

INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

PANOCHÉ ROAD BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT
SAN BENITO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
BRIDGE NUMBER: 43C-0027



LSA

August 2022

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**PANOCHE ROAD BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT
SAN BENITO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
BRIDGE NUMBER: 43C-0027**

Submitted to:

San Benito County Department of Public Works
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Hollister, California 95023

Prepared by:

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Project No. QCE2001



August 2022

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- F: TECHNICAL NOISE MEMORANDUM

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

%g	percentage of acceleration due to gravity
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
AB	Assembly Bill
ac	acre/acres
ACM	asbestos-containing materials
ACOE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
ADL	aerially deposited lead
ADT	average daily traffic
APE	Area of Potential Effects
APN	Assessor's Parcel Number
AQMP	Air Quality Management Plan
ASR	Archaeological Survey Report
BA	Biological Assessment
BMP	Best Management Practice
bridge	Panoche Road Bridge
BSA	Biological Study Area
CAC	Certified Asbestos Consultant
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
California Register	California Register of Historical Resources
Cal/EPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
Cal/OSHA	California Occupational Safety and Health Administration
CalRecycle	California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEC	California Energy Commission
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CH ₄	methane
CHP	California Highway Patrol

CIP	cast-in-place
CMP	corrugated metal pipe
CNDDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO	carbon monoxide
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
CO ₂ e	carbon dioxide equivalent
CGP	General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities (Order No. 2009-0009-DWQ, as amended by 2010-0014-DWG and 2012-0006-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000002)
County	County of San Benito
CRLF	California red-legged frog
CSST	Certified Site Surveillance Technician
cy	cubic yard/yards
DOC	California Department of Conservation
DOSH	Division of Occupational Safety and Health
DTSC	California Department of Toxic Substances Control
dba	A-weighted decibels
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHSZ	Fire Hazard Severity Zone
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FMMP	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
FRAP	Fire and Resources Assessment Program
ft	foot/feet
GHG	greenhouse gas
GSA	groundwater sustainability agency
GWP	Global Warming Potential
HBP	Highway Bridge Program
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan

HFC	hydrofluorocarbon
HPSR	Historical Property Survey Report
HUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
I	Interstate
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation
IS/MND	Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
LBP	lead-based paint
L _{max}	maximum instantaneous sound level
LOS	level of service
LRA	Local Responsibility Area
MASH	Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MBARD	Monterey Bay Air Resources District
mg/cm ²	milligrams per square centimeter
mi	mile/miles
MLD	Most Likely Descendent
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
MT	metric ton/tons
N ₂ O	nitrous oxide
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
National Register	National Register of Historic Places
NCCP	Natural Communities Conservation Plan
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NES	Natural Environmental Study
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
NOI	Notice of Intent
NOT	Notice of Termination
NO _x	nitrogen oxides
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service

OHW	ordinary high water mark
OPR	State Office of Planning and Research
OSHA	federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PBF	physical and biological feature
PFCs	perfluorocarbons
PGA	peak ground acceleration
PM _{2.5}	particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter
PM ₁₀	particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter
ppm	parts per million
PRC	Public Resources Code
PRD	Permit Registration Documents
proposed project	Panoche Road over Tres Pinos Creek Bridge Replacement Project
RMP	Risk Management Plan
RoadMod	Road Construction Emissions Model
ROG	reactive organic gases
RSP	rock slope protection
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SB	Senate Bill
SCCC steelhead	South Central California Coast steelhead
SF ₆	sulfur hexafluoride
SGMA	Sustainable Groundwater Management Act
SMARTS	Stormwater Multiple Application and Report Tracking System
SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
SR	State Route
SRA	State Responsibility Areas
SVP	Society of Vertebrate Paleontology
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TAC	toxic air contaminant
TMP	Transportation Management Plan
US	United States Route

USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
WDID	Waste Discharge Identification Number
WPCP	Water Pollution Control Program
WSEL	water surface elevation
XPI	Extended Phase I

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1.0 PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	Panoche Road over Tres Pinos Creek Bridge Replacement Project
Caltrans Bridge No.:	43C0027
County Project No.:	698
Project Location:	The project is located in an unincorporated portion of San Benito County along Panoche Road, approximately 25 miles (mi) west of Interstate (I) 5 and approximately 9.5 mi east of State Route (SR) 25.
Name of Property Owner:	County of San Benito (County)
Name of Applicant:	San Benito County Resource Management Agency, Public Works Division
Assessor's Parcel Number(s):	0271500030
Acreage of Property:	The completed project would cover approximately 3 acres (ac).
General Plan Designations:	Rangeland
Zoning:	Agricultural Rangeland
Lead Agency:	San Benito County Resource Management Agency, Public Works Division
Prepared By:	LSA 1504 Eureka Road, Suite 310 Roseville, California 95661
Date Prepared:	August 2022
Contact Person:	Steve Loupe, Interim RMA Director
Phone Number:	(831) 902-2271

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2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The San Benito County Department of Public Works proposes to replace the existing two-lane Panoche Road Bridge (bridge), Bridge No. 43C-0027, over the Tres Pinos Creek in San Benito County, California (proposed project). The new bridge would be constructed south of the existing bridge. The roadway approach from the east would be realigned to allow construction of the new bridge in one stage while maintaining traffic flow on the existing bridge during construction. Additionally, shifting the alignment of the eastern roadway approach would improve roadway geometry by eliminating the slight “S” curve over the existing bridge. Upon completion of the new bridge, the existing bridge would be demolished. The proposed project would also widen the roadway approaches on the east and west ends of the bridge to conform to the new bridge width and profile. After construction, both the bridge and roadway approaches would contain two 12-foot (ft) lanes (one in each direction) and two 4 ft shoulders, and would meet current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) minimum design speed standards.

The bridge identification information is listed below:

Dist.-County-Route-PM: 05-SBT-0-CR
Fed. Proj. No.: BRLS-5943(056)
Caltrans Bridge No. 43C0027, County Project No. 698
Latitude: 36° 65' 46"
Longitude: 121° 06' 69"

2.1.1 Existing Facility

The project area is in unincorporated San Benito County, approximately 13 mi east of Paicines and 11 mi west of the intersection of Little Panoche Road and Panoche Road (see **Figure 2-1: Regional Location**). The bridge runs generally in an east-west direction, with Tres Pinos Creek flowing under the bridge in a north-south direction (see **Figure 2-2: Project Vicinity**). The surrounding land uses are primarily agricultural.

The project site is located on Panoche Road, across Tres Pinos Creek. Panoche Road runs roughly east to west, connecting SR-25 and I-5 within San Benito County, California. The project is located approximately 25 miles (mi) west of Interstate (I) 5 and approximately 9.5 mi east of State Route (SR) 25. East of the project site, Panoche Road is degraded and hinders drivers from using the road as a preferred alternate route to I-5.

The Panoche Road Bridge was originally constructed in 1960. The existing bridge is 87 ft long and 16 ft wide with two 8 ft travel lanes (one in each direction) and no shoulders. The existing bridge structure has two piers located within the channel. According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) California Road System Map, Panoche Road is classified as a Major Collector (Rural Roadway). The average daily traffic (ADT) for Panoche Road in 2010 was 800 cars per day, and by 2029, the ADT is projected to be 1,024 cars per day.

There is an unnamed tributary that runs east to west and discharges into Tres Pinos Creek along its east bank on the south side of the existing bridge. Under existing conditions, the channel of the unnamed tributary runs between the southern edge of Panoche Road and the toe of a steep hillside adjacent to the road, past the existing east bridge abutment and into Tres Pinos Creek.

2.2 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

2.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this project is to:

- Provide for wider travel lanes and shoulders that comply with current AASHTO bridge and road design standards;
- Provide a replacement structure that meets current seismic design standards;
- Increase the bridge clearance over Tres Pinos Creek, both vertically and horizontally, to improve flood flows;
- Provide long-term safe vehicular access across Tres Pinos Creek; and
- Comply with County, Caltrans, and AASHTO design standards for design and construction of the approach roadways and replacement bridge.

2.2.2 Need

The existing bridge is 16 ft wide, has no shoulders, and does not meet AASHTO minimum lane and shoulder width standards for Rural Roadways with a future ADT between 400 and 2,000 cars per day. In addition, the existing roadway approaches have no shoulders, which does not meet the AASHTO 3 ft minimum shoulder width standard for a Local Road.

2.2.3 Funding

Funding for the proposed project shall come from the federal Highway Bridge Program (HBP) and local matching funds. It is anticipated that the local match shall come from the San Benito County Department of Public Works.

2.3 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

The environmental documentation for the proposed project evaluates one Build Alternative. A No Project/No Build Alternative is also evaluated as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

2.3.1 No Build Alternative: No Action is Taken

In the No Build Alternative, no improvements to the Panoche Road Bridge would be implemented. The bridge would remain functionally obsolete in that neither the bridge nor the roadway approaches would meet AASHTO lane width and/or shoulder width standards, the bridge would continue to be seismically vulnerable, and it would remain in noncompliance with code-mandated flood-flow requirements.

2.3.2 Build Alternative

As a part of the Build Alternative, the existing single-lane 87 ft long and 16 ft wide bridge would be demolished and replaced with a 132 ft long and 35 ft wide cast-in-place (CIP) pre-stressed concrete slab bridge. The replacement bridge would have two equal (66 ft) long spans, two 12 ft travel lanes, and two 4 ft wide paved shoulders along each side of the travel lanes (see **Figure 2-3: Project Design**). The replacement bridge would be constructed south of the existing bridge, and the existing bridge would be demolished after the new bridge construction has been completed.

The Build Alternative would reduce the current number of piers in the channel from two to one. Pier 2 would be built within the creek channel. Excavation would require an area 47 ft long by 13 ft wide by 6 ft deep. Abutment 1 (west) would require an excavation area that is 60 ft long by 11 ft wide by up to 10 ft deep. Abutment 3 (east) would require an excavation area 55 ft long by 11 ft wide by up to 12 ft deep. A wingwall would be constructed at the southeast corner of the bridge. Rock slope protection (RSP) would be placed on both sides of the creek banks to protect the new abutments from hydraulic scour. The RSP blanket would continue upstream on the east bank to mitigate for increased channel velocities that would result from the larger hydraulic opening and greater channel conveyance capacity of the new two-span bridge. The RSP blanket would be placed on the existing bank surface, without excavating into the bank, in order to avoid impacting the natural spring located northeast of the existing bridge.

The proposed bridge deck would be approximately 5 to 6 ft higher than the existing bridge deck, allowing for drift in the creek channel. Furthermore, the proposed bridge would provide for over 3.5 ft of freeboard, which is the minimum amount of clearance between the bottom of the girders and the design highwater. The Build Alternative would utilize a permanent shorter-length alternative crash cushion system at the northwest corner of the bridge to maintain access to a gated driveway located adjacent to the project boundary.

2.3.2.1 Roadway Approaches and Driveways

As part of the Build Alternative, the east and west roadway approaches would be modified to conform to the width and location of the new bridge and to reduce the S-curve existing along Panoche Road. The modifications would include realigning the eastern roadway approach approximately 35 ft south. At build-out, the modified eastern roadway approach would become the eastern roadway approach for the new Panoche Road Bridge. Work on the roadway approaches would total approximately 550 ft.

The driveway at the nearest residence east of the bridge along Panoche Road would be shifted west by up to 40 ft in order to improve truck turning access.

2.3.2.2 Utility Rerouting

Existing overhead electric and telephone lines and a gas line are located within the project area. The existing overhead telephone line crosses Tres Pinos Creek east of the existing bridge and then transitions to underground just west of the existing bridge. The existing electric and gas lines run perpendicular to the southeast border of the project site and are outside the eastern limits of the project site. At this time, no temporary or permanent utility relocations would be required.

However, if any of the existing utilities are in conflict with the new bridge, they would be relocated and the overhead line shifted to new/relocated poles.

2.3.2.3 Construction Details

Construction is expected to occur between June 2025 and October 2026. Construction would occur year-round and is anticipated to be 13 months in duration. Construction within the channel of the river is anticipated to take a total of approximately 2.5 months. On average, approximately 5–10 workers would be on the construction site per day.

2.3.2.4 Traffic Rerouting

The Build Alternative would maintain traffic on the existing bridge for the duration of project construction. During construction of the proposed bridge one lane would remain open to vehicular traffic on the existing bridge. Upon completion of the proposed project the existing bridge would be demolished completely and the new bridge would facilitate two lanes of traffic. Throughout the duration of construction the Build Alternative would also maintain access to driveways off of Panoche Road.

2.3.2.5 Construction Access, Creek Access and Staging

Most years, the creek channel has some water flowing year-round fed by nearby underground springs. During the low- or no-flow months, access into the channel is expected to be readily available from both banks along the proposed new alignment. Access on the east side of the creek is expected to be more difficult due to the steepness of the adjacent hillside.

Construction of bridge foundation elements and placement of RSP may require some temporary diversion of channel flows. Temporary access easements from adjacent properties would be needed for a contractor staging area, materials storage, and construction operations. Construction materials and equipment would be staged in two locations within the project limits. One location is located south of Panoche Road and east of the existing and proposed bridge, and the other location is located north of Panoche Road on the west side of Tres Pinos Creek. Staging areas are shown on **Figure 2-3: Project Design**.

Panoche Road is shifting to the south (a maximum of 35 ft) and would potentially obstruct the flow of the unnamed tributary that drains into the east bank of Tres Pinos Creek. In order to avoid obstructing flow, the Build Alternative would grade a new channel of the unnamed tributary along the south edge of the realigned road. The new channel would be bound between the wing wall of the bridge and a retaining wall at the southeast corner of the bridge.

2.3.2.6 Retaining Wall

A 110 ft wide by 120 ft long retaining wall would be installed against the hillside east of Tres Pinos Creek and south of Panoche Road to minimize excavation into the hillside and to protect from erosion and scour from Tres Pinos Creek. The retaining wall would run parallel to the new bridge. The retaining wall would retain a new cut slope in the adjacent hillside to accommodate the realignment of the unnamed tributary. The maximum depth of excavation for the retaining wall is 22 ft.

