

# **El Dorado 2R Rehabilitation Project**

On Interstate 5 in Fresno County, from just south of the El Dorado Avenue  
Overcrossing to just south of the Tuolumne Avenue Overcrossing

06-FRE-5-PM 10.0-21.0

Project ID Number/EA Number 0619000044/06-0Y370

State Clearinghouse Number: 2026060458

## **Initial Study with Negative Declaration**



Prepared by the  
State of California Department of Transportation

**August 2026**



## General Information About This Document

Document prepared by: David Farris, Environmental Scientist

The Initial Study was circulated to the public for 30 days between June 10, 2026, and July 9, 2026. Responses to comments received during this period are included in Appendix B. Elsewhere, language has been added throughout the document to indicate where a change has been made since the circulation of the draft environmental document. Minor editorial changes and clarifications have not been so indicated.

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State Clearinghouse Number: 2026060458  
06-FRE-5-PM 10.0-21.0  
Project ID Number/EA Number 0619000044/06-0Y370

The project will cold plane the existing pavement and replace it with new pavement. The project will also install shoulder rumble strips and upgrade guardrails, drainage systems, dikes, signs, Transportation Management System elements, and pavement striping.

**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

  
John Thomas  
Acting Environmental Office Chief, District 6  
California Department of Transportation  
CEQA Lead Agency

8/12/2026

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, California Public Resources Code

**State Clearinghouse Number:** 2026060458

**District-County-Route-Post Mile:** 06-FRE-5-PM 10.0-21.0

**EA/Project Number:** EA 06-0Y370 and Project ID Number 0619000044

### Project Description

The project will cold plane the existing asphalt concrete pavement and replace it with a leveling course of 0.15 foot of Hot Mix Asphalt, a Rubberized or Geosynthetic Pavement Interlayer, 0.25 foot of Hot Mix Asphalt, and topped with 0.25 foot of Gap-Graded Rubberized Hot Mix Asphalt. Other project work will include installing inside and outside shoulder rumble strips and placing shoulder backing. Any severely distressed underlying Portland Cement (PC) concrete panels will be replaced with Hot Mix Asphalt. Additionally, guardrail systems, existing drainage systems, dikes, roadside signs, and Traffic Management System elements will be upgraded or replaced as needed.

### Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 6. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The project will have no effect on aesthetics, agriculture and forestry resources, air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, public services, recreation, transportation, and tribal cultural resources.

The project will have less than significant effects on air quality, biological resources, and greenhouse gas emissions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Thomas', written over a horizontal line.

John Thomas  
Acting Environmental Office Chief, District 6  
California Department of Transportation

8/12/2026

Date



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# **Chapter 1**      Proposed Project

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## **1.1 Introduction**

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to extend the life of the existing pavement on the northbound and southbound lanes of Interstate 5 within Fresno County, from post mile 10.0 to post mile 21.0. Throughout the project limits, Interstate 5 is a four-lane divided freeway that extends across a relatively flat terrain with primarily horizontal alignment. The land use through these limits is primarily agricultural. Interstate 5 also serves intermodal services, such as truck-to-rail modes, and provides an alternate north-south route for Interstate 5 and State Route 99 travelers.

[The paragraph below has been edited since the draft document was circulated.]

The estimated project cost is \$43 million without escalation. The project is to be funded by the 2026 State Highway Operation and Protection Program and the 28/29 Pavement Rehabilitation Program. It is scheduled for delivery in the 28/29 fiscal year. It has been determined that the project is eligible for federal aid funding.

## **1.2 Purpose and Need**

The purpose and need sections discuss reasons for the project and justify its development.

### **1.2.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this 2R project is to restore the existing four-lane, divided Interstate 5 freeway to a state of good repair so that the roadway remains in a condition that minimizes future maintenance costs. The project will bring culverts up to standard and upgrade inside and outside shoulder rumble strips, drainage systems, signs, and Intelligent Transportation System elements.

### **1.2.2 Need**

Within the project limits, there is a considerable amount of distress on the existing flexible pavement, and rehabilitation is needed to prevent further deterioration of the roadway.

### 1.3 Project Description

The project will cold plane the existing asphalt concrete pavement and replace it with a leveling course of 0.15 foot of Hot Mix Asphalt, a Rubberized or Geosynthetic Pavement Interlayer, 0.25 foot of Hot Mix Asphalt, and topped with 0.25 foot of Gap Graded Rubberized Hot Mix Asphalt. Other project work will include installing inside and outside shoulder rumble strips and placing shoulder backing. Any severely distressed underlying Portland Cement concrete panels will be replaced with Hot Mix Asphalt. Additionally, guardrail systems, existing drainage systems, dikes, roadside signs, and Traffic Management System elements will be upgraded or replaced as needed.

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

**Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map**

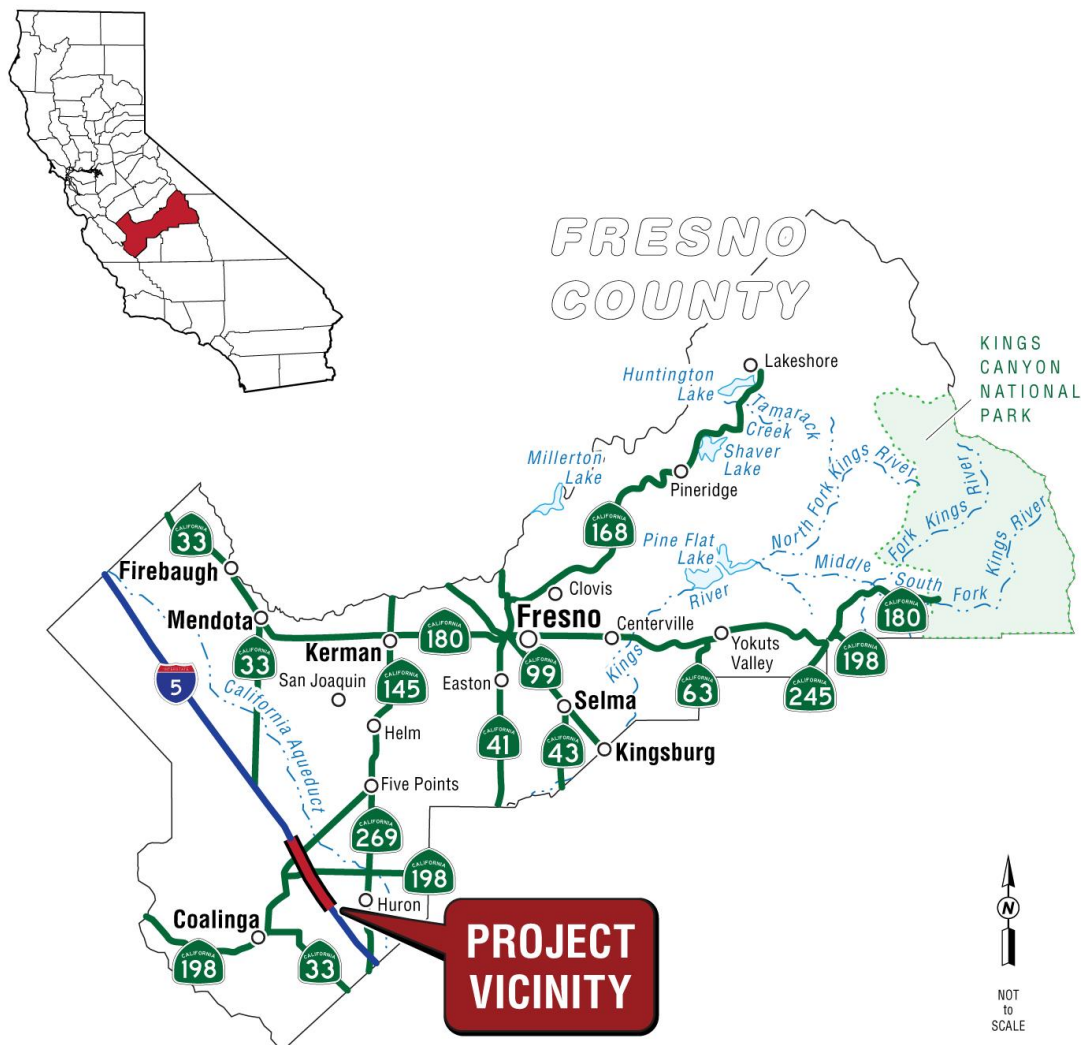


**Figure 1-2 Project Location Map**



## **1.4 Project Alternatives**

The project includes a Build Alternative and a No-Build Alternative.

### **1.4.1 Build Alternative**

#### ***Alternative 1 – Programmable Project Alternative:***

The project will cold plane the existing pavement and replace it with a leveling course of 0.15 foot of Hot Mix Asphalt, a Rubberized or Geosynthetic Pavement Interlayer, 0.25 foot of Hot Mix Asphalt, and be topped with 0.25 foot of Gap Graded Rubberized Hot Mix Asphalt. Other project work will include installing inside and outside shoulder rumble strips and placing shoulder backing. Any severely distressed underlying Portland Cement

concrete panels will be replaced with Hot Mix Asphalt. Additionally, guardrail systems, existing drainage systems, dikes, roadside signs, and Traffic Management System elements will be upgraded or replaced as needed.

This 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 proposed 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**

The No-Build Alternative will leave the existing facility in its current condition, and the roadway will continue to deteriorate. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative does not meet the purpose and need of the project.

