.mcbride@dot.ca.gov

- Submit comments by the deadline: June 30, 2024.

What happens next:

After comments are received from the public and the reviewing agencies, Caltrans may 1) give environmental approval to the proposed project, 2) do additional environmental studies, or 3) abandon the project. If the project is given environmental approval and funding is appropriated, Caltrans could design and construct all or part of the project.

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05-SBt-101- PM R1.28/2.01
Project Number 0524000159/EA 05-1S010

Eucalyptus tree removal on Highway 101
from post miles R1.28 to 2.01 in San Benito County

INITIAL STUDY
with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

Responsible Agency: California Transportation Commission

Heidi Borders
Office Chief, Local Assistance, Environmental Stewardship, Advance Planning, and Clean California
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

05/24/2024
Date

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

Sunny McBride, 50 South Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93405. Phone: 805-440-9575. Email: sunny.mcbride@dot.ca.gov

DRAFT
Proposed Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: pending

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 05-SBt-101-PM R1.28/2.01

EA/Project Number: 05-1S010/0524000159

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes the Highway 101 Rocks Road Tree Removal Project to improve safety for the traveling public on Highway 101 in San Benito County between post miles R1.28 and 2.01 near Aromas, California. The project area is approximately 3 miles west of San Juan Bautista. The project would remove approximately 228 blue gum eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) adjacent to Highway 101 that are in poor health or in weak condition. The trees are within 40 to 60 feet of the pavement edge. The project includes replacement planting with native species.

The project is not expected to impact wetlands, riparian areas, or jurisdictional waterways. Therefore, the project will not require permits from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The project area is not within the California coastal zone, and the project will not require a Coastal Development Permit. With implementation of avoidance and minimization measures, the project is not expected to impact nesting migratory birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or California Fish and Game Code. The project is not expected to impact any special-status plant species. The project is expected to likely adversely affect the California red-legged frog. The project is expected to meet the criteria for the Programmatic Biological Opinion for California red-legged frog for the purposes of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service formal consultation. Critical habitat for the California red-legged frog is not present within the Biological Study Area. No take of state-listed species is anticipated and therefore California Endangered Species Act consultation is not required.

Although the general baseline eucalyptus grove would remain, the removal of approximately 50 to 75 percent of the trees would result in a noticeable change in a visual landmark for highway travelers and local residents. However, the planting of native trees and shrubs throughout the project limits will help to minimize the reduction of the vegetated character.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 5. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action with the incorporation of the identified

mitigation measures will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

- Minimization and avoidance measures for riparian areas and special-status species, nesting birds, and roosting bats will help to avoid impacts to these resources.

- The planting of native trees and shrubs throughout the project limits will provide native habitat and help to minimize the reduction of the vegetated character.

_____

Scott Eades
District Director
California Department of Transportation

_____

Date

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Caltrans proposes to improve safety for the traveling public on Highway 101 near Rocks Road in San Benito County between post miles R1.28 and 2.01 near Aromas, California, by cutting down approximately 228 eucalyptus trees *(Eucalyptus globulus*). The trees identified for removal are in declining health or exhibit structural weakness or imbalance. The project area is approximately 3 miles west of San Juan Bautista. Figures 1-1 and 1-2 show the project vicinity and project location.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