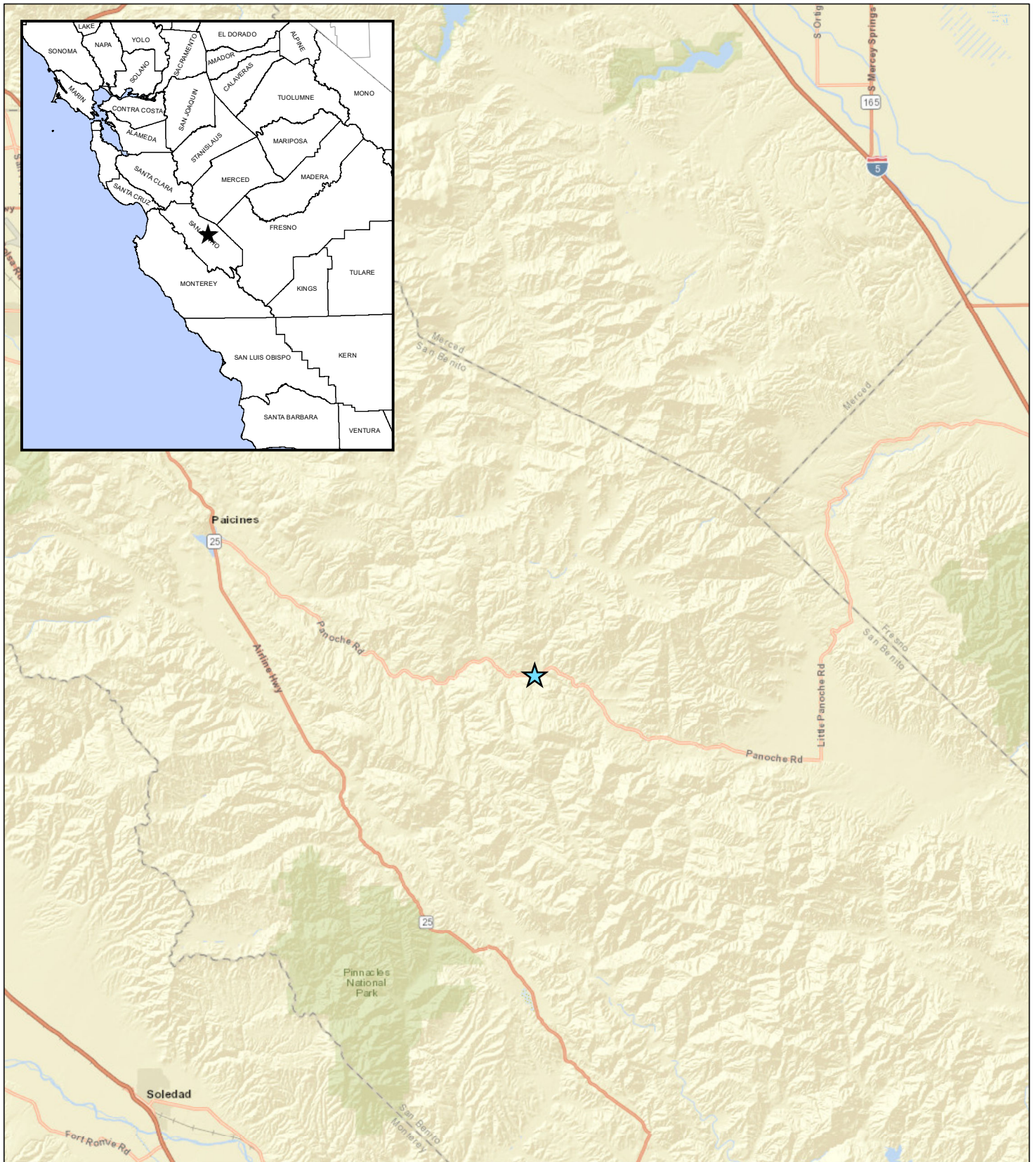
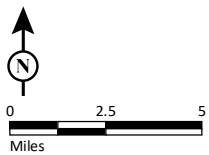


FIGURE 2-1



LEGEND

★ Project Location



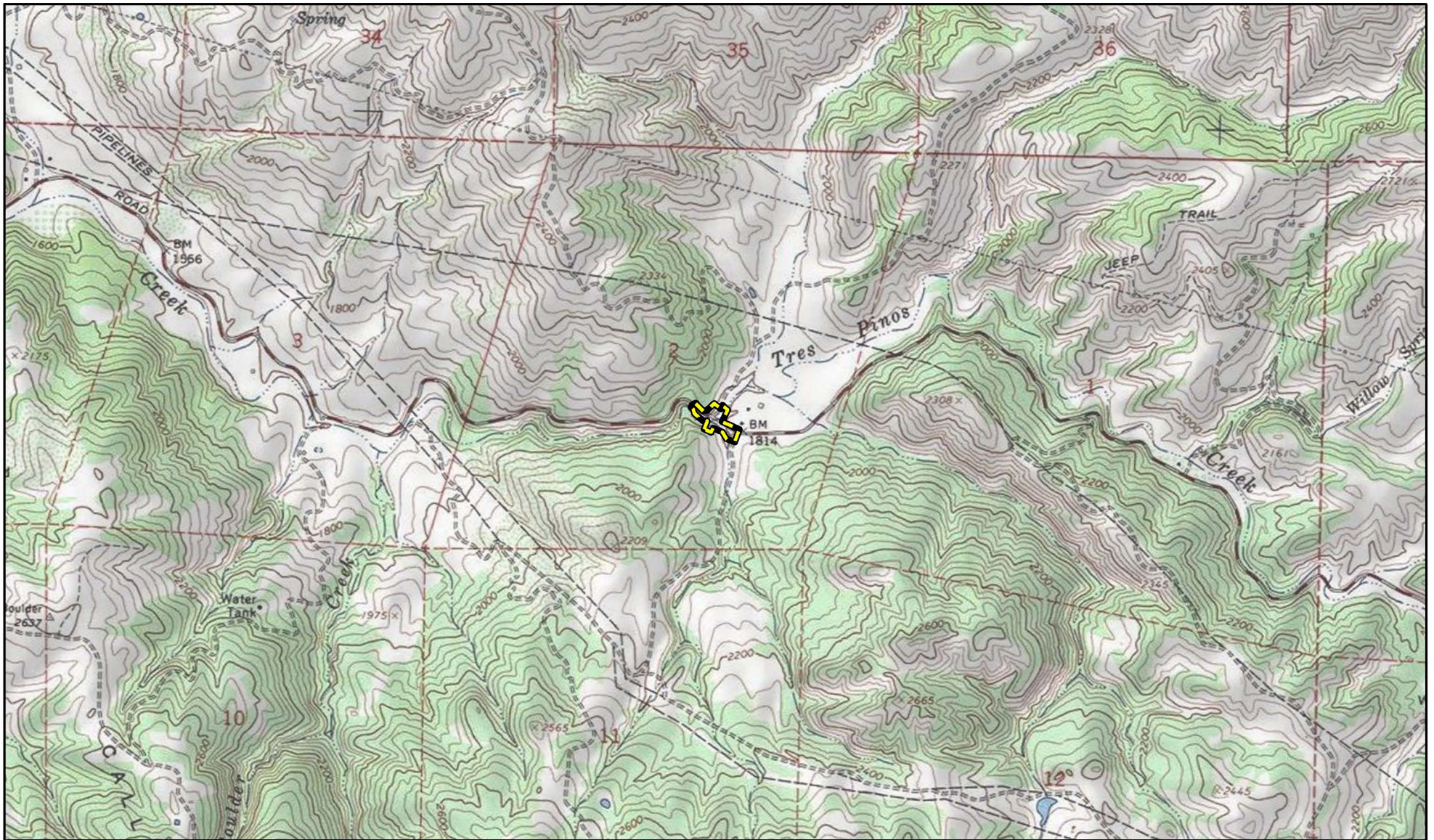
*Panoche Road Bridge (No. 43C0027)
Replacement at Tres Pinos Creek
San Benito County, California; Caltrans District 5
Federal Project No. BRLO-5943(056)*

Regional Location

SOURCE: ESRI World Street Map (05/2020)

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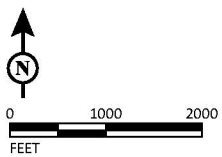
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LEGEND

 Study Area - (3.66 ac)

FIGURE 2-2



Panoche Road Bridge (No. 43C0027)
 Replacement at Tres Pinos Creek
 San Benito County, California; Caltrans District 5
 Federal Project No. BRLO-5943(056)
 Project Vicinity

SOURCE: USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle Panoche Pass, CA (1968, 1971 ed.)

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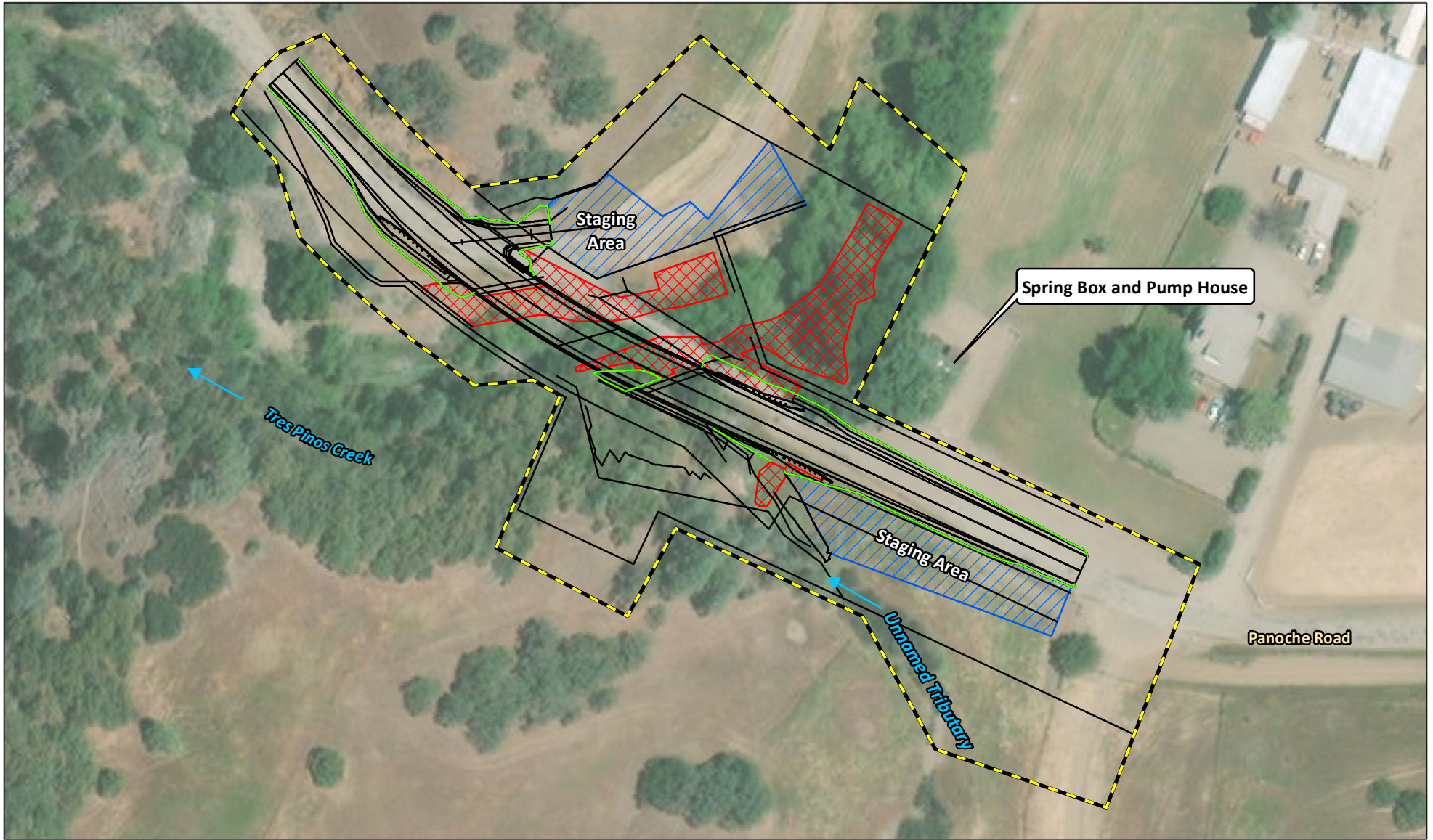





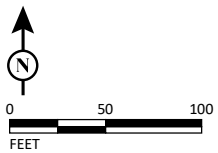


FIGURE 2-3

LEGEND

-  Study Area - (3.66 ac)
-  Project Design
-  Rock Slope Protection
-  Staging Areas
-  Cut and Fill



SOURCE: Basemap - ESRI World Imagery (10/2018); Design - Quincy Engineering (12/2020)
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*Panoche Road Bridge (No. 43C0027)
 Replacement at Tres Pinos Creek
 San Benito County, California; Caltrans District 5
 Federal Project No. BRLO-5943(056)
 Project Design*

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3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED AND DETERMINATION

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a “Potentially Significant Impact” as indicated by the checklist in Chapter 4.0.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Forestry Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Quality |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gas Emissions | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hydrology/Water Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribal Cultural Resources |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wildfire | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance |

Some proposed applications that are not exempt from CEQA review may have little or no potential for adverse environmental impacts related to most of the topics in the Environmental Checklist and/or potential impacts may involve only a few limited subject areas. These types of projects are generally minor in scope, located in a nonsensitive environment, and are easily identifiable and without public controversy. For the environmental issue areas where there is no potential for significant environmental impact (and not checked above), the following findings can be made using the project description, environmental setting, or other information as supporting evidence.

- Check here if this finding is not applicable.

3.1 FINDING

For the above-referenced topics that are not checked off, there is no potential for significant environmental impact to occur from either construction, operation, or maintenance of the proposed project, and no further discussion in the Environmental Checklist is necessary.

3.2 EVIDENCE

3.2.1 Land Use and Planning

The project site is located on a prescriptive easement across privately owned parcels that are designated as Rangeland per the San Benito County General Plan Land Use Map. Additional right-of-way acquisition may be required to accommodate the new bridge and realignment of Panoche Road. If so, these areas would also be added to the prescriptive easement owned/maintained by the County. Overall, such transportation projects are permitted per the San Benito County General Plan Land Use Plan. The proposed project would not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with local planning documents, policy, or regulations. Overall, the proposed project is consistent with all applicable land use plans, policies, or regulations adopted, and no conflict/impacts would occur.

3.2.2 Mineral Resources

There are no known mineral resources within or in the vicinity of the Project site. According to the San Benito County WebGIS Viewer, the nearest mineral resource area is approximately 17.5 miles northwest of the project site (County of San Benito n.d.). The proposed Project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource of value to the region or residents of the State, and no impact related to the loss of mineral resources would occur.

3.2.3 Population and Housing

The proposed project would involve the replacement of the existing 87 ft long and 16 ft wide bridge structure with a 132 ft long and 35 ft wide structure that would be approximately 5 to 6 ft higher than the existing bridge deck to allow for adequate freeboard. The proposed project does not include the construction of new housing, nor would it cause an increase in the housing supply indirectly through increased demand for housing or the extension of roads or other infrastructure. Additionally, because the proposed project is a bridge replacement project, it would not cause an increase in the County's population and would not result in direct or indirect growth-inducing effects. Furthermore, the proposed project would not displace existing housing or people because it is located in a public road easement and no habitable structures exist within the project site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not have an impact on population growth and housing.

3.2.4 Public Services

Public services, including police and fire protection, are currently provided to the project area. Fire service for the proposed project and surrounding area is currently and would continue to be provided by the San Benito County Fire Department and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). Law enforcement services for the proposed project and surrounding area are currently and would continue to be provided by the San Benito County Sheriff's Department. The proposed project would involve replacement of an existing bridge and completion of other related roadway improvements. The proposed project would not result in the development of additional residential uses or cause an increase in population that would require the provision of new fire or police facilities, schools, parks, or other public facilities, or result in the need for physically altered facilities. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not have an impact on public services.

3.2.5 Recreation

As discussed above, the proposed project would involve the replacement of the existing 87 ft long and 16 ft wide structure with a 132 ft long and 35 ft wide structure that would be approximately 5 to 6 ft higher than the existing bridge deck to allow for adequate freeboard. The proposed project would not result in an increase in population that would result in increased use of existing neighborhood or regional parks such that substantial physical deterioration would occur, nor would it include the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not have an impact on parks and recreation.

3.3 DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION shall be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there shall not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION shall be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a “Potentially Significant Impact” or “Potentially Significant Unless Mitigated” impact on the environment, but at least one effect (1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and (2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Project Planner

Date

Planning Manager

Date

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4.0 CEQA ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except “No Impact” answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a Lead Agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A “No Impact” answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A “No Impact” answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project shall not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
3. Once the Lead Agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. “Potentially Significant Impact” is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more “Potentially Significant Impact” entries when the determination is made, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required.
4. “Negative Declaration: Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated” applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from “Potentially Significant Impact” to a “Less than Significant Impact.” The Lead Agency must describe the mitigation measures and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from earlier analyses may be cross-referenced, as discussed below).
5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, Program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or Negative Declaration (Section 15063 [c][3][D]). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
 - a. **Earlier Analysis Used:** Identify and state where they are available for review.
 - b. **Impacts Adequately Addressed:** Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
 - c. **Mitigation Measures:** For effects that are “Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated,” describe the mitigation measures that were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

6. Lead Agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
7. **Supporting Information Sources.** A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
8. This is only a suggested form, and Lead Agencies are free to use different formats; however, Lead Agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
9. The explanation of each issue should identify:
 - a. The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
 - b. The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significant.