[The following heading and paragraph about the preferred alternative have been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

### **1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative**

The Build Alternative was selected as the preferred alternative because it will provide the improvements needed to restore the roadway to a state of good repair. This will minimize maintenance costs and result in smoother pavement surfaces, thereby improving vehicle operations, reducing emissions, extending pavement service life, and reducing energy consumption. The Build Alternative is the only alternative that meets the project's purpose and need.

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

- Caltrans Standard Special Provisions Section 7-1.02K(6)(j)(iii) includes specifications for handling, removing, and disposing of unregulated earth material containing lead. Management of this material exposes workers to health hazards that must be addressed in the project's lead compliance plan before construction starts.
- Caltrans Standard Special Provisions Section 14-11.08 includes specifications for the management of regulated material containing aerially deposited lead. Management of the material includes excavating, loading and unloading containers or trucks, transporting, and disposing of the material.
- Caltrans Standard Special Provisions Section 14-7.03—Discovery of Unanticipated Paleontological Resources: If paleontological resources are discovered at the job site, do not disturb the resources and immediately stop

all work within a 60-foot radius of the discovery, secure the area, and notify the resident engineer. Do not move paleontological resources or take them from the job site.

- Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 13-1: If the project disturbs less than 1 acre of soil, the contractor is required to put together a Water Pollution Control Plan that addresses all potential water quality impacts that may occur when performing construction activities. If the project disturbs 1 acre or more of soil, the following requirements would be required, such as submitting a Notice of Intent to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board at least 30 days before construction starts.
  - A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan is to be prepared and implemented during construction to the satisfaction of the resident engineer.
  - A Notice of Termination shall be submitted to the Regional Water Quality Control Board upon completion of construction and site stabilization. A project would be considered complete when the criteria for final stabilization in the Construction General Permit are met.
- Section 14-0.02 Air Pollution Control: Comply with air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes that apply to work performed under the construction contract.
- Section 14-2.03A: If human remains are encountered during construction on state or private lands, California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 requires that construction or excavation be stopped near the discovery and the county coroner be notified. The coroner would determine if the remains are Native American (California Public Resources Code Section 5097). If the remains are determined to be Native American, the coroner would notify the California Native American Heritage Commission. The California Native American Heritage Commission must then select and notify the person designated as the Most Likely Descendant. The Caltrans District Native American Coordinator would contact the designated Most Likely Descendant to ensure that lines of communication are quickly established. The Most Likely Descendant would provide Caltrans or the private landowner with information on how they want the human remains to be treated.

It is Caltrans' policy to implement the wishes of the Most Likely Descendant if it is feasible to do so. If the location where human remains are found is a temporary easement on private land, the Most Likely Descendant would provide the landowner with a statement of how they want the human remains to be treated. The landowner will decide if he or she wants to comply with the wishes of the Most Likely Descendant and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act regulations. If human remains are found on federal lands, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 protocol will be followed. All construction or archaeological activity will be terminated at the location if human remains are found on federal lands. The

federal agency responsible will be contacted. Cultural staff of that agency will also be notified of the inadvertent discovery of human remains. Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act consultation will be conducted by the appropriate staff at the federal agency with jurisdiction.

- Section 14-11.04 Dust Control: Excavation, transportation, and handling of material containing hazardous waste or contamination must result in no visible dust migration. When clearing, grubbing, and performing earthwork operations in areas containing hazardous waste or contamination, provide a water truck or tank on the job site.
- Section 14-8.02 Noise Control: Pertains to controlling and monitoring noise resulting from work activities. Noise levels are not to exceed 86 decibels at 50 feet from the job site from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

## 1.7 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

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

## 1.8 Permits and Approvals Needed

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

| Agency                         | Permit/Approval       | Status                                                                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Letter of Concurrence | The Letter of Concurrence will be obtained before construction starts. |

# Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

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## 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, and no further discussion is included in this document.

### 2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information in the Scenic Resource Evaluation dated March 12, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

Except as provided in California Public Resources Code Section 21099:

| Question—Would the project:                                                                                                                              | CEQA Significance Determinations<br>for Aesthetics |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?                                                                                                  | No Impact                                          |
| b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway? | No Impact                                          |

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations<br/>for Aesthetics</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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? | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |
| d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |

### 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.

Considering that most work will occur within Caltrans' right-of-way, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations<br/>for Agriculture and Forestry<br/>Resources</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| c) Conflict with existing zoning, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in California Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by California Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))? | <b>No Impact</b>                                                                       |
| d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>No Impact</b>                                                                       |
| 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?                                                                                                  | <b>No Impact</b>                                                                       |

### 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 Memorandum dated May 29, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations<br/>for Air Quality</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?                                                                                                                   | <b>No Impact</b>                                            |
| 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? | <b>No Impact</b>                                            |
| c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?                                                                                                                            | <b>No Impact</b>                                            |
| d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?                                                                                 | <b>No Impact</b>                                            |

### 2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study dated October 24, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries? | <b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>                       |
| 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?                                                                                                                           | <b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>                       |
| 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?                                                                                                                                                     | <b>No Impact</b>                                          |
| 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?                                                                                                                                               | <b>No Impact</b>                                          |
| e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>No Impact</b>                                          |
| 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?                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>No Impact</b>                                          |

### ***Affected Environment***

a) and b) The Biological Study Area includes the project footprint within the Caltrans right-of-way and an additional 50-foot buffer on either side of jurisdictional culverts.

The Biological Study Area for the project is surrounded by non-native grassland/rangeland, agricultural row crops and tree crops, open, dry agricultural areas, and fallowed fields next to Interstate 5. The ground along the right-of-way is a compacted road shoulder and agricultural buffer and is not conducive to most sensitive plants and burrowing animals.

The rural non-native grasslands next to the action area could support certain special-status species; however, no signs were found during preliminary surveys.

Aerial analysis (using Google Earth and ArcGIS) reveals that riparian habitats are not present; however, portions of the action area run next to the Coalinga Canal, which is a human-made cement-lined structure that carries water throughout the Central Valley year-round. Both the Coalinga Canal and the orchards running next to the action area are capable of supporting foraging and nesting habitat for migratory birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

A list of federally endangered species and critical habitats that may be affected by the project was requested on September 8, 2025. In-office research (checking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Information for Planning and Consultation website, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's California Natural Diversity Database, and the California Native Plant Society's Inventory of Rare Plants) and field surveys were conducted by Caltrans biologists for the project.

Drainage, botanical, habitat, and general wildlife surveys were performed in June and July of 2025.

#### ***Special-Status Plant Species***

Potential habitat for Lost Hills crownscale, brittlescale, California jewelflower, Hall's tarplant, recurved larkspur, alkali-sink goldfields, pale-yellow layia, panoche peppergrass, showy golden madia, and San Joaquin woolly-threads was present within parts of the Biological Study Area. The California Native Plant Society ranking of these species is shown below:

- Lost Hills crownscale – 1B.2
- Brittlescale – 1B.2
- California jewelflower—Federally Endangered/State Endangered/1B.1 Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and Elsewhere/Seriously Threatened

- San Joaquin woolly-threads—Federally Endangered/1B.2
- Hall's tarplant—1B.1 Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and Elsewhere/Seriously Threatened
- Recurved Larkspur—1B.2 Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and Elsewhere/Moderately Threatened
- Alkali-sink goldfields—1B.1 Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and Elsewhere/Seriously Threatened
- Pale-yellow Layia—1B.1 Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and Elsewhere/Seriously Threatened
- Panoche peppergrass—1B.2 Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and Elsewhere/Moderately Threatened
- Showy Golden Madia—1B.1 Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and Elsewhere/Seriously Threatened

Even though potential habitat was present, none of the species were seen during surveys.

#### *Special-Status Animal Species*

Potential habitat for the burrowing owl, Crotch's bumblebee, giant kangaroo rat, short-nosed kangaroo rat, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, American badger, western spadefoot toad, and San Joaquin kit fox was present within the Biological Study Area. The federal and state status is shown below:

[The following list has been changed since the draft environmental document.]

- Burrowing owl—California State Official Candidate Species
- Crotch's bumblebee—California State Candidate Endangered Species
- Giant kangaroo rat—California Endangered Species/Federal Endangered Species
- Blunt-nosed leopard lizard—California Endangered Species/Federal Endangered Species
- American badger—California Species of Special Concern
- Western spadefoot toad—California State Species of Special Concern/Proposed Federally Threatened Species.
- San Joaquin kit fox—California Threatened and Federal Endangered Species

While potential habitat is present, no special-status species were seen during surveys.

***Habitats and Natural Communities of Concern***

There is no U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-listed critical habitat within the Biological Study Area.

***Jurisdictional Waterways and Hydrological Resources***

The project footprint crosses seven intermittent drainages and the Coalinga Canal. Of those, the project will only affect two jurisdictional waterways at culvert work locations near post mile 19.59 and post mile 16.54. These locations have been determined to be Waters of the State. The drainage near post mile 19.59 appears to be a natural precipitation-driven, intermittent stream, which only carries water for short periods each year. No wetland-associated plant species were found within the streambed. The second drainage (located at post mile 16.54) appears to be a smaller natural drainage that has been further mechanically channelized to transport agricultural overflow/runoff. Agricultural surface water is present for brief periods during the wet season, but the water table appears to lie well below the ground surface for most of the year. No wetland-associated plant species were found within the drainage.

The maintenance-level culvert work proposed at these two locations is covered by the existing California Department of Fish and Wildlife Routine Maintenance Agreement (NOTIFICATION NUMBER 1600-2018-0137-R4). No other water permits are required.