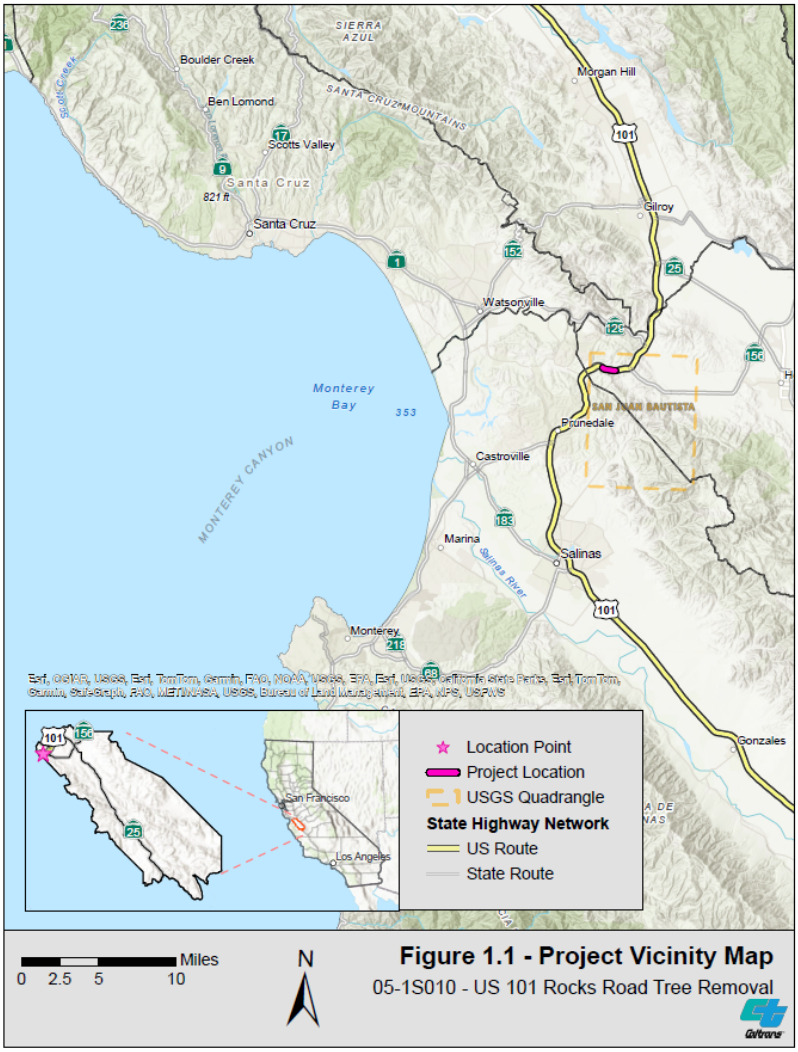
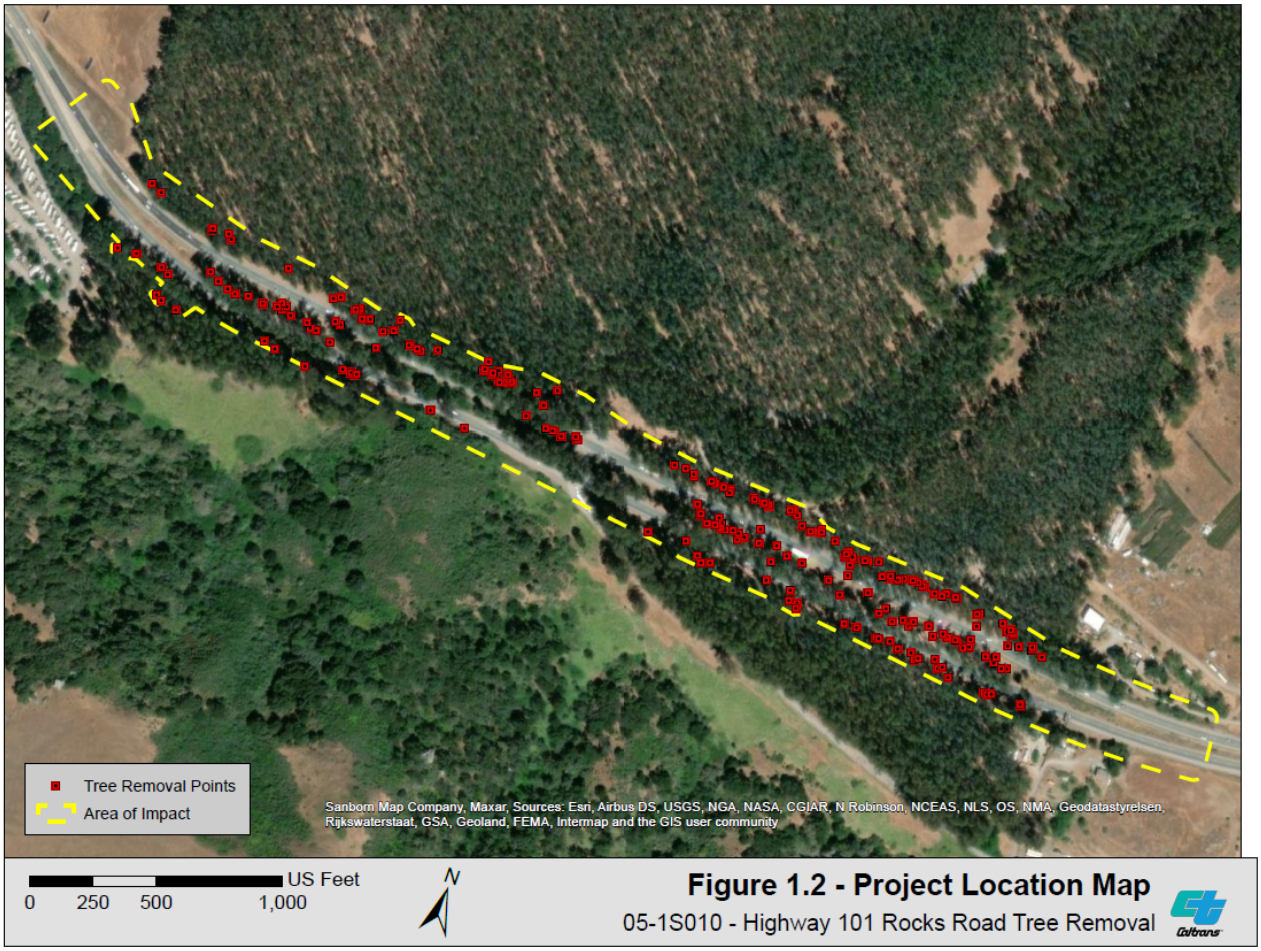


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project is to:

- Improve safety for the traveling public by eliminating the potential of trees and debris falling onto the roadway; and
- Reduce Caltrans maintenance worker exposure on the highway associated with maintenance activities.