4.1 AESTHETICS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:				
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

A scenic vista is defined as a viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the general public. Aesthetic components of a scenic vista generally include: (1) scenic quality, (2) sensitivity level, and (3) view access. The project area is rural and is primarily characterized by open space, the Tres Pinos Creek channel and its associated riparian vegetation, and a single residential unit and accessory buildings. Development in the project vicinity includes local roads, residential uses, and agriculture-related developments such as barns, water tanks, and corrals. The proposed bridge replacement and roadway improvement project would be consistent with the land uses within the project corridor and nearby vicinity.

The project site is only visible from Panoche Road, and there are no other surrounding public viewpoints. Although the nearby open space, which consists of hilly oak woodland habitat, is visible from the project site, the proposed bridge replacement and roadway improvements would not alter the existing views. Furthermore, the proposed project and adjacent land have no federal or locally designated scenic resources and are not located within a Scenic Corridor (County of San Benito 2015b), and Panoche Road is not designated as a Scenic Highway or a Scenic Resource. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

b. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The Caltrans Landscape Architecture Program administers the Scenic Highway Program contained in Streets and Highways Code Sections 260–263. There are three highways within San Benito County that are eligible for State Scenic Highway designation: SR-146, SR-25, and SR-156. Additionally, United States Route (US) 101, SR-129, and SR-146 are listed as County-designated scenic highways (County of San Benito 2015b). The project site is not in the vicinity of or visible from any of the above-listed highways. The nearest highway eligible for State Scenic Highway designation is SR-25, which is approximately 9 mi west of the project site. In addition, according to the San Benito County General Plan, there are no designated scenic corridors in the project vicinity. There are no historic buildings or rock outcroppings on the project site or in the surrounding vicinity. Furthermore, implementation of the proposed project would not result in the removal or damage of any scenic resources. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not damage scenic resources within a State or locally designated scenic roadway. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

c. In non-urbanized area, 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?

San Benito County has identified agricultural areas, such as row crops, pastures, orchards, vineyards, ranches, barns and farms with cattle and various livestock, the Gabilan Mountain Range, and the Diablo Mountain Range, as the most important scenic resources (vistas) in the county (EMC Planning Group Inc. 2015). There are no County-designated scenic resources (vistas) within the boundaries of the proposed project. The project site is in a non-urbanized area in a rural portion of San Benito County along Panoche Road crossing over Tres Pinos Creek. The visual character of the project site is primarily defined by open space consisting of hilly oak woodland habitat, the Tres Pinos Creek channel and its associated riparian vegetation, and the rural residential unit and accessory buildings on Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 0271500030.

During project construction activities, the visual character of the area would change with the introduction of construction equipment, construction materials, construction equipment staging areas, construction workers, and clearing of vegetation in the Tres Pinos Creek channel. This change in visual character would be visible to residents living at the residential unit to the northeast of the project site and motorists approaching the project site from the east and west on Panoche Road; however, these activities would be confined to the creek overcrossing and would not degrade the visual characteristics of the open space surrounding the site. Additionally, the change of visual

character at the project site during construction would be temporary in nature and would be returned to preconstruction conditions after completion of the proposed project.

As detailed in the *Visual Impact Assessment* completed by LSA, which is provided in Appendix A, the existing three-span bridge along Panoche Road is 87 ft long and 16 ft wide, with nonstandard bridge barriers between 27 and 32 inches in height consisting of a combination of side-mounted metal beam guard railing and steel grating. The new two-span bridge would be approximately 132 ft long with two equal spans and 35 ft wide (two 12 ft wide lanes with adjacent 4 ft wide paved shoulders on each side) and would include solid concrete Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH) approved Caltrans Standard Type 836 barriers approximately 36 inches in height. A shorter-length alternative crash cushion system would be installed at the northwest corner of the new bridge to maintain access to a residential gated driveway adjacent to the project boundary. The new bridge type is a CIP pre-stressed concrete slab with a structure depth of 2 ft. A retaining wall would be constructed against the hillside east of the creek and south of the roadway to minimize excavation into the hillside. RSP would be placed on the banks of Tres Pinos Creek to protect the abutment from hydraulic scour. The RSP blanket would continue upstream on the east bank to mitigate for increased channel velocities (in the vicinity of the natural spring) that result from removing the existing bridge and widening the channel with the longer bridge (LSA 2021).

Although the proposed project would result in some visual differences compared to the existing bridge and roadway, the visual character of the site would remain similar to existing conditions because there would be no change to the existing land use. Additionally, implementation of the proposed project would be confined to the creek overcrossing and roadway approaches and would not degrade the visual characteristics of the open space surrounding the site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not adversely affect a scenic vista, nor would it substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. As such, impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

d. Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The proposed project site is located in a rural area of San Benito County with minimal existing sources of light and glare. Existing sources of light and glare include headlights/taillights of vehicles traveling along Panoche Road and the adjacent single-family residential unit and ancillary structures located on APN 0271500030. No new permanent source(s) of light or glare would be introduced as part of the proposed project. All temporary construction-related sources of light or glare (i.e., construction equipment headlights/safety lights) would cease following completion of construction. Replacement of the bridge would not generate any additional traffic that could increase light or glare in the rural area. The proposed project would therefore not create a new

source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area. As such, impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

4.2 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 (DOC) 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 CAL FIRE regarding the State’s inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment Project, as well as the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. Would the project 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?

The DOC Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) reports biannually on the conversion of farmland and grazing land, and compiles important farmland maps and data for each county within the State. These maps categorize land use into the following nine categories to describe farmland and nonfarmland:

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Unique Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance

- Grazing Land
- Urban and Built Up Land
- Other Land
- Water
- Area Not Mapped

Per the CEQA Guidelines, impacts to the following Important Farmland categories must be evaluated:

- **Prime Farmland** is irrigated land with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields.
- **Unique Farmland** is land with lesser-quality soils used for the production of the State's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance** is irrigated land similar to Prime Farmland that has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of agricultural crops. This land has minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture than Prime Farmland.
- **Farmland of Local Importance** is land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.

The proposed project site and surrounding areas are not designated as an Important Farmland category (i.e., Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance) according to the FMMP. The project site and surrounding areas are designated as Grazing Land and Other Land according to the FMMP. As such, implementation of the proposed project would not convert Important Farmland to non-agricultural use. No impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

b. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (the Williamson Act) is a voluntary program that incentivizes the preservation of farmland. According to the San Benito County WebGIS Viewer, the project site is not under a Williamson Act contract (County of San Benito n.d.).

The project site is zoned as Agricultural Rangeland according to the San Benito County Zoning Code. The intent of this district is to provide for areas within the county to be used for agricultural

rangeland purposes as set forth in the general plan. The majority of improvements would occur within an existing prescription easement on Parcel 0271500030. It is anticipated that the proposed project would likely require a temporary construction easement for adjacent properties zoned as Agricultural Rangeland during construction. The temporary construction easements for adjacent properties would be obtained by the County for access during bridge and roadway construction work for a contractor staging area, materials storage, and construction operations prior the commencement of construction activities. These activities would be temporary in nature and would cease upon completion of construction. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with the existing Agricultural Rangeland zoning designation of the area due to existing prescription easements. No impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

c. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?

The proposed project is not located on forest land or timberland, and would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned as Timberland Production. Implementation of the proposed project would result in no impact to forest land and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

d. Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?

The proposed project is not located on forest land and would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to nonforest use. Implementation of the proposed project would result in *no impact* to forest land and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

- e. Would the project 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?*

As previously discussed, the proposed project would likely require a temporary construction easement for adjacent properties zoned as Agricultural Rangeland during construction. However, this acquisition would be temporary in nature and would occur in a linear strip along the edge of the existing road, which would not significantly affect the viability of agricultural operations. No forest land exists on the project site or on adjacent parcels. Therefore, the proposed project would not involve other changes in the existing environment that could result in conversion of farmland to a non-agricultural use or of forest land to a non-forest use. Impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

4.3 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.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

The proposed project is located in San Benito County and is within the jurisdiction of the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD), which regulates air quality in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties. Air quality in the planning area is not only affected by various emission sources (mobile, industry, etc.), but also by atmospheric conditions such as wind speed, wind direction, temperature, and rainfall.

Within the MBARD, ambient air quality standards for ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM_{2.5}) and less than 10 microns in diameter (PM₁₀), and lead have been set by both the State of California and the federal government. The State has also set standards for sulfate and visibility. The MBARD is under State non-attainment status for ozone and PM₁₀.

An air quality plan describes air pollution control strategies to be taken by counties or regions classified as nonattainment areas. The main purpose of an air quality plan is to bring a nonattainment area into compliance with the requirements of federal and State air quality standards. The air quality plan uses the assumptions and projections provided by local planning agencies to determine control strategies for achieving regional air quality compliance. The most recent MBARD plan for attaining California ambient air quality standards is the 2012–2015 Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP), which was adopted on March 15, 2017. The AQMP documents the MBARD’s progress toward attaining the State ozone standard.

For a project to be consistent with the AQMP, the pollutants emitted from the project must not exceed the MBARD significance thresholds or cause a significant impact to air quality. As discussed below, implementation of the proposed project would not result in the generation of criteria air pollutants that would exceed MBARD thresholds of significance. Therefore, the proposed project

would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan. Impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

b. Would the project 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?

The MBARD is designated as nonattainment for ozone and PM_{2.5} for State standards. The MBARD's nonattainment status is attributed to the region's development history. Past, present, and future development projects contribute to the region's adverse air quality impacts on a cumulative basis. By its very nature, air pollution is largely a cumulative impact. No single project is sufficient in size to, by itself, result in nonattainment of ambient air quality standards. Instead, a project's individual emissions contribute to existing cumulatively significant adverse air quality impacts. If a project's contribution to the cumulative impact is considerable, then the project's impact on air quality would be considered significant.

In developing thresholds of significance for air pollutants, the MBARD considered the emission levels for which a project's individual emissions would be cumulatively considerable. If a project exceeds the identified significance thresholds, its emissions would be cumulatively considerable, resulting in significant adverse air quality impacts to the region's existing air quality conditions. The following analysis assesses the potential project-level construction- and operation-related air quality impacts.

Short-Term Construction Emissions. During construction, short-term degradation of air quality may occur due to the release of particulate matter emissions (i.e., fugitive dust) generated by grading, hauling, and other activities. Emissions from construction equipment are also anticipated and would include CO, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), reactive organic gases (ROG), directly-emitted particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀), and toxic air contaminants (TACs) such as diesel exhaust particulate matter.

Site preparation and project construction would involve grading, paving, and other activities. Construction-related effects on air quality from the proposed project would be greatest during the site preparation phase due to the disturbance of soils. If not properly controlled, these activities would temporarily generate particulate emissions. Sources of fugitive dust would include disturbed soils at the construction site. Unless properly controlled, vehicles leaving the site would deposit dirt and mud on local streets, which could be an additional source of airborne dust after it dries. PM₁₀ emissions would vary from day to day, depending on the nature and magnitude of construction activity and local weather conditions. PM₁₀ emissions would depend on soil moisture, silt content of soil, wind speed, and the amount of operating equipment. Larger dust particles would settle near the source, while fine particles would be dispersed over greater distances from the construction site.

In addition to dust-related PM₁₀ emissions, heavy trucks and construction equipment powered by gasoline and diesel engines would generate CO, SO₂, NO_x, ROG, and some soot particulate (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) in exhaust emissions. If construction activities were to increase traffic congestion in the area, CO and other emissions from traffic would increase slightly while those vehicles were delayed. These emissions would be temporary and limited to the immediate area surrounding the construction site.

Project construction emissions were analyzed using the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District’s Road Construction Emissions Model (RoadMod), Version 9.0.01. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2025 and would be 13 months in duration, which was included in RoadMod. In addition, approximately 2,000 cubic yards (cy) of export would be required, which was also included in RoadMod. The anticipated average number of workers per day on the construction site is 5 to 10; therefore, this analysis conservatively assumes there would be 10 construction workers per day. Construction-related emissions are presented in Table 4.A. Detailed calculations are provided in Appendix B.

Table 4.A: Project Construction Emissions in Tons per Year

Project Construction	ROG	NO _x	CO	PM ₁₀	PM _{2.5}
Maximum Project Emissions	6.5	61.7	59.2	34.5	8.9
MBARD Thresholds	137.0	137.0	550.0	82.0	55.0
Exceed Threshold?	No	No	No	No	No

Source: LSA (May 2022).

CO = carbon monoxide

MBARD = Monterey Bay Air Resources District

NO_x = nitrogen oxides

PM_{2.5} = particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter

PM₁₀ = particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter

ROG = reactive organic gases

As shown in Table 4.A, construction emissions associated with the project would not exceed the MBARD’s thresholds for ROG, NO_x, CO, PM₁₀, or PM_{2.5} emissions. Therefore, construction of the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of ozone or PM₁₀ or any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in nonattainment under an applicable federal or State ambient air quality standard, and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Long-Term (Operational) Emissions. Long-term air emission impacts are associated with stationary sources and mobile sources. Stationary-source emissions result from the consumption of natural gas and electricity. Mobile-source emissions result from vehicle trips and result in air pollutant emissions affecting the entire air basin. The proposed project would replace the existing two-lane bridge by constructing a wider bridge that meets current County, Caltrans, and AASHTO requirements. The project would not generate additional vehicle trips through the project area and, therefore, would not increase mobile-source emissions. The proposed project would not include any stationary-source emissions. Therefore, operation of the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of ozone or PM₁₀ or any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in nonattainment under an applicable federal or State ambient air quality standard. Impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

c. Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Sensitive receptors include residences, schools, playgrounds, childcare centers, convalescent centers, retirement homes, and athletic fields. Construction activities (i.e., operation of diesel-fueled vehicles and equipment) can expose sensitive receptors to airborne particulates and fugitive dust as well as a small quantity of construction equipment pollutants.

The nearest sensitive receptor is approximately 315 ft east of the project site. Construction activities associated with the proposed project may expose surrounding sensitive receptors to airborne particulates, as well as a small quantity of construction equipment pollutants (i.e., usually diesel-fueled vehicles and equipment). However, as identified in Table 4.A, above, project construction emissions would be below the MBARD's significance thresholds. Additionally, due to the linear nature of the project, construction activities at any one receptor location would occur for a limited duration. The proposed project does not include any permanent stationary sources of emissions. Once the proposed project is constructed, the project would not be a significant source of long-term operational emissions. Therefore, the proposed project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Potential impacts would be considered less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

d. Would the project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

During construction, the various diesel-powered vehicles and equipment in use on site would create localized odors. These odors would be temporary and are not likely to be noticeable for extended periods of time beyond the project site. The potential for diesel odor impacts is therefore considered less than significant. In addition, once the project is operational, it would not be a source of odors. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people, and potential impacts would be considered less than significant.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

4.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The analysis provided in this section is based on the Natural Environmental Study (NES) (LSA 2021) and Biological Assessment (BA) (LSA 2021), provided in Appendix C. For the purpose of the Biological Resources section, the project area is referred to as the Biological Study Area (BSA), which encompasses 3.66 ac, including the project footprint and adjacent areas that may directly or indirectly be affected by the project.

a. Would the project 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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The BSA predominantly consists of Panoche Road, and natural lands, including Tres Pinos Creek and its associated riparian corridor. The most biologically diverse area within the BSA is located along the Tres Pinos Creek channel. This area is dominated by the following natural communities: California annual grassland series, arroyo willow series, mixed oak series, mulefat series, riverine, and riverine wetlands. A concrete low-water crossing is also present just upstream of the existing bridge. Outside the Tres Pinos Creek floodplain, the BSA is dominated by paved roads, a small amount of pasture,

and part of a rural residence. Natural communities comprise 3.02 ac of the BSA, while 0.01 ac is made up of pasture and 0.63 ac consists of developed areas.

The following electronic databases and agency communications were reviewed for species that could potentially occur in the vicinity of the BSA:

- California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) Rarefind 5 (CDFW 2021)
- California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (CNPS 2021)
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) Trust Resources Report (USFWS 2021)
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (NMFS 2020)

A general biological field survey was conducted by LSA on May 11, 2011, to assess the biological condition of the BSA for the presence of various special-status biological resources, including plants, wildlife, and habitat suitability for special-status species. A follow-up survey to document any changes in field conditions was conducted on April 16, 2020. In addition, LSA conducted a focused plant survey for Munz's tidy tips (*Layia munzii*), chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*), and marsh sandwort (*Arenaria paludicola*) (May 18, 2011, and April 16, 2020); a Jurisdictional Delineation (July 6, 2011, and April 16, 2020); and a habitat assessment for California red-legged frog and California tiger salamander (May 11, 2011, and April 16, 2020).