***Environmental Consequences***

Table 2.1 below provides an evaluation of Federal Endangered Species Act Effect Determinations of species that may have suitable habitat within the project limits.

**Table 2.1 Summary of Federal Endangered Species Act Effect Determinations**

| Species                    | Federal Status                | Effect Determination                        | Rationale                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| San Joaquin kit fox        | Endangered                    | May affect, not likely to adversely affect. | Habitat is present near post miles 19.59, 17.94, and 16.50 but not within the project impact area. No recent records of the San Joaquin kit fox have been documented near the Biological Study Area. |
| Blunt-nosed leopard lizard | Endangered                    | No Effect                                   | No suitable open scrub habitat was identified. Soil was compacted and repeatedly graded, and no blunt-nosed leopard lizards were observed during the 2024 and 2025 surveys.                          |
| Giant kangaroo rat         | Endangered                    | No Effect                                   | No burrow systems were present. Soil within the right-of-way was compacted, and the nearest populations were several miles away in Kettleman Hills.                                                  |
| Western spadefoot          | Federally Proposed Threatened | No Effect                                   | Habitat is present within the Biological Study Area near post miles 19.59, 17.94, and 16.50, but not within the project impact area.                                                                 |
| San Joaquin woolly-threads | Endangered                    | No Effect                                   | Some suitable habitat is present within the Biological Study Area near post mile 19.59 but not within the project impact area.                                                                       |

The following federally listed species were evaluated during biological surveys but considered to have no habitat in the Biological Study Area: the California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*), Fresno kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys nitratoide exilis*), California jewelflower (*Caulanthus californicus*), Tipton kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys nitratoide nitratoide*), California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), Northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*), vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), Delta smelt (*Hvnomesus transoacificus*), and giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*). A no-effect determination was made for these species. No further discussion or evaluation is required.

### *Special-Status Plant Species*

Although the Biological Study Area contains small areas of suitable habitat for special-status plant species, habitat within the project footprint is limited due to current levels of disturbance. Habitat alteration, conversion to agricultural land, soil compaction, and traffic volumes have greatly reduced the likelihood that sensitive plant species will occur within the Biological Study Area. Although marginal habitat exists near post miles 19.59 and 17.91 for Lost Hills crownscale, brittlescale, Hall's tarplant, recurved larkspur, alkali-sink goldfields, pale-yellow layia, panoche peppergrass, and showy golden madia, the project is unlikely to impact special-status plant species for two reasons. First, the project impact area is small. Second, neither Caltrans biologists nor the California Natural Diversity Database has documented any occurrences within

the Biological Study Area. The Federal Endangered Species Act determination for the California jewelflower and the San Joaquin woolly-threads concludes that the project would not affect the species or their habitat.

#### *Special-Status Animal Species*

##### *Burrowing Owl*

Due to the limited size of the project impact area, the nature of the work, and the limited California Natural Diversity Database observations, no impacts are anticipated to the burrowing owl.

##### *Crotch's Bumblebee*

Potential foraging and nesting habitat for the Crotch's bumblebee may be temporarily impacted by work performed directly around culvert inlets/outlets. The project is unlikely to have a direct impact on the Crotch's bumblebee due to the evasive nature of the species and the limited size of the expected project impacts.

##### *Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard*

Because of the limited size and scope of the work and the limited habitat potential within the Biological Study Area, no impacts to the blunt-nosed leopard lizard are anticipated.

The Federal Endangered Species Act determination for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard concludes that the project would not affect the species or its habitat.

##### *Giant Kangaroo Rat*

The project will not impact the giant kangaroo rat.

The Federal Endangered Species Act determination for the giant kangaroo rat is that the project would not affect the species or its habitat.

##### *American Badger*

No permanent impacts to the American badger are anticipated from the planned paving, patchwork, and culvert repairs; therefore, the project is not expected to impact the American badger.

##### *Western Spadefoot Toad*

Maintenance activities at culverts are unlikely to impact the western spadefoot toad. The limited project impact area, combined with the lack of local observations in the California Natural Diversity Database and iNaturalist, as well as the flashy nature of water flow through these areas, makes the presence of the western spadefoot toad unlikely. The project is not expected to negatively impact the species, especially if work is conducted during the dry season. The species is currently a federal candidate species and does not require consultation. If the species is listed before construction starts, federal consultation may be required.

### San Joaquin Kit Fox

Due to the small project impact area and limited scale of the planned paving, patchwork, and culvert repairs, no permanent impacts are expected on the species or its habitat. Because of this and the length of time since San Joaquin kit foxes were last seen, they are also not likely to be adversely affected by the project.

The Federal Endangered Species Act determination for the San Joaquin kit fox concludes that the project will not adversely affect the species or its habitat.

The next area has been added since the draft environmental document.

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

#### *Special-Status Plant Species*

A qualified biologist will conduct botanical surveys the season before construction starts, during the blooming period (February to August). Construction equipment staging areas shall be surveyed and approved by a qualified biologist before use. Staging shall occur in disturbed areas that have been environmentally cleared.

#### *Special-Status Animal Species*

##### Burrowing Owl

[The following section has been updated since the draft environmental document in response to comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.]

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for burrowing owls:

- Worker Environmental Awareness Training: Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- Preconstruction Surveys: A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- Protocol Surveys: A qualified biologist will conduct protocol-level surveys during the nesting season prior to construction for the burrowing owl. These surveys will be conducted in accordance with the California Burrowing Owl Consortium's Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's staff report guidance before project activities begin.

- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.
- *Nighttime Construction Lighting:* For nighttime construction, focused and temporary lighting will be used and directed only toward the active work area. This measure will enhance safety and visibility while minimizing impacts to nocturnal wildlife.
- *No-Disturbance Buffers:* If burrowing owls are on-site, the appropriate no-disturbance buffer will be implemented.

#### *Crotch's Bumblebee*

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the Crotch's bumblebee:

- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist shall conduct preconstruction surveys 30 days before the start of ground disturbance. If Crotch's bumblebees are detected, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be consulted. Construction equipment staging areas shall be surveyed and cleared by a qualified biologist before use. Staging shall occur in disturbed areas. All ingress/egress from work near post mile 19.59 will be on foot, with work vehicles posted on the road above. If Crotch's bumblebees are on-site during preconstruction surveys, the appropriate resource agencies will be consulted.
- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training:* Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.

Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard

[The following has been updated since the draft environmental document in response to comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.]

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard:

- Worker Environmental Awareness Training: Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- Preconstruction Surveys: A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- Protocol-Level Surveys: Where Caltrans has the legal authority to do so (within Caltrans right-of-way, temporary construction easements, etc.), a qualified biologist will conduct a protocol-level surveys for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard will be conducted between post miles 17.4 and 18.2 during the survey season prior to construction. In addition, a qualified biologist would conduct preconstruction surveys within 50 feet of culverts and guardrails where ground-disturbing activities will occur.
- Staging Area Compliance: The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.

Giant Kangaroo Rat

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the giant kangaroo rat:

- Worker Environmental Awareness Training: Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- Preconstruction Surveys: A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities.

These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.

- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.

#### *Short-Nosed Kangaroo Rat*

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the short-nosed kangaroo rat:

- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training:* Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.

#### *American Badger*

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the American badger:

- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training:* Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.

- **Staging Area Compliance:** The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.
- **Burrows:** Burrows in the right-of-way not directly affected by construction will be avoided.

#### **Western Spadefoot Toad**

The following project-level measures will be implemented to reduce potential impacts to the western spadefoot toad:

- **Worker Environmental Awareness Training:** Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- **Preconstruction Surveys:** A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys for the western spadefoot toad no more than 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. Surveys will identify western spadefoot toads or signs of the species within 50 feet of the proposed culvert replacements.
- **Precipitation:** If precipitation is expected during construction, a qualified biologist will identify if additional surveys will be required.
- **Staging Area Compliance:** The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.
- **Burrows:** Burrows in the right-of-way not directly affected by construction will be avoided.

#### **San Joaquin Kit Fox**

The following project-level measures will be implemented to reduce potential impacts to the San Joaquin kit fox:

- **Worker Environmental Awareness Training:** Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief

presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.

- **Preconstruction Surveys:** A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys for the San Joaquin kit fox no more than 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. Surveys will identify San Joaquin kit foxes or signs of the species within 50 feet of the proposed culvert replacements.
- **Staging Area Compliance:** The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.
- **Burrows:** Burrows in the right-of-way not directly affected by construction will be avoided.

**Temblor Legless lizard**

[The following measures have been added in response to comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.]

- **Worker Environmental Awareness Training:** Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that may occur in the project area.

***Compensatory Mitigation***

No compensatory mitigation is proposed.

**2.1.5 Cultural Resources**

Considering the information in the Historical Property Survey Report dated July 9, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project:                                                                                          | CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?      | <b>No Impact</b>                                        |
| b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5? | <b>No Impact</b>                                        |

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                      | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries? | <b>No Impact</b>                                               |

### 2.1.6 Energy

Considering the information in the Energy Analysis Technical Memorandum dated May 14, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

### 2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information in the California Department of Conservation Map Data Viewer webpage accessed in March 2025 and the Paleontological Identification Report dated September 14, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:<br><br>i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |
| ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |
| iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |
| iv) Landslides?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |
| c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on-site or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse? | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |
| 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?                                                                                       | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |
| 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?                                                     | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |
| f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?                                                                                                                                | <b>No Impact</b>                                              |

### 2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Memorandum dated August 13, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

### ***Affected Environment***

a) and b) The project is on Interstate 5 in Fresno County. Interstate 5 passes through somewhat level terrain surrounded by agricultural fields and orchards. The Fresno Council of Governments' Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy guides transportation development and addresses greenhouse gases in the project area. Chapter 3 of the Sustainable Communities Strategy discusses the emissions-reduction

strategy for the region. The Sustainable Communities Strategy strives to reduce air emissions from passenger vehicles and light-duty truck travel by better coordinating expenditures with forecasted development patterns and by helping to meet greenhouse gas targets for the region.