1.2.2 Need

The project is needed to address the trees near the roadway that are in declining health or that exhibit structural weakness or imbalance.

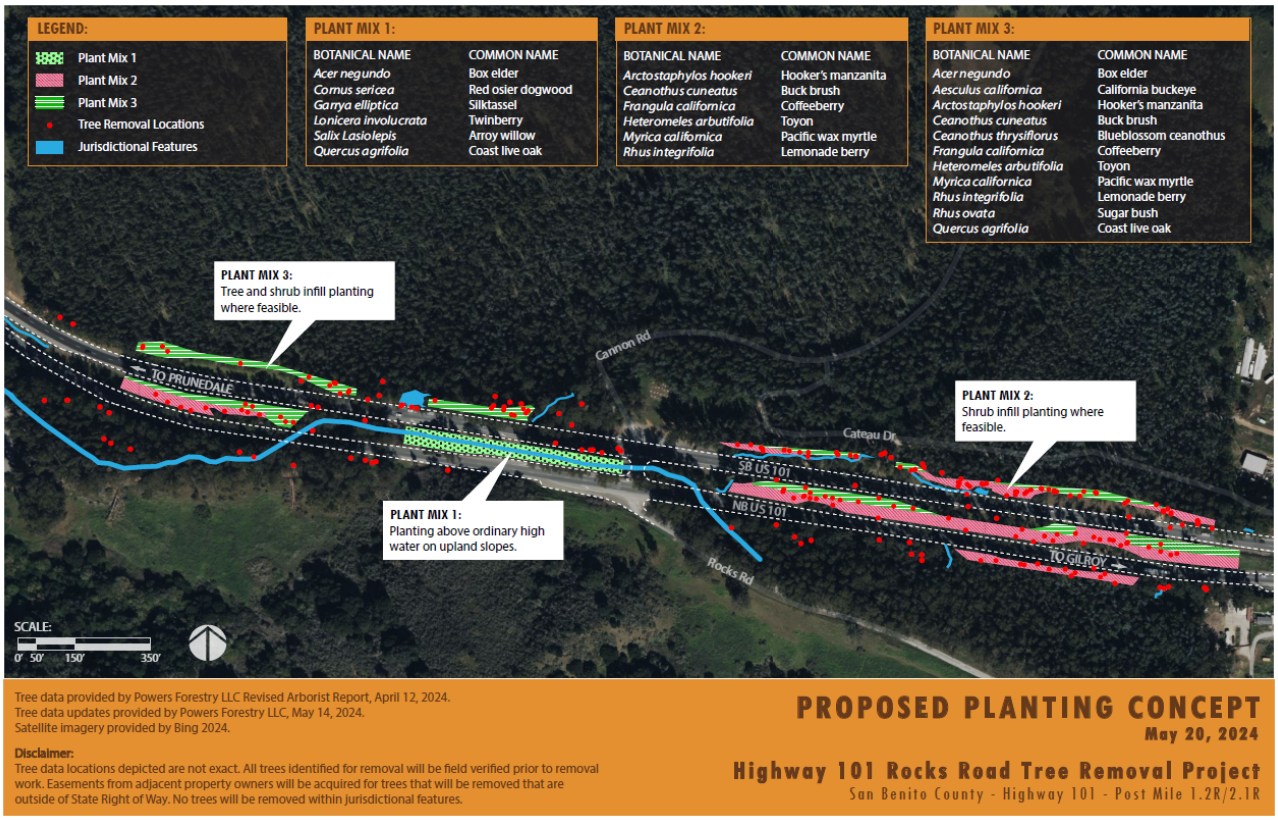
1.3 Project Description

Caltrans proposes the Highway 101 Rocks Road Tree Removal project to improve safety for the traveling public on Highway 101 in San Benito County between post miles R1.28 and 2.01 near Aromas, California. The project area is approximately 3 miles west of San Juan Bautista. An arborist has assessed the condition of the grove of blue gum eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) growing within the Caltrans right-of-way on both the northbound and southbound highway roadsides and in the median. The project would remove approximately 228 blue gum eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) that are in poor health or in weak condition. The trees are within 40 to 60 feet from the pavement edge. After the trees are cut, the stumps will be ground out and/or treated with herbicide to prevent re-growth. The trees identified for removal are scattered throughout the grove; the entire grove will not be removed. About 50 to 75 percent of the trees in the grove will be removed. The scope of the project also includes replacement planting with more appropriate trees and shrubs. Replacement planting will consist of native species and native trees throughout the project area and will result in a higher density of planting, restoring the landscape to more native habitat and improving habitat for the California red-legged frog.