Based on the database review and professional knowledge of species that may occur in the region, 65 special-status plant and animal occurrences were identified that could potentially occur within the BSA. Of the 65 special-status species identified, only the following 8 species have suitable habitat present in the BSA and are discussed in further detail below: Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), Pacific pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*), San Joaquin whipsnake (*Masticophis flagellum ruddocki*), coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*), California red-legged frog (CRLF) (*Rana draytonii*), and South Central California Coast (SCCC) steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Other migratory birds are also discussed. No suitable habitat was found to be present in the BSA for the remaining 57 special-species; therefore, they are not discussed further.

Cooper's Hawk and Other Migratory Birds. Disturbance of Cooper's hawk and other migratory birds during their nesting season (February 1 to September 15) could result in "take," which is prohibited under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and Section 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code. California Fish and Game Code (Section 3503) also prohibits take or destruction of bird nests or eggs.

Cooper's hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*) are on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) watch list for nesting but have no other formal status. In California, they are primarily year-long residents and are found throughout most of the wooded portion of the State. Cooper's hawks favor riparian areas and those near open water for nesting, and often use broken woodlands and habitat edges for hunting. These hawks build stick nests in dense stands of live oak, riparian deciduous

forest, and occasionally coniferous forest, usually near a stream. Breeding season is March through August, with peak activity occurring in May through July. Young are dependent on adults for 30 to 40 days after fledging.

The CNDDDB includes four records for Cooper's hawk within the record search area. The records are all more than 10 mi to the southwest in Pinnacles National Monument. The BSA supports oaks and other trees that provide potential nesting habitat for Cooper's hawk. The arroyo willow series and habitat edges in and adjacent to the BSA provide potential foraging habitat. No Cooper's hawks were observed during any of the field visits; however, there is a possibility this species could occur. The riparian vegetation in the BSA and vegetation in the surrounding areas also provide nesting habitat for other migratory birds.

The project would result in permanent impacts to 0.19 ac and temporarily disturb 0.07 ac of arroyo willow habitat, which is potential foraging habitat for Cooper's hawk. Additionally, the project would remove 0.09 ac and temporarily disturb 0.08 ac of mixed oak habitat, which is potential nesting habitat for this species. The project could also result in temporary impacts to Cooper's hawk attempting to nest in the vicinity of the project, as construction activities could potentially discourage nesting.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-1** requires avoiding tree removal and other work activities during the nesting season, if possible; conducting preconstruction surveys for nesting Cooper's hawks and other migratory birds prior to any work during the nesting season; obtaining a qualified biologist for on-site monitoring; and coordinating with CDFW and Caltrans for work occurring near any active nests found within 500 ft of the BSA to ensure avoidance of any "take." Implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both permanent and temporary in nature, on Cooper's hawks and other nesting migratory birds to a less than significant level.

Western Burrowing Owl. The western burrowing owl is a California species of concern. It has no federal status. Burrowing owls occur in warmer valleys; open, dry grasslands; deserts; and scrublands associated with agriculture and urban areas that support populations of California ground squirrels. Burrowing owls nest below ground, using abandoned burrows of other species (most commonly, ground squirrels) and feed on insects and small mammals.

The CNDDDB includes a single record for this species, dated 2002, from approximately 4 mi northwest of the BSA. The annual grassland within the BSA provides potential foraging habitat for the burrowing owl; however, no burrows of suitable size are present in the BSA, and no signs of owl presence were observed during the field visits. However, this species could occur in the BSA.

The project would permanently impact 0.23 ac and temporarily disturb 0.45 ac of annual grassland habitat, which is potential foraging habitat for western burrowing owl. Permanent impacts would occur as a result of project cut and fill activities; temporary impacts would occur as a result of project staging during construction activities.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-2** would require revegetation of temporarily disturbed annual grassland with a native seed mix to ensure temporary impact areas within western

burrowing owl foraging habitat are restored to pre-project conditions. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-2** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on western burrowing owls to a less than significant level.

Prairie Falcon. The prairie falcon is a California species of concern; it has no formal federal status. Prairie falcons inhabit dry, open terrain, either level or hilly. They forage in open areas such as grasslands, savannahs, desert scrub, and agricultural fields. Their diet consists primarily of small mammals and medium-sized birds; reptiles are also eaten. Prey may be captured in the air or on the ground. Nest locations are usually on a cliff overlooking a large, open area. Breeding season is February through mid-September, with peak activity in April to early August.

The prairie falcon is well-documented in the region; the CNDDDB includes 15 records of this species within 10 mi of the BSA. The closest record is dated 1977 and is approximately 4 mi northwest of the BSA. More recent records within 10 mi of the BSA, dated 2008, are from approximately 9.5 mi southeast of the BSA. There is no suitable nesting habitat for prairie falcons within the BSA; however, the annual grassland habitat in the BSA provides potential foraging habitat. This species could occur in the BSA.

The project would permanently impact 0.23 ac and temporarily disturb 0.45 ac of annual grassland habitat, which is potential foraging habitat for prairie falcons. Permanent impacts would occur as a result of project cut and fill activities; temporary impacts would occur as a result of project staging during construction activities.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-2** would require the revegetation of temporarily disturbed annual grassland with a native seed mix to ensure temporary impact areas within prairie falcon foraging habitat are restored to pre-project conditions. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-2** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on prairie falcons to a less than significant level.

Pacific Pond Turtle. The Pacific pond turtle is a State species of concern; it has no federal status. The species ranges from western Washington State south to northwestern Baja California. Two subspecies occur in California: the north Pacific pond turtle (*E.m. marmorata*); and the south Pacific pond turtle (*E.m. pallida*). The BSA is within the range of intergradations between the two subspecies. The pond turtle is a highly aquatic species found in ponds, marshes, rivers, streams, and irrigation ditches that typically have rocky or muddy bottoms and support aquatic vegetation. Eggs are laid at upland sites, away from the water, from April through August.

The CNDDDB includes five records of Pacific pond turtle within the nine-quad record search area; a record from 1993 is from approximately 0.25 mi from the BSA, upstream in Tres Pinos Creek. Additionally, during the July 2011 site visit, three adult Pacific pond turtles were observed in Tres Pinos Creek 90 ft downstream of the BSA. The reach of Tres Pinos Creek within the BSA provides habitat for the Pacific pond turtle, and the species is present in the area. This species is likely to occur in the BSA.

The project would result in permanent impacts to 0.10 acre of riverine and riverine wetlands that provide aquatic habitat for Pacific pond turtle due to installation of RSP and the new bridge's

concrete pier. The project would also result in temporary impacts to 0.14 ac of aquatic habitat due to stream diversion and the placement of temporary falsework. Indirect effects may occur due to potential degradation of water quality until the plants in the revegetated area are established.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 and BIO-3 and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would require restoration of temporarily disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with a native seed mix to ensure temporary impact areas are restored to pre-project conditions; preconstruction surveys for Pacific pond turtles; relocation of any turtles identified within the BSA, if approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and/or CDFW; and compliance with the Construction General Permit, which includes preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 and BIO-3 and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on Pacific pond turtles to a less than significant level.

San Joaquin Whipsnake. The San Joaquin whipsnake is a State species of concern; it has no federal status. It inhabits the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys from Colusa County to Kern County and westward to the inner South Coast Ranges. An isolated population occurs in the Sutter Buttes. It is found at elevations of 60 ft up to 3,000 ft. This snake occurs in open, dry, treeless areas, including grassland and saltbush scrub, and seeks cover in rodent burrows, under shaded vegetation, and under surface objects such as rocks or logs.

The CNDDDB includes seven records of San Joaquin whipsnake within the nine-quad search area. The closest record is dated 1993 and is from approximately 4.5 mi west of the BSA. The most recent record is dated 1994 and is from approximately 7.5 mi west-southwest of the BSA. The California annual grassland and the edges of the mixed oak series provide habitat for the San Joaquin whipsnake; therefore, this species could be present.

The project would result in permanent impacts to a combined total of 0.32 ac of annual grassland and mixed oak habitat, which is suitable for San Joaquin whipsnake, as a result of project cut and fill activities. Temporary impacts to suitable whipsnake habitat, totaling 0.53 ac, would also occur as a result of project staging and through the cutting back of vegetation to provide access routes during construction activities.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 and BIO-3** would require restoration of temporarily disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with a native seed mix to ensure temporary impact areas within San Joaquin whipsnake habitat are restored to pre-project conditions, as well as preconstruction surveys for San Joaquin Whipsnake by a qualified biologist prior to any ground-disturbing activities. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 and BIO-3** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on San Joaquin whipsnake to a less than significant level.

Coast Horned Lizard. The coast horned lizard is a State species of concern but has no federal status. It occurs in a variety of open habitats with scattered low shrubs, including grassland, chaparral, and open pine, oak, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. Sandy areas, washes, floodplains, and wind-blown deposits provide favorable conditions. It is sometimes found along dirt roads and frequently found near ant hills. This lizard ranges from Butte County to Kern County in the Sierra Nevada foothills, and

throughout the central and southern California coast. The coast horned lizard forages on the ground in open areas, usually between shrubs and often near ant nests.

The CNDDDB includes a single record, dated 1993, for coast horned lizard within the nine-quad search area. This occurrence observed a single lizard approximately 0.8 mi to the west of the BSA along Panoche Road. The California annual grassland and the edges of the mixed oak series provide potential habitat for the coast horned lizard; this species could occur in the BSA.

The project would result in permanent impact to a combined total of 0.32 ac of annual grassland and mixed oak habitat, which is suitable for coast horned lizard, as a result of project cut and fill activities. Temporary impacts to suitable coast horned lizard habitat, totaling 0.53 ac, would also occur as a result of project staging and through the cutting back of vegetation to provide access routes and during construction activities.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 and BIO-3** would require restoration of disturbed slopes to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with a native seed mix to ensure temporary impact areas within Coast horned lizard habitat are restored to pre-project conditions as well as preconstruction surveys for Coast Horned Lizard by a qualified biologist prior to any ground-disturbing activities. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 and BIO-3** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on coast horned lizards to a less than significant level.

California Red-Legged Frog. The CRLF is a federally listed threatened species and a State species of concern. CRLF inhabits lowlands and foothills in or near permanent sources of water. They prefer ponds, creeks, or marshes with extensive shoreline vegetation. Intermittent streams provide suitable habitat if some surface water remains through the summer.

Suitable aquatic breeding habitat and upland habitat are both present in the BSA, and the BSA is located within critical habitat Unit SNB-2 for CRLF. Three frogs were observed under the bridge during the July 2011 site visit. They were thought to be CRLF, but due to shadows and vegetation, a positive identification was not made. No CRLF were observed during the April 2020 site visit. The CNDDDB includes 11 records of CRLF in the nine-quad search area. The nearest record is dated 2005 and is from 0.15 mi upstream of the BSA on Tres Pinos Creek. Although there are no CNDDDB records from within the BSA, this species is well documented in the Tres Pinos Creek watershed.

The project would result in permanent impacts to 0.10 ac of riverine and riverine wetlands that provide suitable aquatic breeding habitat for CRLF. The project also would result in temporary impacts to 0.14 ac of aquatic breeding habitat for one season. Permanent habitat loss is due to installation of RSP and the concrete pier; temporary impacts are due to stream diversion and placement of temporary falsework. Additionally, the project would result in permanent impacts to 0.54 ac and temporary impacts to 0.62 ac of upland habitat for CRLF. Permanent habitat loss is due to installation of foundations, wingwalls, etc.; temporary impacts would be due to project staging, cutting of vegetation to provide access routes, and other temporary construction disturbance. Since the BSA is within designated critical habitat for CRLF and the habitats in the BSA contain physical and biological features (PBFs) for CRLF critical habitat, the impacts described above can also be considered impacts to critical habitat for CRLF.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-5, BIO-10, and Compliance Measure WQ-1**, would require restoration of disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with the native seed mix specified in Table 4.B; implementation of the provisions of the CRLF “Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration’s Federal Aid Program (8-8-10-F-58)”, which would require restoration of temporary impact habitat contours to original configuration and revegetation of disturbed areas with a native seed mix to ensure temporary impact areas within CRLF habitat are restored to pre-project conditions; preconstruction surveys by a USFWS-approved qualified biologist prior to construction; proper relocation of any CRLF; worker awareness training of all construction personnel; managing and regularly removing all trash from the worksite; maintaining at least a 60 ft setback from riparian habitat for refueling, maintenance, and staging equipment; limiting the construction area to the minimum area necessary to achieve the project goal; appropriately scheduling work activities; properly diverting water around the in-stream construction area; avoiding impounding water in a manner that may attract CRLF; removal of exotic species from the BSA; avoiding the use of herbicides and implementing protective measures if herbicides must be used; properly revegetating the areas where RSP would be installed; use of a tarp or other protective structure to prevent debris from entering Tres Pinos Creek during removal of the existing bridge; and compliance with the Construction General Permit and preparation of a SWPPP. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-5, BIO-10, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on CRLF to a less than significant level.

South Central California Coast Steelhead. The South Central California Coast (SCCC) steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) is federally listed as threatened; it has no State status. Steelhead are anadromous fish that spend part of their lifecycle in freshwater and part in salt water. Spawning occurs in small, freshwater streams where the young remain from one to several years before migrating to the ocean to feed and grow. Steelhead require clean, cold, well-oxygenated streams for spawning. Spawning streams must have a substrate of gravel or small cobble to provide safe incubation sites for the eggs. Critical habitat for the SCCC steelhead was established in 2006 and includes the length of the San Benito River within San Benito County.

The BSA is approximately 15 mi upstream of the San Benito River; therefore, the BSA is not located within critical habitat for SCCC steelhead. Within San Benito County, the SCCC steelhead occurs in the San Benito and Pajaro rivers and their tributaries, including Tres Pinos Creek. Additionally, according to the NMFS, the species is intermittently present in the reach of Tres Pinos Creek within the BSA. SCCC steelhead fingerlings were observed in Tres Pinos Creek during the May 11, 2011, general biological survey. Observation of the fish was incidental and not part of a larger survey effort; the number, size, and location of the fish were not documented. Although habitat conditions were largely unchanged during the April 16, 2020, field survey, visibility in pooled areas was minimal due to high cover of floating water primrose. No fish or other aquatic species were observed during this survey.

The project would result in permanent impacts to 0.01 ac of riverine habitat that may provide suitable SCCC steelhead habitat as a result of placement of the bridge support pier and RSP. The project would also result in temporary impacts to 0.02 ac of riverine as a result of construction of

the new bridge, temporary falsework, demolition of the existing bridge, construction access, and in-channel stream diversion. Construction of the support pier and placement of RSP are the only project components anticipated to result in potential for long-term impacts to SCCC steelhead in the form of permanent changes to flow velocity and stream depth. In order to address these potential adverse effects to SCCC steelhead, a hydraulic analysis was prepared (Appendix G of the NES [Appendix C]). The analysis found that average channel velocity (feet per second) at two cross sections upstream of the BSA would result in an approximately 2 to 3 ft per second increase in average channel velocity and recommended RSP in the channel to protect against these increases. The size and extent of the RSP shown in the draft plans is expected to protect the channel bank from erosion. The water surface elevation (WSEL) at the upstream face of the bridge for the 100-year storm with the existing bridge in place is 1,796.5 ft; the proposed bridge would have a WSEL of 1,795.0 ft. These changes represent a minimal shift from existing conditions and are not anticipated to result in substantial adverse effects to SCCC steelhead.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-3, BIO-6 through 10, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would require restoration of disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with a native seed mix to ensure temporary impact areas are restored to pre-project conditions; properly revegetating the areas where RSP would be installed; preconstruction surveys for SCCC steelhead by a qualified biologist prior to construction activities; adherence to in-water work windows; worker awareness training of all construction personnel; properly installing the flow diversion metal pipe; designation of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs); use of a tarp or other protective structure during removal of the existing bridge to prevent debris from entering Tres Pinos Creek; preparation of an Emergency Response and Cleanup Plan; and compliance with the Construction General Permit and preparation of a SWPPP. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-3, BIO-6 through BIO-10, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on SCCC steelhead to a less than significant level.