### ***Environmental Consequences***

Greenhouse gas emissions impacts on non-capacity-increasing projects, such as the El Dorado 2R Rehabilitation Project, are considered less than significant under CEQA because there will be no increase in operational emissions.

However, construction equipment, traffic delays, material processing, and delivery may generate short-term greenhouse gas emissions during construction. Carbon dioxide emissions generated from construction equipment were estimated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool Version 1.1. The estimated emissions are 1,333 tons of carbon dioxide per 250 working days.

While some construction greenhouse gas emissions will be unavoidable, implementing standard conditions or Best Management Practices designated to reduce or eliminate emissions as part of the project will reduce impacts to less than significant.

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

The following project-level measures will be implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to construction activities:

- To the extent feasible, limit idling to 5 minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment (with some exceptions).
- To the extent feasible, reduce the need for transport of earthen materials by balancing cut and fill quantities.
- To the extent feasible, supplement existing construction environmental training with information on methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to construction.
- To the extent feasible, reduce construction waste by reusing or recycling construction and demolition waste.
- To the extent feasible, schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours.
- To the extent feasible, design and install long-life pavement structures to minimize life-cycle costs.
- To the extent feasible, encourage improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment by maintaining equipment in proper working

condition, using the right size equipment for the job, and using equipment with new technologies.

### 2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information in the Initial Site Assessment dated September 15, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?                                                                                                                                           | <b>No Impact</b>                                                     |
| 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?                                                                                   | <b>No Impact</b>                                                     |
| c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?                                                                                                                          | <b>No Impact</b>                                                     |
| 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?                                                    | <b>No Impact</b>                                                     |
| e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area? | <b>No Impact</b>                                                     |
| f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?                                                                                                                                                         | <b>No Impact</b>                                                     |
| g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?                                                                                                                                           | <b>No Impact</b>                                                     |

### 2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information in the Water Quality Memorandum dated April 29, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface water or groundwater quality?                                                                                                                                                   | <b>No Impact</b>                                                        |
| b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?                                                                                                             | <b>No Impact</b>                                                        |
| c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:<br><br>(i) result in substantial erosion or siltation on-site or off-site; | <b>No Impact</b>                                                        |
| (ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-site or off-site;                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>No Impact</b>                                                        |
| (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                                                                                                       | <b>No Impact</b>                                                        |
| (iv) impede or redirect flood flows?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>No Impact</b>                                                        |
| d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>No Impact</b>                                                        |
| e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>No Impact</b>                                                        |

### 2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

The project would not physically divide an established community, and it will not conflict with the Fresno County General Plan or any other policy or regulation intended to avoid or mitigate environmental effects. Considering these factors, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project:                                                                                                                                                            | CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Physically divide an established community?                                                                                                                                         | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |
| 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? | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |

### 2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Considering the information in the California Department of Conservation Online Mineral Land Classification Interactive Map accessed in September 2024, the following significance determinations have been made:

| Question—Would the project:                                                                                                                                           | CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?                                | <b>No Impact</b>                                       |
| 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? | <b>No Impact</b>                                       |

### 2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information in the Noise Compliance Study dated March 24, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

| <b>Question—Would the project result in:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 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?                                                       | <b>No Impact</b>                                  |
| b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>No Impact</b>                                  |
| 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? | <b>No Impact</b>                                  |

### 2.1.14 Public Services

The project involves maintenance of existing highway facilities along Interstate 5. Considering the information in the Project Initiation Report dated October 25, 2019, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

| <b>Question:</b>         | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations<br/>for Public Services</b> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Other public facilities? | <b>No Impact</b>                                                |

### 2.1.15 Recreation

The project includes upgrades to existing highway facilities. Because there are no recreational facilities within or near the project area, the following significance determinations have been made:

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations<br/>for Recreation</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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? | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |
| 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?                        | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |

### 2.1.16 Transportation

This project is listed in the 2023 Fresno Council of Governments' Federal Transportation Improvement Program as a pavement resurfacing and/or rehabilitation project.

The project is predominantly a pavement upgrade. The project type will not lead to a measurable and substantial increase in vehicle capacity travel. Considering this information from the draft Project Initiation Report dated October 25, 2019, the following significance determinations have been made:

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                       | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations<br/>for Transportation</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities? | <b>No Impact</b>                                               |

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                               | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?                                                                            | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |
| c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)? | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |
| d) Result in inadequate emergency access?                                                                                                                        | <b>No Impact</b>                                           |

### 2.1.17 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Historical Property Survey Report dated July 9, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in California 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:

| <b>Question:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in California Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>No Impact</b>                                                      |
| 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 California Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of California Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe. | <b>No Impact</b>                                                      |

### 2.1.18 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering the information from the draft Project Initiation Report dated October 25, 2019, 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? | <b>No Impact</b>                                                   |
| b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?                                                                                                                           | <b>No Impact</b>                                                   |
| 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?                                                   | <b>No Impact</b>                                                   |
| 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?                                                                                             | <b>No Impact</b>                                                   |
| e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>No Impact</b>                                                   |

### 2.1.19 Wildfire

Considering the information in the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Fire Hazard Severity Zone Mapping accessed in August 2025, the following significance determinations have been made: If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones:

| <b>Question—Would the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>No Impact</b>                                     |
| 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?                                                        | <b>No Impact</b>                                     |
| 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? | <b>No Impact</b>                                     |
| 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?                                                                            | <b>No Impact</b>                                     |

### 2.1.20 Mandatory Findings of Significance

| <b>Question:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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? | <b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>                                            |

| Question:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | CEQA Significance Determinations<br>for Mandatory Findings of<br>Significance |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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.) | <b>No Impact</b>                                                              |
| c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>No Impact</b>                                                              |

### ***Affected Environment***

a) Potential habitat for the burrowing owl, Crotch’s bumblebee, giant kangaroo rat, short-nosed kangaroo rat, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, American badger, western spadefoot toad, and San Joaquin kit fox was present within the Biological Study Area. The federal and state status is shown below:

[The following has changed since the draft environmental document.]

- Burrowing owl—California State Official Candidate Species
- Crotch’s bumblebee—California State Candidate Endangered Species
- Giant kangaroo rat—California Endangered Species/Federal Endangered Species
- Short-nosed kangaroo rat—California Endangered Species/Federal Endangered Species
- Blunt-nosed leopard lizard—California Endangered Species/Federal Endangered Species
- American badger—California Species of Special Concern
- Western spadefoot toad—California State Species of Special Concern/Proposed Federally Threatened Species
- San Joaquin kit fox—California Threatened and Federal Endangered Species

While potential habitat is present, no special-status species were seen during surveys.

## ***Environmental Consequences***

### ***Special-Status Plant Species***

Although the Biological Study Area contains small areas of suitable habitat for special-status plant species, habitat within the project footprint is limited due to current levels of disturbance. Habitat alteration, conversion to agricultural land, soil compaction, and traffic volumes have greatly reduced the likelihood that sensitive plant species will occur within the Biological Study Area. Although marginal habitat exists near post miles 19.59 and 17.91, the project is unlikely to impact special-status plant species for two reasons. First, the project impact area is small. Second, neither Caltrans biologists nor the California Natural Diversity Database has documented any occurrences within the Biological Study Area. The Federal Endangered Species Act determination for the California jewelflower and the San Joaquin woolly-threads concludes that the project would not affect the species or their habitat.

### ***Special-Status Animal Species***

#### **Burrowing Owls**

Due to the limited size of the project impact area, the nature of the work, and the limited California Natural Diversity Database observations, no impacts are anticipated for burrowing owls.

#### **Crotch's Bumblebee**

Potential foraging and nesting habitat for the Crotch's bumblebee may be temporarily impacted by work performed directly around culvert inlets/outlets. The project is unlikely to have a direct impact on the Crotch's bumblebee due to the evasive nature of the species and the limited size of the expected project impacts.

#### **Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard**

Because of the limited size and scope of the work and the limited habitat potential within the Biological Study Area, no impacts to the blunt-nosed leopard lizard are anticipated.

The Federal Endangered Species Act determination for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard concludes that the project would not affect the species or its habitat.

#### **Giant Kangaroo Rat**

The project would not impact the giant kangaroo rat.

The Federal Endangered Species Act determination for the giant kangaroo rat is that the project would not affect the species or its habitat.

*American Badger*

No permanent impacts to the American badger are anticipated from the planned paving, patchwork, and culvert repairs; therefore, the project is not expected to impact the American badger.

*Western Spadefoot Toad*

Maintenance activities at culverts are unlikely to impact the western spadefoot toad. The limited project impact area, combined with the lack of local records in the California Natural Diversity Database and on iNaturalist, as well as the flashy nature of water flow through the area, makes the presence of the western spadefoot toad unlikely. The project is not expected to negatively impact the species, especially if work is conducted during the dry season. The species is currently a federal candidate species and does not require consultation. If the species is listed before construction starts, federal consultation may be required.