Replacement planting includes three different plant mixes that will be applied at multiple replacement planting areas. Figure 1-3 shows the locations of the trees that will be removed, where the jurisdictional features are found, and locations of where the three different plant mixes will be applied. The proposed planting plan also includes the species that will be included in each planting mix.

Note that the tree removal locations shown on the proposed planting plan, Figure 1-3, are not exact. All trees identified for removal will be verified in the field before removal. No tree removals will occur that are within jurisdictional features.

Figure 1-3 Proposed Planting Plan



1.4 Project Alternatives

1.4.1 Build Alternatives

The build alternative would remove approximately 228 blue gum eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) that are in poor health or in weakened condition along Highway 101. The trees are within 40 to 60 feet from the pavement edge. The project includes replacement planting with native species.

This project contains a number of standardized project measures and Best Management Practices that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project.

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

Under the no-build alternative, the project would not be completed, and the unhealthy trees would remain.

1.5 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).

1.6 Permits and Approvals Needed

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

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Section 7 Consultation for Threatened and Endangered Species – California red-legged frog	Use of the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the California Red Legged Frog
California Transportation Commission	California Transportation Commission vote to approve construction funds	Following the approval of the final environmental document, the California Transportation Commission will be required to vote to approve construction funding for the project

Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

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

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

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

2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information in the Visual Impact Assessment dated May 2024, 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?	**No Impact**

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

Affected Environment

The project sits along Highway 101 in the northwestern portion of San Benito County. Highway 101 is a principal arterial that serves mostly interregional traffic. It is a slightly curving four-lane expressway from the Monterey County line, changing to a four-lane freeway about 1.6 miles north of the Monterey County line. The project is south of the Highway 101 and State Route 156 interchange near Rocks Road and the adjacent community of Aromas.

Within the California Coast Range, San Benito County's generally rural character is defined by agricultural croplands, rangelands, rolling hills, and open spaces. The topography ranges from gently sloping to steep hills cut by narrow canyons, with riparian areas. Throughout the region, vegetation is a prime component of the visual character and encompasses mostly oak woodlands, chaparral, and open grasslands with stands of eucalyptus.

The project area is uniquely identified by a dense eucalyptus grove that is also in the center median of Highway 101, in areas where the northbound and southbound lanes are at different elevations. The dense stand of trees mostly blocks views to the surrounding hillsides. Where visible at the north and south ends of the project limits, the hillsides are heavily vegetated with native oak trees and chaparral.

Environmental Consequences

The existing visual quality of the highway corridor through the project area is moderately high, based mostly on the rural character and dense eucalyptus tree grove. The nearby city of Aromas is relatively compact and is not visible from the project area. Just south and north of the project area are a few sparsely set residences and businesses visible from the highway, but they do not change the overall rural visual character of the corridor.

The project would remove approximately 228 eucalyptus trees from both sides of the highway as well as in the median. The 228 trees account for approximately 50 to 75 percent of the total eucalyptus trees in the grove. The trees proposed for removal range from large mature trees over 50 feet tall (which grew from the original plantings that are over 60 years old) to resprouted trees that range from 10 to 40 years old.

The eucalyptus grove is a dominant visual element as seen from the surrounding area due to the trees' large stature, the number of trees, and the proximity to the highway. The eucalyptus grove has a high degree of memorability in the landscape. The size, density, and proximity to the highway make the grove very noticeable.

Following project implementation, although the general baseline eucalyptus grove would remain, the removal of approximately 50 to 75 percent of the trees would result in a noticeable change in a visual landmark for highway travelers and local residents. The planting of native trees and shrubs throughout the project limits will help to minimize the reduction of the vegetated character.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

With implementation of the following minimization measures, the project would be consistent with the aesthetic and visual resource protection goals along Highway 101, and potential visual impacts would be reduced:

- Preserve as much existing native vegetation as possible. Prescriptive clearing and grubbing and grading techniques that save the most existing native vegetation possible should be employed.

- Replacement planting shall include aesthetic considerations as well as the inherent biological goals. Revegetation shall include native trees and plants as determined by the Caltrans Biologist and Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture. Revegetation shall occur at the maximum extent horticulturally viable and be maintained until established.

- All tree stumps shall be ground and/or treated so that no portions remain visible at the completion of the project.

- An ISA Certified Arborist with Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) must be present during tree work to direct and oversee implementation of ANSI A300 Tree Care Standards.

- Additional tree removal shall not occur unless previously authorized by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture and Biology.