Overall, implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-10, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW, NMFS, or USFWS, to a less than significant level. Once constructed, the project would have no operational impacts.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: In addition to the measures listed below, refer to **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1** in Section 4.9.a and **Compliance Measure WQ-1** in Section 4.10.a.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1

Nesting Cooper's Hawk and Other Migratory Birds Measures. The County of San Benito (County) or County contractor shall implement the following measures prior to construction:

1. If possible, all trees that shall be impacted by project construction shall be removed during the nonnesting season (September 16 to January 31), to avoid take of a nest or bird. If

work must begin during the nesting season (February 1 to September 15), a survey for nesting Cooper’s hawks and other migratory birds shall be conducted within 500 feet of the Biological Study Area (BSA) by a qualified biologist. The survey shall be conducted a maximum of 10 days prior to the start of construction. The survey area may be decreased due to property access constraints, etc.

2. If nesting Cooper’s hawks or other birds are found within 500 ft of the BSA, a qualified biologist shall evaluate the potential for the proposed project to disturb nesting activities. The evaluation criteria shall include, but are not limited to, the location/orientation of the nest in the nest tree, the distance of the nest from the BSA, and line of sight between the nest and the BSA.
 - a. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) shall be contacted to review the evaluation and determine if the project can proceed without adversely affecting nesting activities.
 - b. If work is allowed to proceed, a qualified biologist shall be on site weekly during construction activities that occur during breeding season to monitor nesting activity. The biologist shall have the authority to stop work if it is determined the project is adversely affecting nesting activities.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2

Revegetation and Restoration to Preconstruction Contours.

Following completion of the new bridge, the County or County contractor shall ensure all areas that are temporarily disturbed shall be restored to preconstruction contours. All disturbed areas including new fill slopes shall be revegetated with the native seed mix specified in Table 4.B.

Table 4.B: Native Species Mix

Scientific Name	Common Name	Rate (pounds per acre)	Minimum Percent Germination
<i>Artemisia douglasiana</i>	Mugwort	2.0	50
<i>Bromus carinatus</i>	California brome	5.0	85
<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i>	Slender wheatgrass	2.0	60
<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	California poppy	2.0	70
<i>Festuca microstachys</i>	Small fescue	10.0	80
<i>Hordeum brachyantherum</i>	California barley	2.0	80
<i>Lupinus bicolor</i>	Bicolored lupine	4.0	80

Mitigation Measure BIO-3

Special-Status Species Preconstruction Surveys. Prior to the start of construction, initial ground disturbance, or vegetation clearing in the Tres Pinos Creek channel or surrounding areas, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey of the work area for special-status species. If special-status species are found, they shall be allowed to leave the work area on their own or, if approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and/or CDFW, the special-status species shall be relocated by the biologist to a safe place outside the work area.

Mitigation Measure BIO-4

Invasive Plant Species Measures. During final design, the County or County's engineer shall prepare specifications to avoid the introduction of invasive plant species into the BSA during project construction. At a minimum, this shall include the following measures:

1. All earthmoving equipment to be used during project construction shall be thoroughly cleaned before arriving on the project site.
2. All seeding equipment (i.e., hydroseed trucks) shall be thoroughly rinsed prior to beginning seeding work.
3. To avoid spreading any nonnative invasive species already existing on site to off-site areas, all equipment shall be thoroughly cleaned before leaving the site.
4. To avoid introducing additional nonnative species to the site, all fill dirt brought onto the site must be weed-free.

Mitigation Measure BIO-5

California Red-Legged Frog Measures. Prior to construction, the County shall implement the following measures, which implement the provisions of the CRLF "Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program (8-8-10-F-58)":

1. Only USFWS-approved biologists shall participate in activities associated with the capture, handling, and monitoring of CRLF. Biologists authorized under this biological opinion do not need to re-submit their qualifications for subsequent projects conducted pursuant to this biological opinion, unless the USFWS has revoked their approval at any time during the life of this biological opinion.
2. Ground disturbance shall not begin until written approval is received from the USFWS that the biologist(s) is/are qualified to

conduct the work, unless the individual(s) has/have been approved previously and the USFWS has not revoked that approval.

3. A USFWS-approved biologist shall survey the project site 48 hours before the onset of work activities. If any life stage of the CRLF is found and these individuals are likely to be or injured by work activities, the approved biologist shall be allowed sufficient time to move them from the site before work activities begin. The USFWS-approved biologist shall relocate the CRLF the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and shall not be affected by activities associated with the proposed project. The relocation site should be in the same drainage to the extent practicable. Caltrans shall coordinate with the USFWS on the relocation site prior to the capture of any CRLF. The USFWS-approved biologist shall maintain detailed records of any individuals that are moved (e.g., size, coloration, any distinguishing features, photographs [digital preferred]) to assist him or her in determining whether translocated animals are returning to the original point of capture.
4. Before any activities begin on a project, a USFWS-approved biologist shall conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training shall include a description of the CRLF and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the CRLF for the current project, and the boundaries within which the project may be accomplished. Brochures, books, and briefings may be used in the training session, provided that a qualified person is on hand to answer any questions.
5. A USFWS-approved biologist shall be present at the work site until all CRLF have been relocated out of harm's way, workers have been instructed, and disturbance of habitat has been completed. After this time, the State or local sponsoring agency shall designate a person to monitor on-site compliance with all minimization measures. The USFWS-approved biologist shall ensure that this monitor receives the training outlined in number 4 (above) and in the identification of CRLF. If the monitor or the USFWS-approved biologist recommends that work be stopped because CRLF would be affected in a manner not anticipated by the USFWS during review of the proposed action, they shall notify the resident engineer (the engineer who is directly overseeing and in command of construction activities)

immediately. The resident engineer shall either resolve the situation by eliminating the effect immediately or require that all actions causing these effects be halted. If work is stopped, the USFWS shall be notified as soon as is reasonably possible.

6. During project activities, all trash that may attract predators shall be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and construction debris shall be removed from work areas.
7. All refueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment and vehicles shall occur at least 60 ft from riparian habitat or water bodies and not in a location from where a spill would drain directly toward aquatic habitat (e.g., on a slope that drains away from the water). The monitor shall ensure contamination of habitat does not occur during such operations. Prior to the onset of work, the County shall provide Caltrans with a plan for prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. All workers shall be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.
8. The number of access routes, size of staging areas, and total area of the activity shall be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project goal. Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) shall be delineated to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction and minimize the impact to CRLF habitat. This goal includes locating access routes and construction areas outside of wetlands and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable.
9. The County shall attempt to schedule work activities for times of the year when impacts to CRLF would be minimal. For example, work that would affect large pools that may support breeding would be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the breeding season (November through May). Isolated pools that are important to maintain CRLF through the driest portions of the year would be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the late summer and early fall. Habitat assessments, surveys, and informal consultation between Caltrans and the USFWS during project planning should be used to assist in scheduling work activities to avoid sensitive habitats during key times of the year.
10. If a work site is to be temporarily dewatered by pumping, intakes shall be completely screened with wire mesh not larger than 0.2 inch to prevent CRLF from entering the pump system.

Water shall be released or pumped downstream at an appropriate rate to maintain downstream flows during construction. Upon completion of construction activities, any diversions or barriers to flow shall be removed in a manner that would allow flow to resume with the least disturbance to the substrate. Alteration of the stream bed shall be minimized to the maximum extent possible; any imported material shall be removed from the stream bed upon completion of the project.

11. Unless approved by the USFWS, water shall not be impounded in a manner that may attract CRLF.
12. A USFWS-approved biologist shall permanently remove any individuals of exotic species, such as bullfrogs (*Rana catesbeiana*), signal and red swamp crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*; *Procambarus clarkii*), and centrarchid fishes, from the project area to the maximum extent possible. The USFWS-approved biologist shall be responsible for ensuring his or her activities are in compliance with the California Fish and Game Code.
13. If the County demonstrates that disturbed areas have been restored to conditions that allow them to function as habitat for CRLF, these areas shall not be included in the amount of total habitat permanently disturbed.
14. To ensure that diseases are not conveyed between work sites by the USFWS-approved biologists, the fieldwork code of practice developed by the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force shall be followed at all times.
15. Project sites shall be revegetated with an assemblage of native riparian, wetland, and upland vegetation suitable for the area. Locally collected plant materials shall be used to the extent practicable. Invasive, exotic plants shall be controlled to the maximum extent practicable. This measure shall be implemented in all areas disturbed by activities associated with the project unless the USFWS determine that it is not feasible or practical.
16. The County shall not use herbicides as the primary method used to control invasive, exotic plants. However, if the County determines the use of herbicides is the only feasible method for controlling invasive plants at a specific project site, it shall implement the following additional protective measures for the CRLF:

- a. The County shall not use herbicides during the breeding season for CRLF.
- b. The County shall conduct surveys for CRLF immediately prior to the start of any herbicide use. If found, CRLF shall be relocated to suitable habitat far enough from the project area that no direct contact with herbicides would occur.
- c. Giant reed and other invasive plants shall be cut and hauled out by hand and then painted with glyphosate or glyphosate-based products, such as Aquamaster® or Rodeo®.
- d. Licensed and experienced County staff or a licensed and experienced contractor shall use a hand-held sprayer for foliar application of Aquamaster® or Rodeo® where large monoculture stands occur at an individual project site.
- e. All precautions shall be taken to ensure that no herbicide is applied to native vegetation.
- f. Herbicides shall not be applied on or near open-water surfaces (no closer than 60 ft from open water).
- g. Foliar applications of herbicide shall not occur when wind speeds are in excess of 3 miles per hour.
- h. No herbicides shall be applied within 24 hours of forecasted rain.
- i. Application of all herbicides shall be done by qualified County staff or contractors to ensure that overspray is minimized, that all application is made in accordance with label recommendations, and that all required and reasonable safety measures are implemented. A safe dye shall be added to the mixture to visually denote treated sites. Application of herbicides shall be consistent with the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Pesticide Programs, Endangered Species Protection Program county bulletins.
- j. All herbicides, fuels, lubricants, and equipment shall be stored, poured, or refilled at least 60 ft from riparian habitat or water bodies in a location where a spill would not drain directly toward aquatic habitat. Caltrans shall ensure that contamination of habitat does not occur during such

operations. Prior to the onset of work, the County shall ensure that a plan is in place for a prompt and effective response to accidental spills. All workers shall be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

Mitigation Measure BIO-6

Rock Slope Protection Installation. During construction, the County or County contractor shall ensure that placement of rock slope protection (RSP), native topsoil from the channel shall be incorporated within the RSP to provide a seeding and planting medium. Areas of RSP above the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) shall be revegetated with the seed mix specified in Table 4.B. In addition, locally obtained willow cuttings/poles shall be installed within the lower sections of the RSP near the OHWM.

Mitigation Measure BIO-7

Live Channel Work Period. Work in the live channel of Tres Pinos Creek (consisting of placement of RSP, a support pier, and falsework) shall be limited to the period of June 15 through October 15. If any work within the live channel of Tres Pinos Creek is not completed by October 15, the County or County contractor shall request a written approval/extension from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to allow work past October 15. Revegetation activities are excluded from this requirement with the stipulation that no heavy equipment be used in the channel.

Mitigation Measure BIO-8

South Central California Coast Steelhead. During construction, the County or County contractor shall implement the following measures:

1. Prior to project implementation, a qualified biologist shall conduct a worker environmental awareness training for all construction personnel and monitoring biologists on the terms and conditions being implemented to protect SCCC steelhead during construction. The biological monitor shall have the full authority to halt work as necessary for the purpose of minimizing adverse effects on SCCC steelhead.
2. The work area for placement of the RSP, support pier, and falsework shall be dewatered prior to the start of work. Dewatering shall consist of installation of a flow diversion to separate the live channel from the area where in-stream work shall occur. The flow diversion shall consist of a corrugated metal pipe (CMP) sized to accommodate the flows expected during the diversion period. The CMP shall be placed along the low-flow invert of the natural creek and a small earthen berm shall be installed at each end of the pipe to direct water into the

pipe. Clean sand and gravel shall be used at the base of the berm to protect the existing creek channel. Both the berms and CMP shall be completely removed at the completion of project construction. A qualified biologist shall be on site during installation and removal of the flow diversion.

3. Prior to installation of the flow diversion, a qualified biologist shall determine the need for a temporary fish seine around the area to be isolated. If a seine is needed, the qualified biologist shall oversee the installation. A weighted fish seine shall be stretched across the length of the bank where work shall be conducted and shall extend a minimum of 3.3 ft beyond the upstream and downstream limits of the work. With the upstream and downstream ends of the seine remaining on the bank, the remainder of the seine shall be extended into the channel to approximately 3.3 ft beyond the limits of the area to be dewatered. The seine shall be temporarily staked into place in such a way that no fish may enter the isolated area. The purpose of this method is to direct the fish out of the area to be dewatered.
4. After the seine is in place, the qualified biologist shall visually survey the waters isolated behind the seine for the presence of any fish. If any fish are encountered within the isolated area, the fish seining process must be repeated until all fish are driven from the area to be isolated, as determined by the fisheries biologist. The qualified biologist shall capture any fish that remain in the areas to be dewatered. Electrofishing may be implemented to ensure that all of the fish are removed from the work area.
5. Once all of the fish have been removed from the work area, the flow diversion shall be installed in the isolated area. The qualified biologist shall be on site during installation and removal of the flow diversion.
6. All construction shall be conducted during daylight hours.

Mitigation Measure BIO-9

Environmentally Sensitive Area Fencing. Prior to construction activities, the qualified biologist shall identify locations for the placement of ESA fencing to protect sensitive habitat areas (i.e., jurisdictional areas, arroyo willow and mulefat riparian habitat, oak woodland habitat, the Tres Pinos Creek channel) adjacent to the construction area and to delineate a protection zone beyond which construction activities are prohibited. The construction contractor, with the assistance of the qualified biologist, shall install the ESA

fencing prior to construction activities. The qualified biologist shall verify the correct placement and installation of the ESA fences before work begins in the area.

Mitigation Measure BIO-10 Protective Structure Use During Bridge Demolition. During demolition of the existing bridge, the County or County contractor shall ensure that a heavy tarp, temporary decking, or equivalent structure be placed beneath the bridge to collect debris falling from the bridge and prevent it from entering Tres Pinos Creek. The tarp shall be left in place until the bridge is removed. This measure may also apply during construction of the new bridge deck. This measure only applies prior to stream diversion.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

b. Would the project 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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The BSA includes one formally designated natural community of special concern, arroyo willow series, and one sensitive natural community, riverine wetlands. Both communities are associated with Tres Pinos Creek; the riverine wetlands also extend southeast from the creek within the unnamed ephemeral tributary. Additionally, the mixed oak series within the BSA contains several native oak trees, which are considered sensitive under CEQA. Other natural communities on site with no formal designation include the mulefat series and riverine. Impacts to each habitat and natural community are discussed further below.