*San Joaquin Kit Fox*

Due to the small project impact area and limited scale of the planned paving, patchwork, and culvert repairs, no permanent impacts are expected to the species or its habitat. Because of this and the length of time since San Joaquin kit foxes were last seen, they are also not likely to be adversely affected by the project.

The Federal Endangered Species Act determination for the San Joaquin kit fox concludes that the project would not adversely affect the species or its habitat.

Because the project will have minimal to no impacts on biological resources, a determination of less than significant impacts was made.

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

The following are standard measures to ensure there are no impacts on special-status species.

***Special-Status Plant Species***

A qualified biologist will conduct botanical surveys the season before construction starts, during the blooming period (February to August). Construction equipment staging areas shall be surveyed and approved by a qualified biologist before use. Staging shall occur in disturbed areas that have been environmentally cleared.

***Special-Status Animal Species***

*Burrowing Owl*

[The following section has been updated since the draft environmental document in response to comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.]

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for burrowing owls:

- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training:* Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- *Protocol Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct protocol-level surveys during the nesting season prior to construction for the burrowing owl. These surveys will be conducted in accordance with the California Burrowing Owl Consortium's Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's staff report guidance before project activities begin.
- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.
- *Nighttime Construction Lighting:* For nighttime construction, focused and temporary lighting will be used and directed only toward the active work area. This measure will enhance safety and visibility while minimizing impacts to nocturnal wildlife.
- *No-Disturbance Buffers:* If burrowing owls are on-site, the appropriate no-disturbance buffer will be implemented.

#### *Crotch's Bumblebee*

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the Crotch's bumblebee:

- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist shall conduct preconstruction surveys 30 days before the start of ground disturbance. If Crotch's bumblebees are detected, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be consulted. Construction equipment staging areas shall be surveyed and cleared by a qualified biologist before use. Staging shall occur in disturbed areas. All ingress/egress from work near post mile 19.59 will be on foot, with work vehicles posted on the road above. If

Crotch's bumblebees are on-site during preconstruction surveys, the appropriate resource agencies will be consulted.

- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training:* Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.

#### *Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard*

[The following section has been updated since the draft environmental document in response to comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.]

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard:

- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training:* Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- *Protocol-Level Surveys:* Where Caltrans has the legal authority to do so (within Caltrans right-of-way, temporary construction easements, etc.), a qualified biologist will conduct protocol-level surveys for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard will be conducted between post miles 17.4 and 18.2 during the survey season prior to construction.

- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.

#### *Short-Nosed Kangaroo Rat*

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the short-nosed kangaroo rat:

- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training:* Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.

#### *American Badger*

The following are the minimization and avoidance measures for the American badger:

- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training:* Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- *Preconstruction Surveys:* A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys within 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. These surveys will assess the presence of special-status species and determine if additional measures are necessary.
- *Staging Area Compliance:* The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of

environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.

- Burrows: Burrows in the right-of-way not directly affected by construction will be avoided.

#### Western Spadefoot Toad

The following project-level measures will be implemented to reduce potential impacts to the western spadefoot toad:

- Worker Environmental Awareness Training: Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.
- Preconstruction Surveys: A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys for the western spadefoot toad no more than 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. Surveys will identify western spadefoot toads or signs of the species within 50 feet of the proposed culvert replacements.
- Precipitation: If precipitation is expected during construction, a qualified biologist will identify if additional surveys will be required.
- Staging Area Compliance: The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.
- Burrows: Burrows in the right-of-way not directly affected by construction will be avoided.

#### San Joaquin Kit Fox

The following project-level measures will be implemented to reduce potential impacts to the San Joaquin kit fox:

- Worker Environmental Awareness Training: Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that could be in the project area.

- *Preconstruction Surveys*: A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys for the San Joaquin kit fox no more than 30 days before the start of ground-disturbing activities. Surveys will identify San Joaquin kit foxes or signs of the species within 50 feet of the proposed culvert replacements.
- *Staging Area Compliance*: The project biologist will approve all staging areas and clearly mark them with stakes or flagging. If any staging or storage occurs outside the project footprint or on private property, proof of environmental compliance with applicable state and federal regulations will be submitted to the project engineer.
- *Burrows*: Burrows in the right-of-way not directly affected by construction will be avoided.

*Temblor Legless lizard*

[The following measures have been added in response to comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife:]

- *Worker Environmental Awareness Training*: Before construction starts, all personnel—including the contractor, subcontractors, and their employees—will attend an environmental education training course conducted by a qualified biologist. The training course will include a brief presentation on the biology, legal protections, and avoidance measures for special-status species that may occur in the project area.

## **Chapter 3**      **Coordination**

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Early and continuing coordination with the general public and public agencies is an essential part of the environmental process. It helps planners determine the necessary scope of environmental documentation and the level of analysis required to identify potential impacts, avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures, as well as related environmental requirements. Agency consultation and public participation for this project have been accomplished through several formal and informal methods, including project development team meetings and interagency coordination meetings.

This chapter summarizes the results of Caltrans' efforts to identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

### **3.1      Coordination with Native American Groups**

#### **3.1.1      California Native American Heritage Commission**

##### ***January 2, 2025***

Caltrans emailed the California Native American Heritage Commission requesting a Sacred Lands File.

##### ***January 23, 2025***

The California Native American Heritage Commission responded to Caltrans' request, stating that the Sacred Lands File search resulted in negative findings.

##### ***Tribes***

Native American consultation was initiated through letters mailed via the U.S. Postal Service and emailed to tribal representatives on October 28, 2024, and January 2, 2025. The District 6 Native American Coordinator provided a consultation list for the area of potential effects that included names of representatives who might be interested in the proposed undertaking or able to provide information regarding Native American resources in the area of potential effects. The correspondence included an invitation to consult under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, California Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1, and Chapter 532 of Statutes 2014 (i.e., Assembly Bill 52). These representatives are:

- Charmaine McDarment, Chairperson, Tule River Indian Tribe of California
- Robert Gomez Jr., Chairman, Tübatulabals of Kern Valley
- Julian Behill, Vice-Chairperson, Chalon Indian Council of Bakersfield
- John Ledger, Dumna Wo-Wah Tribal

- Linda Silva, Chumash Native Nation
- Michelle Heredia-Cordova, Chairperson, Table Mountain Rancheria
- Octavio Escobedo III, Chairman, Tejon Indian Tribe
- Leo Sisco, Chairman, Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi Yokut Tribe
- Kenneth Woodrow, Chairperson, Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band

Follow-up phone calls were made on January 21, 2025. No responses have been received to date. Consultation is considered ongoing for the life of the undertaking.

## **3.2 Coordination with Agencies**

[This section has been updated since the draft environmental document.]

### **3.2.1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

#### ***September 8, 2025***

Caltrans obtained a threatened and endangered species list from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### ***August 4, 2026***

Caltrans obtained a threatened and endangered species list from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### **3.2.2 The California Department of Fish and Wildlife**

#### ***July 6, 2026***

Caltrans received an email from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife requesting a two-week extension on the draft environmental document review period.

#### ***July 9, 2026***

Caltrans responded to the July 6, 2026, email requesting an extension of the draft environmental document comment period. Caltrans was unable to grant the extension due to the project delivery schedule.

# Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

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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  
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September 2025

### TITLE VI/NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

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

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dina El-Tawansy'.

Dina El-Tawansy (Sep 12, 2025 16:52:12 PDT)

DINA A. EL-TAWANSY  
Director

"Improving lives and communities through transportation."

## **Appendix B** Comment Letters and Responses

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[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 June 10, 2026, to July 9, 2026, 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 public notice was published in The Fresno Bee on June 10, 2026. The notice stated that the public review and comment period for the draft environmental document will run from June 10, 2026, through July 9, 2026, and provided the public with an opportunity to request a public hearing. No requests for a public hearing were received during the public review period.

One comment letter was received during the public review period from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The comments are presented below, followed by Caltrans' responses.

## **Comment from California Department of Fish and Wildlife**

July 9, 2026

Judith Lopez, District 6 Environmental Division California Department of Transportation  
2015 East Shields Ave, Suite 100  
Fresno, California 93726  
Judith.shaw@dot.ca.gov

**Subject: El Dorado 2R Rehabilitation Project ID 0619000044 (Project)  
Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration  
State Clearinghouse No. 2026060458**

Dear Judith Lopez:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received an Initial Study with proposed Negative Declaration (ND) from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the above referenced Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife.

Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under Fish and Game Code.

### **CDFW ROLE**

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (Id., § 1802). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting comments as a Responsible Agency under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in “take” as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), related authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code may be required.

**Bird Protection:** CDFW has jurisdiction over actions with the potential to result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections that protect birds, their eggs, or nests include sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession or destruction of any birds -of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird).

**Unlisted Species:** Species of plants and animals need not be officially listed as Endangered, Rare, or Threatened (E, R, or T) on any State or federal list to be considered E, R, or T under CEQA. If a species can be shown to meet the criteria for E, R, or T, as specified in the CEQA Guidelines section 15380, CDFW recommends it be fully considered in the environmental analysis for the Project.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY**

**Proponent:** Caltrans

**Objective:** The Project proposes to cold plane the existing asphalt concrete pavement and replace it with a leveling course of 0.15 foot of hot mix asphalt (HMA), a rubberized or geosynthetic pavement interlayer, 0.25 foot of HMA, and topped with 0.25 foot of rubberized hot mix asphalt gap graded. Other Project work would include installing inside and outside shoulder rumble strips and placing shoulder backing. Any severely distressed underlying Portland cement concrete panels will be replaced with HMA. Additionally, guardrail systems, existing drainage systems, dikes, roadside signs, and Traffic Management System elements will be upgraded or replaced as needed.