- Following construction, re-grade and re-contour all new construction staging areas and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding pre-project topography.

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 non-agricultural 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 non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	**No Impact**

2.1.3 Air Quality

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

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

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study – Minimal Impacts dated May 2024, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	**Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated**
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

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?	**No Impact**
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	**No 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?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

Biological Study Area

The biological study area lies in a small valley 3 miles south of the northern foothills of the Gabilan Range and eastern opening to the Pajaro Valley formation, the division between the Gabilan Range and the Santa Cruz Mountains within the Central California Coast Mountain ranges. At roughly 250 feet elevation, the biological study area is 11.75 miles east of the Pacific Ocean and 3 miles west of San Juan Bautista. The regional climate is generally semi-arid to Mediterranean, with a small coastal influence from the Pacific Ocean. Little to no precipitation occurs during the summer months, and cool temperatures and moderate rain occur during the winter months. The 7-year average precipitation within the Aromas area is roughly 19.29 inches yearly.

The biological study area is mostly paved with highway or composed of eucalyptus trees, with minimal ruderal vegetation. Land use in this area of Aromas is agricultural and residential. The main soils within the biological study area include Arnold loamy sand, Botella loam, and Los Gatos rocky clay loam. A perennial creek runs through the project site, following Rocks Road from the east, passing through a culvert into a shallow corridor in the median between Rocks Road and Cannon Road and then continues west

through another final culvert out of the project site and continues along Highway 101.

The biological study area can be described as ruderal/disturbed; the area contains mostly non-native weedy and/or invasive species tolerant of conditions such as compacted soils, roadsides subjected to vehicle disturbance, and eucalyptus habitat. The vegetation that exists within the biological study area consists of upland, non-native, ruderal species such as black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), great brome (*Bromus diandrus*) spear thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*), and cheeseweed (*Malva parviflora*).

Most of the biological study area is composed of a large grove of eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*). Eucalyptus trees are also found along the banks and upland of the perennial and ephemeral creeks. Banks are also vegetated by non-native perennial herbs. A small segment of coyote brush scrub exists south of Rocks Road, mostly consisting of non-native ruderal species.

Special-Status Species and Critical Habitat

Animals are considered to be of special concern based on (1) federal, state, or local laws regulating their development; (2) limited distributions; and/or (3) the habitat requirements of special-status animals occurring onsite. The California red-legged frog may be present in the biological study area during project activities. No other state or federally listed animal species are expected to be present within the biological study area. The project does not occur within designated critical habitat for any species. Numerous species of nesting birds have the potential for occurrence in or adjacent to the project site and are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Department of Fish and Wildlife Section 3503.

Riparian Areas

Receiving water bodies for the project are two unnamed features: one perennial creek and one ephemeral creek. Jurisdictional areas of significance within the biological study area for the project are two unnamed features—one perennial creek and one ephemeral creek—which are tributaries to the Elkhorn Slough. No riparian vegetation removal or work within jurisdictional areas is proposed for the project.

Environmental Consequences

The project will have no permanent impacts. The project will have temporary impacts, with minimal ground disturbance. Temporary impacts involve work off pavement: cutting and limbing of eucalyptus trees. All impacts occur either in areas of existing hardscape or within non-native eucalyptus grove habitat.

Avoidance and minimization measures will require that the contractor use existing disturbed or developed areas within the area of potential impacts for temporary staging and storage. In addition, avoidance and minimization

measures will be incorporated into the project specifically for tree removal, trimming and limbing.

The project is not within the coastal zone. The literature and database search identified no California Department of Fish and Wildlife natural community of special concern in the project area. The project would have no negative impacts to wildlife habitat connectivity, and the project would have no impacts to wetlands, waters of the U.S., or jurisdictional waters of the State of California.

Potential impacts to special-status species are discussed below.

California Red-Legged Frog

The biological study area has low-quality habitat for the California red-legged frog, and no critical habitat or aquatic breeding habitat is present. Eucalyptus leaves, bark, and duff (and associated tannins) throughout the biological study area have greatly reduced the availability of habitat features for the California red-legged frog.

Eucalyptus trees throughout the upland sections of the creek and throughout the upland area have greatly reduced the availability or potential growth of dense vegetation necessary for California red-legged frog habitat. The species was found in one section of the creek lacking eucalyptus tree upland canopy; the absence of eucalyptus trees allowed creek banks to grow vegetation.

Habitat within the biological study area is likely used for dispersal and refuge. California red-legged frogs may occur in the project area during construction due to the observations of the species found within and adjacent to the biological study area during two April surveys and due to the presence of marginal upland and dispersal and refugia habitat for the species.