Arroyo Willow Series and Mulefat Series. The arroyo willow series is located along Tres Pinos Creek. Arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) and narrow-leaved willow (*Salix exigua*) are dominant and form a small thicket. This natural community totals 0.41 ac. The project would result in permanent impacts to 0.19 ac of arroyo willow series during installation of the new bridge. Temporary impacts, totaling 0.07 ac, would also occur as a result of cutting back of vegetation to provide access routes and disturbance from construction activities. The mulefat series is located along an unnamed ephemeral tributary originating from a stock pond south of the BSA. Mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*) dominates the overstory in this community, with California mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*) and rabbitsfoot grass (*Polypogon monspeliensis*) being the primary understory species. This natural community totals 0.15 ac. The project would result in permanent impacts to 0.03 ac of mulefat series during installation of RSP. Temporary impacts, totaling 0.02 ac, would also occur as a result of cutting back of vegetation to provide access routes and disturbance from construction activities. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, BIO-9 through BIO-13, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would require restoration of disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with the native seed mix specified in Table 4.B; management of invasive plant species; properly revegetating the areas where RSP would be installed; limiting the work period in the live channel of Tres Pinos Creek; placing brightly colored ESA fencing along the limits of work; use of a tarp or other protective structure during removal of the existing bridge;

locating staging areas, access routes, and construction areas outside of wetland and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable; obtaining all required regulatory permits from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and/or CDFW; compensation for the removal of arroyo willow and mulefat riparian vegetation at a 3:1 ratio by preserving, creating, and/or restoring the resource within the project site at a 3:1 ratio and/or purchasing credits at an approved mitigation bank at a minimum 1:1 ratio; preparation of a SWPPP implementation of construction BMPs; and preparation of an Emergency Response and Cleanup Plan. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, BIO-9 through BIO-13, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts on the arroyo willow series to a less than significant level.

Riverine and Riverine Wetlands. Riverine areas in the BSA are associated with concrete-lined, unvegetated open-water areas of Tres Pinos Creek and include areas underneath the existing bridge and the low-water crossing to the north. This natural community totals 0.05 ac. Permanent impacts to riverine, totaling 0.01 ac, would occur during installation of the new bridge. Temporary impacts, totaling 0.02 ac, would occur as a result of stream diversion and temporary construction access. Riverine wetlands in the BSA are associated with Tres Pinos Creek and the unnamed ephemeral tributary. The wetlands are dominated by a variety of hydrophytic vegetation, and this natural community totals 0.37 ac. Permanent impacts to riverine wetlands, totaling 0.09 ac, would occur during installation of the new bridge. Temporary impacts, totaling 0.12 ac, would occur as a result of stream diversion and temporary construction access. Removal of the existing bridge and subsequent revegetation of the area currently covered by the bridge shall restore approximately 0.02 ac of riverine wetland habitat.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, BIO-9 through BIO-12, BIO-14, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would require restoration of disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with the native seed mix specified in Table 4.B; management of invasive plant species; properly revegetating the areas where RSP would be installed; properly revegetating the areas where RSP would be installed; restoration of disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with the native seed mix specified in Table 4.B; limiting the work period in the live channel of Tres Pinos Creek; placing brightly colored ESA fencing along the limits of work; use of a tarp or other protective structure during removal of the existing bridge; locating staging areas, access routes, and construction areas outside of wetland and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable; obtaining all required regulatory permits from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and/or CDFW; compensation for permanent impacts to riverine and riverine wetlands areas by purchasing credits at an approved mitigation bank at a minimum 1:1 ratio; preparation of a SWPPP and implementation of BMPs; and preparation of an Emergency Response and Cleanup Plan. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, BIO-9 through BIO-12, BIO-14, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent, on riverine and riverine wetlands to a less than significant level.

Mixed Oak Series. The mixed oak series is located on the north-facing slope in the south-central portion of the BSA. This community consists of a mix of valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) and coast live

oak species (*Quercus agrifolia*). Other representative species include Alvord oak (*Quercus x alvordiana*), gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*), California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), and an annual wildflower understory. This community totals 0.39 ac within the BSA. The project would result in the removal of 0.09 ac of mixed oak woodland vegetation, including two native oak trees (10 and 31 inches, respectively) along the south shoulder of Panoche Road as a result of construction of the realigned, new wider eastern bridge approach. Temporary impacts, totaling 0.08 ac, would also occur during temporary construction access.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-9, BIO-11, and BIO-13** would require restoration of disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with the native seed mix specified in Table 4.B; managing invasive plant species; placing brightly colored ESA fencing along the limits of work; locating staging areas, access routes, and construction areas outside of oak woodland areas to the maximum extent practicable; and compensation for the removal of arroyo willow and mulefat riparian vegetation at a 3:1 ratio by preserving, creating, and/or restoring the resource within the project site at a 3:1 ratio and/or purchasing credits at an approved mitigation bank at a minimum 1:1 ratio. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-3, BIO-9, BIO-11, and BIO-13** would reduce potential construction-related impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on the mixed oak series to a less than significant level.

Overall, implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, and BIO-9 through BIO-14, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts on riparian habitats and other sensitive natural communities identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS, to a less than significant level. Once constructed, the project would have no operational impacts.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: In addition to the measures listed below, refer to **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, BIO-9, and BIO-10** in Section 4.4.a; **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1** in Section 4.9.a; and **Compliance Measure WQ-1** in Section 4.10.a.

Mitigation Measure BIO-11 **Staging, Access, and Construction Area Placement.** The County shall ensure that the contractor's staging areas, access routes, and construction areas are located outside of wetland, riparian, and oak woodland areas to the maximum extent practicable.

Mitigation Measure BIO-12 **Regulatory Permits.** Prior to issuance of a grading permit or other authorization to proceed with project construction, the County or County contractor shall obtain any regulatory permits that are required from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), CDFW, and/or Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

Mitigation Measure BIO-13 **Arroyo Willow Riparian Vegetation, Mulefat Riparian Vegetation, and Mixed Oak Vegetation Compensatory Mitigation.** Prior to construction, the County shall approve the compensatory habitat mitigation plan for arroyo willow riparian vegetation, mulefat

riparian vegetation, and mixed oak vegetation based on the requirements of the ACOE, CDFW, and RWQCB as specified in the approved regulatory permits. Mitigation shall be accomplished using one of the following methods, or by using a combination of the methods, contingent upon approval by the ACOE, CDFW, and RWQCB:

- Preservation, creation, and/or restoration of the impacted resources per permit requirements. This work would occur solely within the project impact area.
- Purchase of credits at an approved mitigation bank per permit requirements.

Mitigation Measure BIO-14

Riverine and Riverine Wetlands Compensatory Mitigation. Prior to construction, the County shall ensure that permanent impacts to riverine and riverine wetlands be mitigated using the following method, contingent upon approval by the ACOE, CDFW, and/or RWQCB:

- Purchase of credits at an approved mitigation bank at a minimum 1:1 mitigation ratio.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

c. Would the project 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?

Waters of the United States within the BSA are limited to Tres Pinos Creek and a small ephemeral tributary totaling 0.42 ac. Wetlands within the BSA, totaling 0.37 ac, are located along the length of Tres Pinos Creek (except under the existing bridge deck and the low-water crossing) and the central length of the ephemeral tributary. Nonwetland waters, totaling 0.05 ac, consist of all features within the OHWM that do not support wetlands.

The proposed project would result in both permanent and temporary impacts to waters of the United States. Permanent impact to wetlands, totaling 0.09 ac, would occur during realignment of a portion of the ephemeral drainage, placement of the concrete pier, and RSP. Temporary impacts to wetlands, totaling 0.12 ac, would occur during stream diversion activities. Permanent impacts to nonwetland waters, totaling 0.01 ac, would occur during realignment of a portion of the ephemeral drainage and placement of RSP. Temporary impacts, totaling 0.02 ac, would occur during stream diversion activities.

The project would result in minor permanent and temporary impacts to wetlands. The project has been designed to avoid impacts to wetlands, where feasible, including constructing two retaining

walls to minimize embankment fill from encroaching into the creek. There is no viable project alternative that completely avoids temporary and permanent impacts in wetlands. The mitigation measures listed below would minimize impacts to wetlands during and after construction.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, BIO-9 through BIO-12, BIO-14, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would require restoration of disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with the native seed mix specified in Table 4.B; managing invasive plant species; properly revegetating the areas where RSP would be installed; limiting the work period in the live channel of Tres Pinos Creek; placing brightly colored ESA fencing along the limits of work; use of a tarp or other protective structure during removal of the existing bridge; locating staging areas, access routes, and construction areas outside of wetland and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable; management of invasive plant species; obtaining all required regulatory permits from the ACOE, RWQCB, and/or CDFW; and compensation for permanent impacts to riverine and riverine wetlands areas by purchase of credits at an approved mitigation bank at a minimum 1:1 ratio; preparation of a SWPPP and implementation of BMPs; and preparation of an Emergency Response and Cleanup Plan. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, BIO-9 through BIO-12, BIO-14, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential impacts, both temporary and permanent in nature, on wetlands to a less than significant level. Once constructed, the project would have no operational impacts.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: Mitigation Measure **BIO-2, BIO-4, BIO-6, BIO-7, BIO-9 through BIO-12, and BIO-14** in Section 4.4a and 4.4b above; Mitigation Measure **HAZ-1** in Section 4.9.a; and Compliance Measure **WQ-1** in Section 4.10.a.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

d. Would the project 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?

Wildlife movement corridors are linear habitats that function to connect two or more areas of significant wildlife habitat. These corridors may function on a local level as links between small habitat patches (e.g., streams in urban settings) or may provide critical connections between regionally significant habitats (e.g., deer movement corridors). Wildlife corridors typically include vegetation and topography that facilitate the movements of wild animals from one area of suitable habitat to another in order to fulfill foraging, breeding, and territorial needs.

Tres Pinos Creek is tributary to the San Benito River approximately 15 mi downstream of the BSA. It is joined by numerous tributaries along this reach. Tres Pinos Creek within the BSA is near the upper end of the watershed and provides a link between the foothill habitats and the habitats in the Hollister Valley. Consequently, Tres Pinos Creek provides a potential movement corridor for smaller species of wildlife.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 through BIO-12, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would require restoration of disturbed areas to preconstruction contours and revegetation of disturbed areas with the native seed mix specified in Table 4.B; pre-construction surveys by a qualified biologist prior to construction activities; management of invasive plant species; implementation of the provisions of the CRLF “Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration’s Federal Aid Program (8-8-10-F-58)”, which would require restoration of temporary impact habitat contours to original configuration and revegetation of disturbed areas with a native seed mix to ensure temporary impact areas within CRLF habitat are restored to pre-project conditions; preconstruction surveys by a USFWS-approved qualified biologist prior to construction; proper relocation of any CRLF; worker awareness training of all construction personnel; managing and regularly removing all trash from the worksite; maintaining at least a 60 ft setback from riparian habitat for refueling, maintenance, and staging equipment; avoiding impounding water in a manner that may attract CRLF; removal of exotic species from the project area; properly revegetating the areas where RSP would be installed; limiting the work period in the live channel of Tres Pinos Creek; preconstruction surveys for SCCC steelhead by a qualified biologist prior to construction activities; adherence to in-water work windows; worker awareness training of all construction personnel; properly installing the flow diversion metal pipe; designation of ESAs; use of a tarp or other protective structure during removal of the existing bridge; locating staging areas, access routes, and construction areas outside of wetland and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable; obtaining all required regulatory permits from the ACOE, RWQCB, and/or CDFW; preparation of a SWPPP and implementation of BMPs; and preparation of an Emergency Response and Cleanup Plan and implementation of BMPs.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 through BIO-12, HAZ-1, and Compliance Measure WQ-1** would reduce potential construction-related impacts on wildlife movement to a less than significant level.

Construction of the proposed project would result in temporary effects to wildlife movement, but these effects would be temporary in that they would only occur during construction and would not result in a permanent barrier to aquatic or terrestrial animals. Once the proposed project is operational, land uses in the BSA would be the same as under existing conditions. Operation of the proposed project would have no permanent impacts to wildlife movement corridors.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: **Mitigation Measures BIO-2 through BIO-12** in Section 4.4a and 4.4b; **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1** in Section 4.9.a; and **Compliance Measure WQ-1** in Section 4.10.a.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

e. Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Woodlands within San Benito County are regulated by the County of San Benito Zoning Ordinance, Title 19, Chapter 19.33 – Management and Conservation of Woodlands. This policy is intended to

control the removal of protected woodlands, maintain and enhance tree cover, and protect woodland environments. A discretionary permit is required for the removal of woodlands per the canopy retention standard in Table 19.33.007(1) (please refer to San Benito Zoning Ordinance, Title 19).

Construction of the proposed project would result in the removal of 0.09 ac of mixed oak woodland vegetation, including two native oak trees (10 and 31 inches, respectively). Additionally, the project has been designed to avoid impacts to oak woodlands, where feasible, including the use of retaining walls and minimizing the amount of cut and fill required to install the new roadway bridge approaches. Based upon the above considerations, it is determined that there is no practicable alternative to the proposed construction in oak woodlands and that the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to oak woodlands.

Project impacts do not meet the threshold for the above mentioned discretionary permit. Additionally, as detailed in **Mitigation Measure BIO-13**, the removal of mixed oak vegetation would be compensated at a 3:1 ratio through preservation, creation, and or/restoration of the impacted resource and/or purchase of credits at an approved mitigation bank. The proposed project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources. There would be a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: **Mitigation Measure BIO-13**, as described in Section 4.4.b.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

f. Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

The proposed project does not fall in an area with an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP), or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan, and therefore would not present a conflict with any such plan. There would be no impact and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

4.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The discussion and analysis in this section is based on the Supplemental Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR) (LSA, July 2021). The Supplemental HPSR is not available due to resource confidentiality. Refer to California Government Code Sections 6254.10 and 6254(r); California Code of Regulations Section 15120(d); and Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966). Preparation of the Supplemental HPSR included an archaeological presence/absence excavation (an Extended Phase I [XPI]). The project area for cultural resources is the Area of Potential Effects (APE), which is the area where ground-disturbing activities would occur, including access routes, staging, and work areas. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) evaluated in the Supplemental HPSR encompasses 3.66 ac. For the purposes of this IS/MND, the project site is the same as the APE.

a. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5; and

CEQA defines a “historical resource” as a resource that meets one or more of the following criteria: (1) listed in, or determined eligible for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register); (2) listed in a local register of historical resources as defined in California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5020.1(k); (3) identified as significant in a historical resource survey meeting the requirements of PRC Section 5024.1(g); or (4) determined to be a historical resource by a project’s Lead Agency (PRC Section 21084.1 and *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15064.5(a)).

The Caltrans Historic Bridge Inventory lists the Panoche Road Bridge (#43C-0027) as a Category 5 bridge. Category 5 bridges are not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historical Places (National Register).

Record searches were conducted on August 26, 2011, and April 10, 2020, at the Northwest Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System and did not identify any previously recorded cultural resources within the project site or the 0.5 mi search radius. Field surveys conducted on November 2, 2011, April 2, 2011, and July 10, 2012, did not identify any archaeological artifacts or sites. An updated intensive pedestrian survey of the project site conducted on April 2, 2020, resulted in the identification of one precontact-period bedrock milling station archaeological site (LSA-PRB-001) and two isolated artifacts (PRB-ISO-001, a cryptocrystalline core, and PRB-ISO-002, a hopper mortar). The proposed project has been designed to avoid the bedrock milling feature (LSA-PRB-001); this feature would not be affected by the proposed project.

As isolated artifacts with no informational potential, no special or particular qualities, and no direct association with scientifically recognized prehistoric or historic events or persons, archaeological resources PRB-ISO-001 and PRB-ISO-002 do not qualify as historical or unique archaeological resources. Per PRC Section 21083.2(h), non-unique archaeological resources warrant no additional consideration under CEQA other than recording of the resource, which has been conducted. As such, no historical resources were identified within the project site by the work conducted as part of the HPSR preparation. There are no known historical resources as defined in Section 15064.5 of the *State CEQA Guidelines* located within the project site. The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

b. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

As discussed above, the proposed project has been designed to avoid bedrock milling feature LSA-PRB-001, and this archaeological resource would not be affected by the proposed project. As isolated artifacts with no informational potential, no special or particular qualities, and no direct association with scientifically recognized prehistoric or historic events or persons, archaeological resources PRB-ISO-001 and PRB-ISO-002 do not qualify as historical or unique archaeological resources. Per PRC Section 21083.2(h), non-unique archaeological resources warrant no additional consideration under CEQA other than recording of the resource, which has been conducted.