**Location:** The proposed Project is located on Interstate 5 in Fresno County between post miles 10.0 and 12.0.

**Timeframe:** Not included.

## **COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist Caltrans in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project’s significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Due to the broad geographic scope of the proposed Project, CDFW’s comments are based on the possibility that Project activities may occur at any location along the highways listed in the Initial Study, within Fresno County. Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be

included to improve a subsequent CEQA document if additional CEQA review is conducted for the Project.

**Special-Status Species:** Given the countywide nature of the Project, there is the potential for the Project to impact a variety of State-listed species. These resources may need to be evaluated and addressed in the CEQA document and prior to Project construction. CDFW has concerns about the following special-status species that the proposed Project may significantly impact, either because they were not identified in the Initial Study or CDFW has additional concerns about Project impacts and avoidance of unauthorized take, including, but not limited to the State and federally endangered and California fully-protected blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia sila*), State threatened Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), State candidate species western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) and Temblor legless lizard *Anniella alexanderae*, in addition to those listed in **Attachment 1**. CDFW advises that the special-status species be addressed with appropriate avoidance and minimization measures. If take could occur as a result of Project implementation, consultation with CDFW is warranted.

CDFW recommends that habitat assessments be conducted in and surrounding all locations for planned work and identify all the potential plant, animal, invertebrate, and fish special-status species and habitats that could be present. For species with the potential to be present, CDFW recommends a robust analysis of potential Project and cumulative impacts for each of those species along with avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures that could be implemented at each discrete Project location to reduce impacts to those species. For many species, subsequent protocol level surveys may be necessary during biological studies conducted in support of the presence or absence of a species. Depending on the survey results, avoidance and minimization measures, permits, and mitigation may be required.

CDFW advises that the special-status species be addressed with appropriate avoidance and minimization measures. If take could occur as a result of Project implementation, consultation with CDFW would also be warranted. The special-status species listed below have the greatest chance to be impacted by the Project, or the Initial Study/ND did not address sufficient proposed avoidance and mitigation measures :

### **Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard (BNLL)**

The Project area is within the known geographic range of BNLL (CDFW 2026) and based on aerial imagery, suitable habitat occurs within and adjacent to the Project area. Suitable BNLL habitat includes areas of grassland and upland scrub that contain requisite habitat elements, such as small mammal burrows. Female BNLL have been documented dispersing over a kilometer before returning back to their home range (Tennant 2018). The Natural Environment Study (NES) in support of the ND characterized the habitat in

the Project area as unsuitable for BNLL based on the density of grassland habitat in the Project area. Although BNLL are known to occupy sparsely vegetated areas of desert scrub and grassland, they also use open space patches between suitable habitats, including disturbed sites and unpaved roads. The density of vegetation in annual grassland and ruderal areas varies based on seasonal conditions and as a result of fire and mowing. Habitat loss resulting from agricultural, urban, and industrial development is the primary threat to BNLL (CSU Stanislaus 2025).

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: BNLL Surveys.** Where suitable habitat is present, within a year prior to the start of Project construction, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for BNLL in accordance with the “Approved Survey Methodology for the Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard” (CDFW 2019). This survey protocol is designed to optimize BNLL detectability. Please note that protocol level surveys must be conducted on multiple dates during late spring, summer, and fall of the same calendar year, and that within these time periods, there are specific date, temperature, and time parameters. As a result, protocol level surveys for BNLL are not synonymous with 30-day “preconstruction surveys” often recommended for other wildlife species.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: BNLL Take Avoidance.** CDFW also recommends that consultation with CDFW occur to discuss how to implement ground-disturbing activities and avoid take if any BNLL detection, known burrows, or egg clutch sites are detected during surveys or during construction of the Project.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: BNLL Take Authorization.** With the passage of Senate Bill No. 147, the incidental take of BNLL may be authorized for certain categories of projects, including maintenance, repair, or improvement to critical infrastructure. If BNLL protocol surveys find that the Project area is occupied, or if Caltrans chooses to assume presence for BNLL, consultation with CDFW is recommended to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA.

### **Swainson’s Hawk (SWHA):**

The Project area is within the known geographic range of SWHA (CDFW 2026). The NES in support of the ND characterizes that SWHA are not expected in the Project area due to limited number of trees. However, based on aerial imagery, potential SWHA nesting trees occur within ½ mile of the Project area. SWHA are known to breed within the Central Valley of California and prefer to nest near and forage in alfalfa, fallow fields, field crops, and grassland habitats with a sufficient source of small mammals (CDFG 1994). Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for SWHA,

potentially significant impacts associated with the Project's activities include reduced reproductive success, reduction in health and vigor of eggs and/or young, and direct mortality of individuals.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 4:** SWHA Surveys. CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for nesting SWHA following the entire survey methodology developed by the SWHA Technical Advisory Committee (SWHA TAC 2000), as part of the biological studies conducted in support of the ND. CDFW also recommends that a qualified biologist conduct follow-up surveys prior to the start of Project construction activities.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 5:** SWHA Avoidance Buffer. If Project-specific activities will take place during the SWHA nesting season (i.e., March 1 through September 15), and active SWHA nests are present, CDFW recommends a minimum ½-mile no-disturbance buffer be delineated and maintained around each nest, regardless of whether it was detected by surveys or observed incidentally. CDFW recommends these buffers remain in place until the breeding season has ended; or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival; and to prevent nest abandonment and other take of SWHA as a result of Project activities.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 6:** SWHA Take Authorization. CDFW also recommends that in the event an active SWHA nest is detected, and a ½-mile no-disturbance buffer is not feasible during the nesting season, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA.

### **Western Burrowing Owl (BUOW)**

The Project site is within the known geographic range of BUOW, and suitable nesting habitat occurs directly adjacent to the Project area. BUOW typically inhabit open grasslands containing small mammal burrows, a requisite habitat feature used by BUOW for nesting and cover. BUOW may also use "man-made burrows" such as pipes or culverts. Based on aerial imagery, the Project area and adjacent areas contain suitable habitat for BUOW, including nesting, overwintering, and foraging. The NES in support of the ND characterized the habitat in the Project area as unsuitable for BUOW based on the density of grassland habitat in the Project area. Although BUOW are known to occupy sparsely vegetated areas in grasslands, they will utilize burrow complexes that have hillside vantages, fencelines, and along levees and unpaved roads.

The California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) approved western burrowing owl (BUOW) as a candidate for potential listing as a protected

species under CESA on October 10, 2024, and published these findings in the California Regulatory Notice Register on October 25, 2024. As such, BUOW is now a candidate under CESA and receives the same legal protection afforded to an endangered or threatened species (Fish & G. Code, §§ 2074.2 & 2085). CDFW recommends that Caltrans update the status of BUOW in the ND.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 7: BUOW Surveys.** To evaluate potential Project impacts to BUOW, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for BUOW following the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (2012 Staff Report; CDFG 2012) within at least 500 meters (1,640 feet) of the Project area, as part of the biological studies in support of the ND. CDFW also recommends that a qualified biologist conduct follow-up surveys prior to the start of Project construction activities.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 8: BUOW Avoidance Buffer.** If a BUOW individual or known BUOW burrow (active or inactive, including overwintering) be detected, either during baseline surveys or construction activities, CDFW recommends that no-disturbance buffers, as outlined in the 2012 Staff Report, be implemented prior to and during any ground-disturbing activities.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 9: BUOW Take Authorization.** If a BUOW individual or known BUOW burrow is detected, and the no-disturbance buffers outlined in the 2012 Staff Report are not feasible, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081 subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA.

### **Temblor Legless Lizard (TLL)**

The Project area is within the known geographic range of TLL (CDFW 2026) and recent unpublished studies have documented TLL within three miles of the Project area. The NES in support of the ND characterized the habitat in the Project area as unsuitable based on the density of grassland habitat in the Project area and proximity of agricultural habitat. Although TLL are known to occupy sparsely vegetated areas of desert scrub, sandy washes, stream terraces with scattered woody vegetation, they also occur in very ephemeral washes, dry stream terraces, and areas with historically present scrub. TLL can also be found under surface objects such as rocks, boards, driftwood, and logs. Potentially significant impacts associated with the Project's features, as part of the biological studies in support of the ND. CDFW also recommends that a qualified biologist conduct follow-up surveys prior to the start of Project construction activities.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 10:** TLL Surveys. CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for TLL and their requisite habitat features, as part of the biological studies in support of the ND. CDFW also recommends that a qualified biologist conduct follow-up surveys prior to the start of Project construction activities.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 11:** TLL Avoidance Buffer. If a TLL is found prior to or during construction, CDFW recommends implementation of a minimum 50-foot no-disturbance buffer to avoid take and potentially significant impacts.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 12:** TLL Take Authorization. In the event that a TLL is detected, consultation with CDFW is warranted to determine if the Project can avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA

### **Editorial Comments and/or Suggestions**

**CNDDDB:** Please note that the CNDDDB is populated by records through voluntary submissions of species detections. As a result, species may be present in locations not depicted in the CNDDDB but where there are suitable habitat features capable of supporting species. A lack of an occurrence record in the CNDDDB does not mean a species is not present. To adequately assess any potential Project-related impacts to biological resources, surveys conducted by a qualified biologist during the appropriate survey period(s) using the appropriate protocol survey methodology are warranted to determine whether any special-status species are present at or near the Project area.