Project work would be conducted in the late summer and early fall of 2024, outside of California red-legged frog dispersal and breeding seasons. Temporary impacts to the California red-legged frog include potential relocation if this species is present during pre-construction surveys and/or construction. Only eucalyptus trees outside of jurisdictional areas would be removed. Any eucalyptus trees within the jurisdictional habitat that have been deemed high risk would be avoided. No grading, excavating or ground disturbance will occur. Project work within this area using heavy equipment may result in injury, death, or relocation of California red-legged frogs if the species were to inhabit the area during work activities.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is the project may affect and is likely to adversely affect the California red-legged frog. The basis for this determination is that the California red-legged frog is present within the biological study area and therefore there could be potential for take of the species during construction. Federally designated critical

habitat for the California red-legged frog does not occur within the biological study area.

California Tiger Salamander

No habitat for the California tiger salamander exists within the biological study area, and no critical habitat or aquatic breeding habitat for the species is present. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conservation plan for the Ellicott Slough, the end for the neighboring Pajaro Valley watershed, found that eucalyptus species “continue to threaten native habitats” for amphibians, specifically the California tiger salamander. The California Department of Fish and Game conducted a status review of the California tiger salamander in 2010 through a large spatial analysis of California tiger salamander species habitat, deliberately ruling out any known eucalyptus stands. Eucalyptus leaves, bark, and duff (and associated tannins) throughout the biological study area have greatly reduced the availability for any habitat features for the California tiger salamander.

Project work would be conducted in the late summer and early fall of 2024, outside of California tiger salamander dispersal and breeding seasons. Tree removal work would be limited to eucalyptus trees, none within any jurisdictional habitat. Any eucalyptus trees within the jurisdictional habitat that have been deemed high risk would be avoided. No grading, excavating or ground disturbance would be conducted for the project.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is the project will have no effect to the California tiger salamander or California tiger salamander habitat. The basis for this determination is that the California tiger salamander will not be present because the biological study area has no available habitat. The biological study area is not within critical habitat for the California tiger-salamander.

Monarch Butterfly

Full criteria for monarch butterfly habitat are lacking within the biological study area, with the absence of nectar sources for foraging and larval host plants for egg laying substrate; also, the species was not observed during wildlife surveys. The project would remove only eucalyptus trees that pose a danger to the traveling public. The eucalyptus grove stretches for an additional 1 mile north, outside of the Caltrans right-of-way, with the widest section of the grove at 0.64 mile.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is the project will have no effect to the monarch butterfly. The basis for this determination is that the monarch butterfly will not be present because the biological study area has marginal habitat, lacking key criteria. Critical habitat has not been designated.

Roosting Bats

Although no bat roosts were observed during reconnaissance surveys, there is low potential that bats could establish new roosts in trees within the biological study area with the passage of time before trees are removed. Direct impacts to bats could result during removal of vegetation if bats are found to be roosting in these areas. These direct effects could result in the injury or mortality of bats or harassment that could alter roosting behaviors. Indirect impacts could also result from noise and disturbance associated with construction, which could also alter roosting behaviors. The implementation of pre-activity surveys and exclusion zones would reduce the potential for adverse effects to roosting bat species.

Western Spadefoot (Spea hammondii)

No habitat for the western spadefoot occurs within the biological study area, and no aquatic breeding habitat for the species is present. Eucalyptus leaves, bark, and duff (and associated tannins) throughout the biological study area have greatly reduced the availability for any habitat features for the western spadefoot. Tree removal work within the biological study area would be limited to the eucalyptus trees, none within any jurisdictional habitat. Any eucalyptus trees within the jurisdictional habitat that have been deemed high risk would be avoided. No grading, excavating or ground disturbance will be conducted for the project.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is the project will have no effect to the western spadefoot. The basis for this determination is that the western spadefoot will not be present because the biological study area has no available habitat. The biological study area is not within critical habitat for the western spadefoot since no critical habitat for the species is currently available.

Nesting Birds

The chestnut-backed chickadee (*Poecile rufescens*), song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), and Steller's jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) were observed during field surveys. The Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code protect native migratory birds and associated nests and eggs. Trees, shrubs, other vegetation, and structures within and adjacent to the biological study area could provide potential nesting habitat for native migratory bird species.

Direct impacts could occur during tree removal activities. Project activities may cause noise and vibrations that could indirectly impact nesting birds in the immediate vicinity. The avoidance and minimization measures described below would be implemented to protect all nesting bird species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Avoidance and Minimization Measures for Riparian Areas

The following avoidance and minimization measure would be incorporated into the project to avoid potential adverse effects to the perennial creek and the ephemeral creek jurisdictional habitats:

- Permanent erosion control on all disturbed areas proximate to perennial creek and the ephemeral creek would be applied.
- No equipment would be fueled or serviced within 100 feet of the riparian areas.
- Native riparian vegetation along the riparian corridor would be considered environmentally sensitive area (ESA) and defined and protected using Temporary Fence (Type ESA).