There are no known significant archaeological resources within the project site. While the project site is located on a landform associated with high sensitivity for buried archaeological deposits, historic-period settlement, bridge installation, road infrastructure, and grazing activities have likely diminished this sensitivity due to associated ground disturbance. Nevertheless, to ensure that historical and archaeological resources as defined by *State CEQA Guidelines* §15064.5 are not impacted by project implementation, **Mitigation Measure CUL-1**, provided below, would be implemented. With implementation of **Mitigation Measure CUL-1**, the proposed project would ensure that impacts related to a historical or archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5 would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures:

Mitigation Measure CUL-1 **Prehistoric or Historic Archaeological Discovery Protocols.** If deposits of prehistoric or historical archaeological materials are discovered during nonmonitored project activities, all work within 25 feet of the discovery shall be redirected and a qualified archaeologist contacted, if one is not present, to assess the

situation, consult with the agencies as appropriate, and make recommendations for the treatment of the discovery. The Director of Planning at the San Benito County Building and Planning Department shall also be notified. Project personnel shall not collect or move any archaeological materials.

Any adverse impacts to the finds shall be avoided by project activities. If avoidance is not feasible, the archaeological deposits shall be evaluated to determine if they qualify as a historical resource or unique archaeological resource, or as historic property. If the deposits do not so qualify, avoidance is not necessary. If the deposits do so qualify, adverse impacts on the deposits shall be avoided, or such impacts shall be mitigated. Mitigation may consist of, but is not limited to, recovery and analysis of the archaeological deposit; recording the resource; preparing a report of findings; and accessioning recovered archaeological materials at an appropriate curation facility. Educational public outreach may also be appropriate. Upon completion of the assessment, the archaeologist shall prepare a report documenting the methods and results and provide recommendations for the treatment of the archaeological deposits discovered. The report shall be submitted to the County of San Benito for approval.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

c. Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

No known human remains are present within the project site, and there is no evidence to support the idea that Native Americans or people of European descent are buried in the project site. However, undiscovered human remains may be present below the ground surface on any property. In the unlikely event that human remains are encountered during construction activities, the proper authorities would be notified, and standard procedures for the respectful handling of human remains during the earthmoving activities would be implemented, as specified by **Compliance Measure CUL-2**. Therefore, compliance with **Compliance Measure CUL-2** would reduce the potential for impacts on unknown buried human remains to a less than significant level.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures:

Compliance Measure CUL-2 **Discovery of Human Remains.** In the event that human remains are encountered on the project site, work within 50 feet of the discovery shall be redirected and the San Benito County Coroner notified immediately, consistent with the requirements of California

Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15064.5(e). State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5097.98. If the remains are determined to be Native American, the County Coroner shall notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours, which shall determine and notify a Most Likely Descendant (MLD). With the permission of the property owner, the MLD may inspect the site of the discovery. The MLD shall complete the inspection within 48 hours of being granted access to the project site. The MLD may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

4.6 ENERGY

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. Would the project result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?

This analysis evaluates energy consumption for both construction and operation of the proposed project, including diesel fuel use for off-road construction equipment.

Construction. Construction of the proposed project would require the use of energy to fuel grading vehicles, trucks, and other construction vehicles. All or most of this energy would be derived from nonrenewable resources. However, construction activities are not anticipated to result in an inefficient use of energy, as gasoline and diesel fuel would be supplied by construction contractors, which would conserve the use of their supplies to minimize their costs on the project. Energy usage on the project site during construction would be temporary in nature and would be relatively small in comparison to the State’s available energy sources. Therefore, construction energy impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation would be required.

Operation. Typically, energy consumption is associated with fuel used for vehicle trips and electricity and natural gas use. However, the proposed project would replace the existing two-lane bridge by constructing a wider bridge that meets current County, Caltrans, and AASHTO requirements. The project would not generate additional vehicle trips through the project area and, therefore, would not increase fuel usage. Operation of the proposed project would not require the consumption of natural gas or energy. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a long-term demand for electricity and natural gas, nor would the project require new service connections or construction of new off-site service lines or substations to serve the project. The nature of proposed improvements would not require substantial amounts of energy for either construction or maintenance purposes. Therefore, the proposed project would not use nonrenewable resources in a wasteful or inefficient manner. Thus, operational energy impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation would be required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

b. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

In 2002, the State Legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 1389, which required the California Energy Commission (CEC) to develop an integrated energy plan every 2 years for electricity, natural gas, and transportation fuels for the California Energy Policy Report. The plan calls for the State to assist in the transformation of its transportation system to improve air quality, reduce congestion, and increase the efficient use of fuel supplies with the least environmental and energy costs. The most recently adopted reports include the *2021 Integrated Energy Policy Report* (CEC 2021) and the *2022 Integrated Energy Policy Report Update* (CEC 2022). The CEC's *2021 Integrated Energy Policy Report* and *2022 Integrated Energy Policy Report Update* provide the results of its assessments of a variety of energy issues facing California.

As indicated above, energy usage in the project area during construction would be relatively small in comparison to the State's available energy sources, and energy impacts would be negligible at the regional level. Once operational, the proposed project would not increase energy use. Because California's energy conservation planning actions are conducted at a regional level, and because the project's total impact to regional energy supplies would be minor, the proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct California's energy conservation plans as described in the CEC's *2021 Integrated Energy Policy Report* and *2022 Integrated Energy Policy Report Update*. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency, and potential impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

4.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv. Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The analysis in this section is based on the *Geotechnical Investigation Report* (Quincy Engineering, Inc. 2013) unless otherwise noted (refer to Appendix D). The purpose of the *geotechnical investigation* was to evaluate the general subsurface conditions at the project site, evaluate engineering properties, and provide foundation design recommendations for replacing the existing Panoche Road Bridge. The scope of work performed for this investigation included a review of the readily available geologic literature pertaining to the site, obtaining representative soil and rock samples and logging materials encountered in the exploratory borings, laboratory testing of the collected samples, engineering analysis of the field and laboratory data, and preparation of the *Geotechnical Investigation Report*.

Two exploratory borings, Borings BH-1 and BH-2, were drilled at the planned location of the west abutment and east abutment, respectively. These two deep borings were advanced primarily by rotary wash drilling method with the use of diamond core for retrieving rock samples to a maximum depth of 50.5 ft below the existing ground surface. Another two shallow borings, Boring R-1 (located about 60 ft northwest of the proposed western abutment) and Boring R-2 (located about 200 ft southeast of the proposed eastern abutment), were drilled to about 5 ft below existing grade for pavement design. Laboratory tests were performed on selected samples to evaluate the physical and engineering properties of the soils and rocks. The tests performed for the study include the

following: Laboratory Determination of Moisture Content (California Test Method 226), Unit Weight (California Test Method 212), Grain Size Analysis (California Test Method 202), Corrosion Test (California Test Method 643), R-value Test (California Test Method 301), and Unconfined Compressive Strength and Young's Modulus of Rock Core (ASTM D 7012). The boring data indicated shallow bedrock at the project site below an approximately 5 ft thick layer of sand and gravel. Below the surficial materials, the borings encountered Schist (approximately 5 ft thick in Boring BH-1 and 8.5 ft in Boring BH-2) overlying Graywacke to the maximum depth explored.

At the proposed location of the new bridge, groundwater is expected to be relatively deep and would not be encountered during construction. However, localized perched water may be expected between the soil and rock interface and seepage through rock fractures could be expected. It is anticipated that perched water would vary with the passage of time due to seasonal runoff, surface and subsurface flow, the water level in the creek, and other factors that were not evident at the time of the geotechnical investigation.

a. Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.

Active geologic features in San Benito County include the San Andreas, Calaveras, Sargent, Paicines, Bear Valley, Zayante Vergeles, and Quien Sabe faults (County of San Benito 2015a). Several fault systems are located about 6 to 8 mi west of the project site. The nearest Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone is the San Andreas fault, located approximately 8.2 mi west of the project site. The Pine Rock fault and Calaveras fault are approximately 7.1 mi and 6.6 mi from the project site, respectively. Since no active faults pass through the site, the potential for fault rupture is relatively low. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?

The California Geologic Survey Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Assessment (PHSA) calculates earthquake shaking hazards through historic seismic activity and fault slope rates. Four PHSA-identified faults are present within San Benito County, including the San Andreas; Calaveras, Zayante-Vergeles, and Quien-Sabe faults. Shaking from these faults is expressed as the peak ground acceleration (PGA) measured as a percentage (or fraction) of acceleration due to gravity (%g) from ground motion that has a 10 percent probability of being exceeded in 50 years. The project site is in an area of San Benito County with a PGA of 30 to 40 percent (County of San Benito 2015a).

The possibility of the project site to experience strong ground shaking is considered moderate to high. However, the proposed project would be designed in accordance with Caltrans seismic design criteria, which would include seismic attenuation features to ensure the integrity of the proposed structures remains intact during an earthquake. Therefore, the proposed project would be adequate to withstand the impacts of strong seismic ground shaking (i.e., the bridge would not collapse during a seismic event) and would not expose people or structures to adverse effects. **Mitigation Measure GEO-1**, which requires the preparation of a Final Geotechnical Report, would be required during final design and prior to the start of construction. **Mitigation Measure GEO-1** stipulates that the Final Geotechnical Report shall include appropriate seismic design provisions to be implemented as part of the final project design to address the impacts of strong seismic ground shaking on the proposed project. With implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO-1**, potential project impacts associated with seismic ground shaking would be reduced to a less than significant level.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures:

Mitigation Measure GEO-1 **Final Geotechnical Report.** During final design, a detailed geotechnical investigation shall be conducted by qualified geotechnical personnel to assess the geotechnical conditions at the project site. The geotechnical investigation shall include drilled borings and/or cone penetration tests to confirm and extend site-specific subsurface site conditions for final design. The project-specific findings and recommendations of the geotechnical investigation shall be incorporated into the final design of the proposed project and shall be summarized in the Final Geotechnical Report to be submitted to the County of San Benito for review and approval.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Liquefaction is a phenomenon in which saturated cohesionless soils are subject to a temporary but essentially total loss of shear strength under the reversing, cyclic shear stresses associated with earthquake shaking. Submerged cohesionless sands and silts of low relative density are the type of soils that are usually susceptible to liquefaction. The possibility of liquefaction occurring at the project site is dependent upon (a) the occurrence of a significant earthquake in the vicinity; (b) sufficient groundwater to cause high pore pressures; and (c) the grain size, plasticity relative density, and confining pressures of the soils at the project site.

According to the geologic investigation, based on the boring data and the published geologic map, the liquefaction potential at the project site was deemed relatively low and liquefaction was not considered for foundation design. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

iv. Landslides?

Slope instability (landslides and rockfalls) can result in the movement of material down a slope or gradient. Areas at risk from landslides within San Benito County are expected to be concentrated along active faults and steep topographical slopes with weak soil and rock. The project site is surrounded to the northwest, north, south, and southwest by steep hillsides. According to the geologic investigation, a large landslide was identified about 800 ft west of the project site, but given the distance to the project site, landslides would not pose an impact to the proposed project. The potential for seismically induced landslides to occur at the project area would be the same as in the existing condition. There is no potential for the proposed project to expose people or structures to impacts related to landslides. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

b. Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

During construction activities, soil would be exposed during grading and excavation activities, and there would be an increased potential for soil erosion compared to existing conditions. Additionally, during a storm event, soil erosion could occur at an accelerated rate. The increased erosion potential could result in short-term water quality impacts as identified in Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality. As required by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit, and as prescribed in **Compliance Measure WQ-1**, a SWPPP would be prepared that would specify construction BMPs to be implemented during construction activities. Construction BMPs would include Erosion Control BMPs designed to minimize erosion. With implementation of **Compliance Measure WQ-1**, substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil during construction would be reduced to a less than significant level.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in an increase in impervious surface area at the project site by approximately 8,426 square feet. The operation of the proposed project would result in increases in surface runoff and runoff velocity, which would increase the likelihood of soil erosion. However, implementation of **Compliance Measure WQ-2**, requiring compliance with post-construction Construction General Permit requirements that require postconstruction runoff to match preconstruction runoff for the 85th percentile storm event, would reduce the likelihood of

erosion or loss of topsoil during project operations. With implementation of **Compliance Measure WQ-2**, substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil would be reduced to a less than significant level.

A retaining wall would be constructed at the cut at the hillside near the southern abutment and RSP would be installed on both sides of the creek banks to protect the abutment from hydraulic scour. These measures would prevent erosion of the creek banks during the operational period of the project after construction is complete.

Overall, no mitigation is required. However, **Compliance Measures WQ-1 and WQ-2**, provided in Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality, are standard conditions based on local, State, and federal regulations or laws that serve to reduce impacts associated with soil erosion. These compliance measures are applicable to the proposed project and shall be incorporated to ensure that the proposed project has minimal impacts associated with soil erosion.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: Please refer to **Compliance Measures WQ-1, and WQ-2** in Section 4.10.a.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

c. Would the project 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- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

As described in the geotechnical investigation, the exploratory borings indicated bedrock at shallow depths below a 5 ft thick layer of sand and gravel. The proposed location of the new bridge is underlain by Franciscan Assemblage, which is submetamorphosed from eugeosynclinal marine clastic sedimentary and minor mafic igneous rock. The proposed bridge location is underlain by Glauconite blueschist (gl) and Graywacke sandstone (fs). Blueschist was observed from the existing slope along Tres Pinos Creek during the geotechnical investigation site visit. Glauconite blueschist (gl) is characterized as massive, coherent, and metamorphosed from ultramafic igneous rocks. Graywacke sandstone (fs) is characterized as massive to bedded, hard, fine-grained, including interbeds of gray claystone-siltstone, and somewhat shattered and sheared.

Subsidence or Collapse. Subsidence or collapse can result from the removal of subsurface water resulting in either catastrophic or gradual depression of the surface elevation of a project site. As discussed above, groundwater is expected to be relatively deep at the proposed bridge location. However, localized perched water may be expected between the soil and rock interface and seepage through rock fractures could be expected. In addition, it is anticipated that perched water would vary with the passage of time due to seasonal runoff, groundwater fluctuations, surface and subsurface flow, water level in the creek, and other factors that were not evident at the time of the geotechnical investigation. Additionally, land subsidence generally does not occur in response to declines in shallow groundwater (East Bay Municipal Utility District GSA and City of Hayward GSA 2021); therefore, potential impacts related to subsidence or soil collapse would be less than significant.

Liquefaction or Lateral Spreading. As discussed above, the geotechnical investigation concluded that the liquefaction potential at the proposed bridge location is relatively low. Additionally, groundwater was not encountered in the exploratory borings at the time of drilling. Therefore, potential impacts related to liquefaction or lateral spreading would be less than significant.

Landslide. As discussed above, a large landslide was identified about 800 ft west of the project site. However, the potential for landslides to occur in the project area would be the same as in the existing condition. Therefore, potential impacts related to landslides would be less than significant. Overall, the proposed project is not 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- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

d. Would the project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

Expansive soils are characterized by the potential for shrinking and swelling as the moisture content of the soil decreases and increases, respectively. Shrink-swell potential is influenced by the amount and type of clay minerals present and can be measured by the percent change of the soil volume. Expansive soils generally have a substantial amount of clay particles, which can give up water (shrink) or absorb water (swell). The change in the soil volume can cause structures to move unevenly and crack. The extent or range of the shrink/swell is influenced by the amount and kind of clay present in the soil. Expansive soils can be widely dispersed, and they can occur in hillside areas as well as low-lying alluvial basins.