**Federally Listed Species:** CDFW recommends consulting with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding potential impacts to federally listed or proposed species. The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) is more broadly defined than CESA; take under FESA also includes significant habitat modification or degradation that could result in death or injury to a listed species by interfering with essential behavioral patterns such as breeding, foraging, or nesting. Consultation with the USFWS in order to comply with FESA is advised well in advance of any Project activities.

**Nesting birds:** CDFW encourages that Project implementation occur during the bird non-nesting season; however, if ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities must occur during the breeding season (February 1 through September 15), the Project applicant is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Codes as referenced in this letter.

To evaluate Project-related impacts on nesting birds, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct pre-activity surveys for active nests no more than 10 days prior to the start of ground or vegetation disturbance to maximize the probability that nests that could potentially be impacted are detected. CDFW also recommends that surveys cover a sufficient area around the Project area to identify nests and determine their status. A sufficient area means any area potentially affected by the Project. In addition to direct impacts (i.e., nest destruction), noise, vibration, and movement of workers or equipment could also affect nests. Prior to initiation of construction activities, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a survey to establish a behavioral baseline of all identified nests. Once construction begins, CDFW recommends having a qualified biologist continuously monitor nests to detect behavioral changes resulting from the Project. If behavioral changes occur, CDFW recommends halting the work causing that change and consulting with CDFW for additional avoidance and minimization measures.

If continuous monitoring of identified nests by a qualified wildlife biologist is not feasible, CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors. These buffers are advised to remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or on-site parental care for survival. Variance from these no-disturbance buffers is possible when there is compelling biological or ecological reason to do so, such as when the construction area would be concealed from a nest site by topography. CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist counsel and support any variance from these buffers and notify CDFW in advance of implementing a variance.

**Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement:** Project activities that will substantially change the bed, bank, and channel of streams and associated wetlands are subject to CDFW's regulatory authority pursuant Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq. Fish and Game Code section 1602 requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may (a) substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream, or lake; (b) substantially change or use any material from the bed, bank, or channel of any river, stream, or lake; (c) deposit debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream, or lake. "Any river, stream, or lake" includes those that are ephemeral or intermittent as well as those that are perennial. It is important to note that if Project activities require notification, CDFW is required to comply with CEQA in the issuance of a Lake or Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement; therefore, if the CEQA document approved for the Project does not adequately describe the Project and its impacts, a subsequent CEQA analysis may be necessary for LSA Agreement issuance. For additional information on notification requirements, please contact our

staff in the Caltrans Liaison Unit at [RRR.R4@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:RRR.R4@wildlife.ca.gov) and the CDFW website: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/LSA>.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DATA**

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database, which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the CNDDDB. The CNDDDB field survey form can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>.

The completed form can be mailed electronically to the CNDDDB at the following email address: [CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov). The types of information reported to the CNDDDB can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plants-and-Animals>.

## **FILING FEES**

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089).

## **CONCLUSION**

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Initial Study to assist Caltrans in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. Please see the enclosed Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) table (Attachment 2) which corresponds with the recommended mitigation measures in this comment letter. If you have any questions, please contact Mindy Trask, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), at the address provided on this letterhead, by telephone at (559) 939-0282, or by electronic mail at [Mary.Trask@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Mary.Trask@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

For Julie A. Vance Regional Manager

ATTACHMENT 1: Special-Status Species Table ATTACHMENT 2: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

ec: State Clearinghouse

Land Use and Climate Innovation [state.clearinghouse@lci.ca.gov](mailto:state.clearinghouse@lci.ca.gov)

## REFERENCES

California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). 1994. Staff report regarding mitigation for impacts to Swainson's hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*) in the Central Valley of California. Sacramento, California, USA.

. 2012. Staff report on burrowing owl mitigation. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California.  
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CSU Stanislaus. 2025. Endangered Species Recovery Program, Species Profile for blunt-nosed leopard lizard.  
<http://esrp.csustan.edu/speciesprofiles/profile.php?sp=gasi> (accessed 6 July 2026).

Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee. Recommended timing and methodology for Swainson's hawk nesting surveys in California's Central Valley. Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee.

Tennant, E., D. Germano, J. Stewart, H. Butterfield, and M. Westphal. 2018. Investigating blunt-nosed leopard lizard population size, demographics, space use, and future population trends on Department Ecological Reserves. Sacramento, California, USA.

## **Response to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife:**

Thank you for your comments on the El Dorado Rehabilitation Project.

### ***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 1:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 1:** BNLL Surveys. Where suitable habitat is present, within a year prior to the start of Project construction, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for BNLL in accordance with the “Approved Survey Methodology for the Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard” (CDFW 2019). This survey protocol is designed to optimize BNLL detectability. Please note that protocol level surveys must be conducted on multiple dates during late spring, summer, and fall of the same calendar year, and that within these time periods, there are specific date, temperature, and time parameters. As a result, protocol level surveys for BNLL are not synonymous with 30-day “preconstruction surveys” often recommended for other wildlife species.

### ***Caltrans Response:***

#### **Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard Surveys**

Where Caltrans has the legal authority to do so (within Caltrans right-of-way, temporary construction easements, etc.), a qualified biologist would conduct protocol-level surveys for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard will be conducted between post miles 17.4 and 18.2 during the survey season prior to construction. In addition, a qualified biologist would conduct preconstruction surveys within 50 feet of culverts and guardrails where ground-disturbing activities will occur.

### ***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 2:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 2:** BNLL Take Avoidance. CDFW also recommends that consultation with CDFW occur to discuss how to implement ground-disturbing activities and avoid take if any BNLL detection, known burrows, or egg clutch sites are detected during surveys or during construction of the Project.

### ***Caltrans Response:***

#### **Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard Take Avoidance**

If blunt-nosed leopard lizards are identified during surveys, Caltrans will consult with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 3:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 3:** BNLL Take Authorization. With the passage of Senate Bill No. 147, the incidental take of BNLL may be authorized for certain categories of projects, including maintenance, repair, or improvement to critical infrastructure. If BNLL protocol surveys find that the Project area is occupied, or if Caltrans chooses to assume presence for BNLL, consultation with CDFW is recommended to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard Take Authorization**

If surveys identify blunt-nosed leopard lizards and consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife determines that take of the species is unavoidable, an Incidental Take Permit will be obtained.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 4:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 4:** SWHA Surveys. CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for nesting SWHA following the entire survey methodology developed by the SWHA Technical Advisory Committee (SWHA TAC 2000), as part of the biological studies conducted in support of the ND. CDFW also recommends that a qualified biologist conduct follow-up surveys prior to the start of Project construction activities.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 4: Swainson's Hawk Surveys**

Most of the project is located within agricultural areas of western Fresno County. Based on the Summer 2025 surveys, Caltrans identified little to no suitable nesting trees within the project limits. Construction activities, including vehicle and heavy equipment traffic, agricultural operations, and routine highway maintenance, are unlikely to present novel stimuli to migratory birds and raptors. Culvert replacement activities are not anticipated to extend beyond a few working days at each location, and pavement resurfacing is anticipated to take no more than one day at any given location. Based on the survey results documented in the Natural Environment Study-Minimal Impacts and existing site conditions, preconstruction surveys would be appropriate to detect any changes before construction.

Where Caltrans has the legal authority to do so (within Caltrans right-of-way, temporary construction easements, etc.), a qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys for migratory birds and raptors will be conducted within 500 feet of the project action area. Surveys will be conducted by two biologists using a combination of pedestrian and windshield surveys with binoculars. No Swainson's hawks were observed during the initial reconnaissance-level surveys conducted in Summer 2025.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 5:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 5:** SWHA Avoidance Buffer. If Project-specific activities will take place during the SWHA nesting season (i.e., March 1 through September 15), and active SWHA nests are present, CDFW recommends a minimum ½-mile no-disturbance buffer be delineated and maintained around each nest, regardless of whether it was detected by surveys or observed incidentally. CDFW recommends these buffers remain in place until the breeding season has ended; or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival; and to prevent nest abandonment and other take of SWHA as a result of Project activities.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 5: Swainson's Hawk Avoidance Buffer**

If Swainson's hawks are identified during preconstruction migratory bird nesting surveys, Caltrans will implement appropriate avoidance buffers.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 6:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 6:** SWHA Take Authorization. CDFW also recommends that in the event an active SWHA nest is detected, and a ½-mile no-disturbance buffer is not feasible during the nesting season, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 6: Swainson's Hawk Take Authorization**

If protocol-level surveys and consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife determine that take of the species is unavoidable, an Incidental Take Permit will be obtained.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measures 7:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 7: BUOW Surveys.** To evaluate potential Project impacts to BUOW, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for BUOW following the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (2012 Staff Report; CDFG 2012) within at least 500 meters (1,640 feet) of the Project area, as part of the biological studies in support of the ND. CDFW also recommends that a qualified biologist conduct follow-up surveys prior to the start of Project construction activities.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 7: Burrowing Owl Surveys**