Avoidance and Minimization Measures for California Red-Legged Frog

No compensatory mitigation is required for California red-legged frog; however, implementation of mitigation through replacement of eucalyptus removal with native trees will benefit California red-legged frog and ensure any suitable habitat on-site that is temporarily impacted will be restored.

Caltrans anticipates the project will qualify for Federal Endangered Species Act incidental take coverage under the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program (8-8-10-F-58). The following avoidance and minimization measures from the Programmatic Biological Opinion will be implemented for the California red-legged frog:

- Only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologists shall participate in activities associated with the capture, handling, and monitoring of California red-legged frogs.
- Ground disturbance shall not begin until written approval is received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the biologist is qualified to conduct the work.
- A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall survey the project area no more than 48 hours before the onset 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 shall be allowed sufficient time to move them from the site before work begins. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall relocate the California red-legged frogs the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and will not be affected by the activities associated with the project. The relocation site shall be in the

same drainage to the extent practicable. Caltrans shall coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the relocation site prior to the capture of any California red-legged frogs.

- Before any activities begin on a project, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training shall 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, with a qualified person on hand to answer any questions.

- A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall be present at the work site until all California red-legged frogs have been removed, workers have been instructed, and disturbance of habitat has been completed. After this time, Caltrans shall designate a person to monitor onsite compliance with all minimization measures. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall ensure this monitor receives the training outlined in measure 4 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 would be affected in a manner not anticipated by Caltrans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during review of the proposed action, the monitor shall notify the resident engineer immediately. The resident engineer shall resolve the situation by requiring that all actions that are causing these effects be halted. When work is stopped, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall be notified as soon as possible.

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

- All refueling, maintenance and staging of equipment and vehicles shall occur at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies and not in a location from where a spill would drain directly toward aquatic habitat, unless otherwise preapproved by the necessary agencies. The monitor shall ensure contamination of habitat does not occur during operations. Prior to the onset of work, Caltrans shall ensure that a plan is in place for prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. All workers shall be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

- Habitat contours shall be returned to a natural configuration at the end of the project activities. This measure shall be implemented in all areas disturbed by activities associated with the project, unless the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service and Caltrans determine that it is not feasible or modification of original contours would benefit the California red-legged frog.

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

- Caltrans shall attempt to schedule work for times of the year when impacts to the California red-legged frog would be minimal. For example, work that would affect large pools that may support breeding would be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the breeding season (November through May). Isolated pools that are important to maintain California red-legged frogs through the driest portions of the year would be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the late summer and early fall. Habitat assessments, surveys, and technical assistance between Caltrans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during project planning shall be used to assist in scheduling work activities to avoid sensitive habitats during key times of year.

- To control sedimentation during and after project completion, Caltrans shall implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) outlined in any authorizations or permits issued under the authorities of the Clean Water Act received for the project. If Best Management Practices are ineffective, Caltrans shall attempt to remedy the situation immediately, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- If a work site is to be temporarily dewatered by pumping, intakes shall be completely screened with wire mesh not larger than 0.2 inch to prevent California red-legged frogs from entering the pump system. Water shall 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 shall be removed in a manner that would allow flow to resume with the least disturbance to the substrate. Alteration of the streambed shall be minimized to the maximum extent possible; any imported material shall be removed from the streambed upon completion of the project.

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

- A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall permanently remove any individuals of exotic species, such as bullfrogs (*Rana catesbeiana*), signal and red swamp crayfish (*Pacifasticus leniusculus;*

Procambarus clarkii), and centrarchid fishes from the project area, to the maximum extent possible. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall be responsible for ensuring his or her activities are in compliance with the California Fish and Game Code.

- 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.

- To ensure that diseases are not conveyed between work sites by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist, the fieldwork code of practice developed by the Declining Amphibian Task Force shall be followed at all times.

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

- Caltrans shall not use herbicides as the primary method to control invasive, exotic plants. However, if it is determined that 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 shall not use herbicides during the breeding season for the California red-legged frog;

    b) Caltrans shall conduct surveys for the California red-legged frog immediately prior to the start of herbicide use. If found, California red-legged frogs shall be relocated to suitable habitat far enough from the project area that no direct contact with herbicide would occur;

    c) Giant reed and other invasive plants shall be cut and hauled out by hand and painted with glyphosate-based products, such as Aquamaster® or Rodeo®;

    d) Licensed and experienced Caltrans staff or a licensed and experienced contractor shall 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 shall be taken to ensure that no herbicide is applied to native vegetation;

f) Herbicides shall not be applied on or near open water surfaces (no closer than 60 feet from open water);

g) Foliar applications of herbicide shall not occur when wind speeds are in excess of 3 miles per hour;

h) No herbicides shall be applied within 24 hours of forecasted rain;

i) Application of all herbicides shall be done by qualified Caltrans staff or contractors to ensure that overspray is minimized, that all applications are made in accordance with the label recommendations, and with implementation of all required and reasonable safety measures. A safe dye shall be added to the mixture to visually denote treated sites. Application of herbicides shall be consistent with the U.S Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Pesticide Programs, Endangered Species Protection Program county bulletins;

j) All herbicides, fuels, lubricants, and equipment shall be stored, poured, or refilled at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies in a location where a spill would not drain directly toward aquatic habitat, unless otherwise preapproved by the necessary agencies. Prior to the onset of work, Caltrans shall ensure that a plan is in place for a prompt and effective response to accidental spills. All workers shall be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures for California Tiger Salamander