A qualified biologist will conduct protocol-level surveys during the nesting season prior to construction for the burrowing owl. The surveys will be done in accordance with the California Burrowing Owl Consortium's Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's staff report guidance before project activities begin. No burrowing owls or signs of the species were observed during reconnaissance-level surveys. If burrowing owls are identified, a Caltrans biologist will notify the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and implement appropriate avoidance measures. Caltrans will also conduct preconstruction surveys immediately before construction.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 8:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 8: BUOW Avoidance Buffer.** If a BUOW individual or known BUOW burrow (active or inactive, including overwintering) be detected, either during baseline surveys or construction activities, CDFW recommends that no-disturbance buffers, as outlined in the 2012 Staff Report, be implemented prior to and during any ground-disturbing activities.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 8: Burrowing Owl Avoidance Buffer**

If burrowing owls are identified during protocol-level or pre-construction surveys, Caltrans will implement appropriate avoidance buffers.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 9:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 9: BUOW Take Authorization.** If a BUOW individual or known BUOW burrow is detected, and the no-

disturbance buffers outlined in the 2012 Staff Report are not feasible, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081 subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 9: Burrowing Owl Take Authorization**

If surveys and consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife determine that take of the species is unavoidable, an Incidental Take Permit will be obtained.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 10:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 10:** TLL Surveys. CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys for TLL and their requisite habitat features, as part of the biological studies in support of the ND. CDFW also recommends that a qualified biologist conduct follow-up surveys prior to the start of Project construction activities.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 10: Temblor Legless Lizard Surveys**

The focused survey will not be conducted for the following reasons: This project is located just outside the known range of *Anniella alexanderae* and *Anniella pulchra* but includes soils that appear to be suitable for these species. After reviewing the project maps, Caltrans determined that very little of the proposed work will overlap with potential Temblor legless lizard microhabitat.

The March 2022 California Department of Fish and Wildlife report, Evaluation of the Petition From the Center for Biological Diversity To List the Temblor Legless Lizard (*Anniella alexanderae*) as Threatened or Endangered Under the California Endangered Species Act, states, "To thrive, this microhabitat specialist requires loose, sandy soils, moderate plant cover, and an upper layer of soil or leaf litter." The report further states, "Because of their burrowing needs, they are highly sensitive to soil compaction and environmental changes." The report also notes that the species is highly sensitive to the loss of native vegetation and to noise.

Nearly all ground-disturbing activities associated with this project will occur next to the roadway in graveled, paved, or compacted areas dominated by ruderal or nonnative vegetation. These areas are subject to frequent disturbance from annual mowing, routine maintenance activities, and

interstate traffic. In addition, these areas will be difficult to rake for presence/absence surveys.

The report also notes that Temblor legless lizards may inhabit areas next to ephemeral streams. The culverts at post miles 16.52, 19.50, and 19.59 are considered jurisdictional because they convey ephemeral streams. However, the work at post mile 16.52 consists of joint repairs within the center median and will not occur at the culvert inlet or outlet, where Temblor legless lizards are more likely to occur. The work at post miles 19.50 and 19.59 consists of workers walking to the existing headwalls and regrouting the joints by hand using buckets and trowels, resulting in minimal impacts.

Qualified biologists will reevaluate the culvert areas before construction to ensure that site conditions have not changed. As a precaution, Caltrans biologist will provide Worker Environmental Awareness Training for this species to all construction personnel.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 11:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 11:** TLL Avoidance Buffer. If a TLL is found prior to or during construction, CDFW recommends implementation of a minimum 50-foot no-disturbance buffer to avoid take and potentially significant impacts.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 11: Temblor Legless Lizard Avoidance Buffer**

If Temblor legless lizards are identified, Caltrans will implement appropriate avoidance buffers.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Mitigation Measure 12:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 12:** TLL Take Authorization. In the event that a TLL is detected, consultation with CDFW is warranted to determine if the Project can avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 12: Temblor Legless Lizard Take Authorization**

If Temblor legless lizards are identified and consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife determines that take of the species is unavoidable, an Incidental Take Permit will be obtained.

***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-California Natural Diversity Database:***

**California Natural Diversity Database**

Please note that the CNDDDB is populated by records through voluntary submissions of species detections. As a result, species may be present in locations not depicted in the CNDDDB but where there are suitable habitat features capable of supporting species. A lack of an occurrence record in the CNDDDB does not mean a species is not present. To adequately assess any potential Project-related impacts to biological resources, surveys conducted by a qualified biologist during the appropriate survey period(s) using the appropriate protocol survey methodology are warranted to determine whether any special-status species are present at or near the Project area.

***Caltrans Response:***

**California Natural Diversity Database**

Caltrans understands that the absence of a California Natural Diversity Database occurrence record does not necessarily indicate that a species is absent. Comment noted.

***California Department of Fish Wildlife Comment-Federally Listed Species***

**Federally Listed Species:** CDFW recommends consulting with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding potential impacts to federally listed or proposed species. The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) is more broadly defined than CESA; take under FESA also includes significant habitat modification or degradation that could result in death or injury to a listed species by interfering with essential behavioral patterns such as breeding, foraging, or nesting. Consultation with the USFWS in order to comply with FESA is advised well in advance of any Project activities.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Federally Listed Species**

Caltrans will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding potential impacts on federally listed or proposed species. A Letter of Concurrence is anticipated for this project.

## ***California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Nesting Birds***

**Nesting birds:** CDFW encourages that Project implementation occur during the bird non-nesting season; however, if ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities must occur during the breeding season (February 1 through September 15), the Project applicant is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Codes as referenced in this letter.

To evaluate Project-related impacts on nesting birds, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct pre-activity surveys for active nests no more than 10 days prior to the start of ground or vegetation disturbance to maximize the probability that nests that could potentially be impacted are detected. CDFW also recommends that surveys cover a sufficient area around the Project area to identify nests and determine their status. A sufficient area means any area potentially affected by the Project. In addition to direct impacts (i.e., nest destruction), noise, vibration, and movement of workers or equipment could also affect nests. Prior to initiation of construction activities, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a survey to establish a behavioral baseline of all identified nests. Once construction begins, CDFW recommends having a qualified biologist continuously monitor nests to detect behavioral changes resulting from the Project. If behavioral changes occur, CDFW recommends halting the work causing that change and consulting with CDFW for additional avoidance and minimization measures.

If continuous monitoring of identified nests by a qualified wildlife biologist is not feasible, CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors. These buffers are advised to remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or on-site parental care for survival. Variance from these no-disturbance buffers is possible when there is compelling biological or ecological reason to do so, such as when the construction area would be concealed from a nest site by topography. CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist counsel and support any variance from these buffers and notify CDFW in advance of implementing a variance.

### ***Caltrans Response:***

#### **Nesting Birds**

Caltrans will implement nesting bird avoidance and minimization measures, including the following:

- If nesting birds are observed on-site, the nest site will be designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area, and the recommended no-work buffer will be established around the nest. A buffer variance may be approved if a qualified biologist determines that the young have fledged or that there are no signs of disturbance.
- A qualified biologist will be available to monitor active nests during construction activities, if required.
- Caltrans will provide Worker Environmental Awareness Training to all personnel associated with the project.

### **California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement**

**Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement:** Project activities that will substantially change the bed, bank, and channel of streams and associated wetlands are subject to CDFW's regulatory authority pursuant Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq. Fish and Game Code section 1602 requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may (a) substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream, or lake; (b) substantially change or use any material from the bed, bank, or channel of any river, stream, or lake; (c) deposit debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream, or lake. "Any river, stream, or lake" includes those that are ephemeral or intermittent as well as those that are perennial. It is important to note that if Project activities require notification, CDFW is required to comply with CEQA in the issuance of a Lake or Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement; therefore, if the CEQA document approved for the Project does not adequately describe the Project and its impacts, a subsequent CEQA analysis may be necessary for LSA Agreement issuance. For additional information on notification requirements, please contact our staff in the Caltrans Liaison Unit at RRR.R4@wildlife.ca.gov and the CDFW website: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/LSA>.

### ***Caltrans Response:***

### **Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement**

Caltrans understands that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is legally required to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act when issuing a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement. Caltrans will utilize the existing Streambed Alteration Agreement Routine Maintenance Agreement Notification Number 1600-2018-0137-R4.

### **California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-ENVIRONMENTAL DATA**

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database, which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the CNDDDB. The CNDDDB field survey form can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>.

The completed form can be mailed electronically to the CNDDDB at the following email address: [CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov). The types of information reported to the CNDDDB can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plants-and-Animals>.

***Caltrans Response:***

**Environmental Data**

Caltrans will update the California Natural Diversity Database when appropriate.

**California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment-FILING FEES**

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089).

***Caltrans Response:***

**Filing Fees**

Caltrans will submit the California Department of Fish and Wildlife environmental review fee when the Notice of Determination is submitted to the State Clearinghouse.

## **List of Technical Studies Bound Separately**

Air Quality Report

Noise Study Report

Water Quality Report

Natural Environment Study—Minimal Impacts

Historical Property Survey Report

- Historic Resource Evaluation Report
- Historic Architectural Survey Report
- Archaeological Survey Report

Hazardous Waste Reports

- Initial Site Assessment
- Preliminary Site Investigation (Geophysical Survey)

Scenic Resource Evaluation/Visual Assessment

Initial Paleontology Study

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

Judith Lopez  
District 6 Environmental Division  
California Department of Transportation  
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100, Fresno, California 93726

Or send your request via email to: [judith.lopez@dot.ca.gov](mailto:judith.lopez@dot.ca.gov)  
Or call: 559-240-5068

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: El Dorado 2R Rehabilitation

General location information: On Interstate 5 in Fresno County

District number-county code-route-post mile: 06-FRE-5-PM 10.0-21.0

Project ID number: 0619000044