The following avoidance and minimization measures will be applied for the California tiger salamander:

- Before any activities begin on a project, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training shall include a description of the California tiger salamander and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the California tiger salamander 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, with a qualified person on hand to answer any questions.

- If a California tiger salamander is found, work would stop and consultation would be required with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and an incidental

take permit through the California Department of Fish and Wildlife would be required.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures for Monarch Butterfly

The project would have no effect to the monarch butterfly because the marginal habitat lacks key criteria, and the species was not observed during surveys. Regardless, Caltrans will implement measures to avoid and minimize impacts to the monarch butterfly. Prior to conducting work and during the work associated with the project, the following measures will be implemented:

- Before any eucalyptus tree removal within the project biological study area, a biologist will survey for the presence of roosting or aggregated, overwintering monarch butterflies.
- A temporary fence will be installed along the outer boundary of the buffer zone prior to and during any construction activities on the site.
- If an active roost or aggregation is present on the project site, any construction grading, or other development within 200 feet of the active roost will be prohibited between October 1 and March 1.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures for Roosting Bats

Removal of eucalyptus trees will be offset with replacement plantings, which will provide native roosting habitat. No other compensatory mitigation is proposed.

In addition, Caltrans would implement the following measure to protect roosting bats:

- If tree removal is required during the bat maternity roosting season (February 1 to September 30), a bat roost survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist within three (3) days prior to removal. If an active bat roost is found, a qualified biologist shall determine an appropriate buffer or monitoring strategy based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area shall be avoided, or monitoring shall continue until a qualified biologist has determined that roosting activity has ceased. Active bat maternity roosts shall not be disturbed or destroyed at any time.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures for Nesting Birds

The following measures apply to all birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code. There are no formal survey protocols for most of these bird species, but the California Department of Fish and Wildlife typically requires pre-construction nesting bird surveys and avoidance of impacts to active bird nests.

- If necessary, vegetation should be removed between September 1 to January 31, outside of the typical nesting bird season, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If construction activities are proposed to occur within 100 feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to August 31), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a biologist determined qualified by Caltrans no more than two weeks (14 days) prior to construction. If an active nest is found, Caltrans shall determine an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area shall be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that juveniles have fledged and no longer dependent on the nest.

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

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Screened Undertaking Memo dated March 2024, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

2.1.6 Energy

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**

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

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: i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	**No Impact**
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	**No Impact**
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	**No Impact**
iv) Landslides?	**No 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 would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in onsite or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	**No 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 waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	**No Impact**
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	**No Impact**

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

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?	**No Impact**
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	**No Impact**

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

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?	**No 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 one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	**No Impact**
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	**No Impact**
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
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?	**No Impact**

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

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**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	**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

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

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

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?	**No Impact**
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	**No 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 two 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**

2.1.14 Population and Housing

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

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

2.1.16 Recreation

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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	**No Impact**
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	**No Impact**
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	**No Impact**
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	**No Impact**

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Screened Undertaking Memo dated March 2024, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or	**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

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

2.1.20 Wildfire

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**

Chapter 3 Coordination

March 28, 2024 – Caltrans obtained a special-status species list through the California Natural Diversity Database.

March 28, 2024 – Caltrans obtained an Unofficial Species List from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the IPaC.

March 28, 2024 – Caltrans obtained an Official Species List from the National Marine Fisheries Service Google Earth-based species list generator and emailed the list to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

May 15, 2024 – Caltrans obtained an Official Species List (Project Code: 2024-0093758) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the IPaC.

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

California Department of Transportation

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September 2023

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.

TONY TAVARES
Director

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

List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

Natural Environment Study Minimal Impacts

Screened Undertaking Memo

Visual Impacts Assessment

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

Sunny McBride
District 5 Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
50 South Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93405

Or send your request via email to: sunny.mcbride@dot.ca.gov

Or call: 805-440-9575

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: Highway 101 Rocks Road Tree Removal

General location information: On Highway 101 from post miles R1.28 to 2.01 in San Benito County

District number-county code-route-post mile: 05-SBt-101- PM R1.28/2.01

Project ID number: 0524000159 / EA 05-1S010