Soil types located within the project area include the following:

- **Vallecitos Rocky Loam, 30 to 50 Percent Slopes, Eroded:** The Vallecitos series consists of shallow, well-drained soils formed in material weathered from metamorphosed sandstone and shale dominantly of the Franciscan Formation. Vallecitos soils are on hills and have slopes of 9 to 75 percent. These soils have medium to very rapid runoff and slow permeability and are mainly used for livestock grazing. Vegetation consists primarily of annual grasses, forbs and scattered oak, sagebrush, chamise, and Digger pine (USDA 2001).
- **Sorrento Silt Loam, 2 to 9 Percent Slopes:** The Sorrento series consists of very deep, well-drained soils that formed in medium-textured alluvium, mostly from sedimentary formations. Sorrento soils are on alluvial fans and stabilized floodplains and have slopes of 0 to 15 percent. These soils have negligible to medium runoff and moderate to moderately slow permeability, depending upon the dominant texture and amount of stratification in the lower part of the profile. These soils are used mainly for growing irrigated fruit, nut, field, forage, and truck crops,

as well as some dry grain. Uncultivated areas are mostly annual grasses and forbs with sycamore along drainage ways (USDA 1999).

According to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey, Vallecitos rocky loam has a plasticity index of 16 percent and a liquid limit of 36 percent. Sorrento silt loam has a plasticity index of 15 percent and a liquid limit of 38 percent. According to a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) study titled *An Evaluation of Expedient Methodology for Identification of Potentially Expansive Soils* (FHWA 1977), soils with a liquid limit percentage less than 50 and a plasticity index less than 25 have a low potential swell classification. Therefore, both soil types would have low swelling based off their plasticity index and liquid limit values. Therefore, impacts associated with expansive soils would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

e. Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

The proposed project involves a bridge replacement and nearby roadwork. The project is transportation-related, and no septic or alternative waste treatment systems would be required during construction or operation of the proposed project. Portable toilets would be maintained on site throughout the construction period and would be serviced regularly by a service provider. The proposed project would not result in temporary or permanent impacts associated with soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

Paleontological resources include fossilized remains or traces of mammals, plants, and invertebrates, as well as their imprints. Such fossil remains, as well as the geological formations that contain them, are also considered a paleontological resource. Together, they represent a limited, nonrenewable scientific and educational resource. No paleontological resources are currently known to exist on the project site; however, the proposed project would require excavation of approximately 3,500 cy of soil to a maximum depth of approximately 22 ft below the ground

surface. Ground-disturbing activities could adversely impact previously unidentified fossils. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO-2** would require excavation to halt within 50 ft of any discovered paleontological resources and examination of any paleontological find by a qualified paleontologist to determine its significance. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO-2** would reduce impacts on paleontological resources to less than significant levels.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures:

Mitigation Measure GEO-2 **Paleontological Resources.** In the event of an unanticipated discovery of a paleontological resource during construction, excavations within 50 feet of the find shall be temporarily halted or diverted until the discovery is examined by a qualified paleontologist (per Society of Vertebrate Paleontology standards [SVP 1995,1996]). The qualified paleontologist shall document the discovery as needed, evaluate the potential resource, and assess the significance of the find. The paleontologist shall notify the appropriate agencies to determine procedures that would be followed before construction is allowed to resume at the location of the find. If the County of San Benito (County) determines that avoidance is not feasible, the paleontologist shall prepare an excavation plan for mitigating the effect of the project on the qualities that make the resource important, and such plan shall be implemented. The plan shall be submitted to the County for review and approval.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

4.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are present in the atmosphere naturally and are released by natural sources or are formed from secondary reactions taking place in the atmosphere. However, over the last 200 years, human activities have caused substantial quantities of GHGs to be released into the atmosphere. These extra emissions are increasing GHG concentrations in the atmosphere and enhancing the natural greenhouse effect, which is believed to be causing global climate change. The gases that are widely seen as the principal contributors to human-induced global climate change are:

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂)
- Methane (CH₄)
- Nitrous oxide (N₂O)
- Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)
- Perfluorocarbons (PFCs)
- Sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆)

Certain gases, such as water vapor, are short-lived in the atmosphere. Others remain in the atmosphere for significant periods of time, contributing to climate change in the long term. Water vapor is excluded from the list of GHGs above because it is short-lived in the atmosphere and its atmospheric concentrations are largely determined by natural processes, such as oceanic evaporation.

These gases vary considerably in terms of Global Warming Potential (GWP), which is a concept developed to compare the ability of each GHG to trap heat in the atmosphere relative to another gas. GWP is based on several factors, including the relative effectiveness of a gas in absorbing infrared radiation and the length of time that the gas remains in the atmosphere (“atmospheric lifetime”).

The GWP of each gas is measured relative to CO₂, the most abundant GHG; the definition of GWP for a particular GHG is the ratio of heat trapped by one unit mass of the GHG to the ratio of heat

trapped by one unit mass of CO₂ over a specified time period. GHG emissions are typically measured in terms of pounds or tons of “CO₂ equivalents” (CO₂e).

Construction Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Construction activities, such as site preparation, site grading, on-site heavy-duty construction vehicles, equipment hauling materials to and from the site, and motor vehicles transporting the construction crew, would produce combustion emissions from various sources. During construction of the proposed project, GHGs would be emitted through the operation of construction equipment and from worker and builder supply vendor vehicles, each of which typically uses fossil-based fuels to operate. The combustion of fossil-based fuels creates GHGs such as CO₂, CH₄, and N₂O. Furthermore, CH₄ is emitted during the fueling of heavy equipment. Exhaust emissions from on-site construction activities would vary daily as construction activity levels change. According to the results of the RoadMod analysis, the project would generate 1,323.19 metric tons (MT) CO₂e construction emissions. The MBARD does not provide guidance for analyzing GHG emissions during construction. Amortizing the project emissions over 50 years (the expected lifespan of the project) would result in GHG emissions of approximately 26.4 MT CO₂e per year. Therefore, based on the minimal emissions that would be generated by construction of the project, the proposed project would not generate GHG emissions that would have a significant impact on the environment, and construction-related impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

Operational Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Long-term GHG emissions are typically generated from mobile and area sources as well as indirect emissions from sources associated with energy consumption. Mobile-source GHG emissions typically would include project-generated vehicle trips to and from a project site. Area-source emissions would be associated with activities such as landscaping and maintenance on the project site. Energy-source emissions are typically generated at off-site utility providers as a result of increased electricity demand generated by a project. In addition, water-source emissions associated with the proposed project are generated by water supply and conveyance, water treatment, and water distribution. The proposed project would replace the existing two-lane bridge by constructing a wider and taller bridge that meets current County, Caltrans, and AASHTO requirements. The project would not generate additional vehicle trips through the project area and, therefore, would not increase mobile-source emissions. The project would result in low levels of off-site emissions due to energy generation associated with lighting along the project segment. However, these emissions would be minimal. Operation of the proposed project would not generate GHG emissions that would have a significant impact on the environment, and operational impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

b. Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

San Benito County does not have an adopted climate action plan; however, the State has established GHG reduction goals under Assembly Bill (AB) 32, SB 32, and Executive Order (EO) S-3-05. As discussed in Response 4.8.a, the proposed project's short-term construction and long-term operational GHG emissions would be minimal and would not have a significant impact on the environment. Since the proposed project's GHG emissions would be minimal, the proposed project would not result in emissions that would conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions, and a less than significant impact would occur. No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less Than Significant Impact

4.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.9.1 Impact Analysis

a. Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

Hazardous materials are chemicals that could potentially cause harm during an accidental release and are defined as being toxic, corrosive, flammable, reactive, an irritant, or a strong sensitizer. Hazardous substances include all chemicals regulated under the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) “hazardous materials” regulations and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) “hazardous waste” regulations. Hazardous wastes require special handling and disposal because of their potential to damage public health and the environment. The severity of any such exposure is dependent upon the type, amount, and characteristics of the hazardous material involved; the time, location, and nature of the event; and the sensitivity of the individual or environment affected.

The proposed project would include the demolition of an existing bridge, Tres Pinos Creek slope protection installation, roadway approach work/realignment, and installation of a new bridge across

Tres Pinos Creek. During construction, hazardous materials may be present on site from construction vehicles and demolition debris.

Construction of the proposed project would include the use of heavy equipment for grading, hauling, and handling materials. Use of this equipment may require the use of fuels and other common materials that have hazardous properties (e.g., fuels and oils). These materials would be used in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations and, if used properly, would not pose a hazard to people, animals, plants, or sensitive areas (i.e., Tres Pinos Creek) on or near the project site. As described in **Mitigation Measure BIO-5**, the proposed project would maintain at least a 60 ft setback from riparian habitat for refueling, maintenance, and staging equipment. The use of such hazardous materials would be temporary, and the proposed project would not include a permanent use or source of hazardous materials. During construction, the proposed project would be required to abide by San Benito County General Plan Policy HS-6.1: Hazardous Materials Storage and Disposal, which requires the proper disposal and storage of hazardous materials. Additionally, the construction contractor would prepare and implement an Emergency Response and Cleanup Plan in the event a spill was to occur, as specified in **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1**. As required by **Mitigation Measure BIO-5**, in order to prevent hazardous runoff in the event of a fuel or oil spill, all equipment maintenance and refueling would be conducted within designated areas outside of the Tres Pinos Creek channel. Transportation of hazardous materials would be regulated by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and Caltrans. **Mitigation Measures HAZ-2 and BIO-5** would require the contractor to adhere to procedures for construction equipment maintenance, refueling, and washing activities.

The proposed project would not include a permanent use or source of hazardous materials. Additionally, the proposed project would not facilitate the routine transport of hazardous materials.

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures HAZ-1, HAZ-2, and BIO-5**, potential impacts associated with the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be reduced to a less than significant level.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures:

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 **Emergency Response and Cleanup Plan.** Prior to commencement of construction activities, the construction contractor shall prepare an emergency response and cleanup plan. The construction contractor shall implement the plan during construction. The plan shall detail the methods to be used to contain and clean up a spill of petroleum products or other hazardous materials in the work area.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 **Construction Equipment Maintenance, Refueling, and Washing Activities.** During construction, the construction contractor shall ensure that all equipment maintenance, refueling, and storage are conducted on level ground outside the Tres Pinos Creek channel, away from concentrated flows of stormwater and drainage courses. Drip pans or absorbent pads shall be used during equipment

refueling and maintenance activities. Adequate quantities of absorbent spill clean-up material and spill kits shall be kept in the refueling and maintenance area and on fuel trucks. Spill clean-up and materials shall be disposed of immediately after use.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

b. Would the project 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?

Exposure to hazardous materials during construction and operation of the proposed on-site uses could result from: (1) the improper handling or use of hazardous substances; (2) a transportation accident; or (3) an inadvertent release resulting from an unforeseen event (e.g., fire, flood, or earthquake).

After project construction, the newly developed bridge on Panoche Road crossing Tres Pinos Creek would operate as under existing conditions. The potential for releasing hazardous materials into the environment during project operation would be limited to vehicles traveling on the roadway. This potential exists under existing conditions and would not be exacerbated by implementation of the proposed project because traffic volumes would remain the same. Additionally, the transport of hazardous materials is subject to strict regulations established by State and federal agencies. Therefore, operation of the proposed project would not result in a significant impact associated with hazards from a reasonably foreseeable upset and accident condition involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.

However, demolition and construction activities at the project site could expose construction workers to potentially hazardous materials, including traffic striping, asbestos-containing materials (ACM), lead-based paint (LBP), and aerially deposited lead (ADL). Hazardous materials shall be excavated, transported, and disposed of in accordance with the rules and regulations of the following agencies: USEPA, Caltrans, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA), the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), and local regulatory agencies (i.e., the County of San Benito).

Traffic Striping. Traffic striping within the project area would include both yellow and white striping. Lead chromate is the yellow pigment that was used in “safety yellow” colored traffic striping on the majority of California roads. Lead chromate-containing yellow striping materials may contain ~20,000 parts per million (ppm) of lead and ~5,000 ppm of hexavalent chromium. The debris produced when this older yellow striping is ground from the pavement would likely meet the definition of a hazardous waste, unless it is substantially diluted with the underlying pavement material (by using extensive pavement milling). As such, removal of yellow striping on Panoche Road has the potential to expose construction workers to a hazardous material. In order to reduce this potential impact, **Mitigation Measure HAZ-3** would require sampling of waste generated during

striping and, if necessary, handling and disposal of the material as a hazardous waste. Implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Asbestos-Containing Materials/Lead-Based Paint. The existing bridge spanning Tres Pinos Creek on Panoche Road was built in 1959. Due to the age of the existing bridge, there is a potential for presence of ACM and LBP. Demolition of the existing structure could potentially release airborne particles of hazardous materials that may affect construction workers or the public.

An Asbestos and Lead-containing Paint Survey Report was conducted for the proposed project by Geocon Consultants (2014). As detailed in the Asbestos and Lead-containing Paint Survey Report, investigative sampling concluded that no asbestos was detected, and the Cal/OSHA asbestos standard does not apply for the proposed project.

The USEPA and the DTSC require that LBP with lead concentrations equal to or greater than the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of an LBP (greater or equal to 1 milligram per square centimeter [mg/cm^2] or 0.5 percent lead by weight) be removed prior to demolition if the paint is loose and peeling. If the paint is securely adhering to the substrate, the entire material may be disposed of as demolition debris, which is a nonhazardous waste. Loose and peeling paint must be disposed of as a State and/or federal hazardous waste if the concentration of lead exceeds applicable waste thresholds. Investigative samples were taken from the existing bridge barriers and bridge barrier posts and girders to determine concentrations of lead. Lead was detected in both samples. Lead concentrations detected in the sample taken from the bridge barriers would not be classified as California or Federal hazardous, but lead concentration detected in the sample taken from the bridge barrier posts and girders would be classified as California and Federal hazardous if the lead-based paint is removed from the existing pavement. Therefore, removal of the existing Panoche Road Bridge over Tres Pinos Creek and yellow traffic striping of the proposed bridge have the potential to expose construction workers to LBP.

As recommended in the Asbestos and Lead-containing Paint Survey Report, paints at the project site should be treated as lead-containing for purposes of determining the applicability of the Cal/OSHA lead standard during demolition activities.

As described below, **Mitigation Measure HAZ-4** would require compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Standard 1926.6 to protect construction workers while handling or disposing of LBP. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures HAZ-4** would reduce impacts related to the release of airborne LBP to a less than significant level.

Aerially Deposited Lead and Other Potential Soil/Groundwater Contamination. Soils located adjacent to roads (i.e., Panoche Road) may contain elevated concentrations of ADL in exposed surface soils, which could pose a health hazard to construction workers. Potential ADL impacts are anticipated to be limited to the areas of exposed soil at both ends of the bridge where the Panoche Road realignment would be conducted. Although potential soil/groundwater contamination at the project site is unlikely, implementation of **Mitigation Measures HAZ-5 and HAZ-6**, described below, would reduce potential impacts related to ADL and other soil contamination to an impact level that is less than significant.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures:

Mitigation Measure HAZ-3 **Paint Striping Protocol.** During construction, if the contractor is required to remove yellow striping from existing pavement, the waste generated shall be sampled, handled, and disposed of as a hazardous waste. Processes and requirements for removal or grinding of traffic striping shall be conducted in compliance with the current (2018) California Department of Transportation Standard Special Provisions (Caltrans SSPs).

Mitigation Measure HAZ-4 **Lead-Based Paint Abatement Program.** During construction, the construction contractor shall comply with federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Standard 1926.6 related to lead abatement, and all other applicable State and federal requirements for handling and disposal of lead-based paint (LBP), asbestos-containing materials (ACM), and universal wastes.

Prior to demolition of the existing bridge, LBP and ACM surveys shall be performed by a qualified environmental professional retained by the County of San Benito (County). ACM inspections in California are required to be conducted by a Certified Asbestos Consultant (CAC) or a Certified Site Surveillance Technician (CSST) working under a CAC. The LBP inspection should be conducted by a California Department of Public Health Certified Lead Inspector/Assessor as defined in Title 17 California Code of Regulations (CCR), Division 1, Chapter 8. If any LBP or ACM is identified, it shall be abated and removed from the site in accordance with all applicable regulations, including OSHA requirements. The County shall verify that the surveys and abatement or removal, as necessary, have been completed prior to any demolition and construction activities on the project site.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-5 **Soil Investigation.** Prior to the initiation of project construction, a soil investigation shall be performed by a licensed professional to evaluate whether ADL or other potentially hazardous constituents are present in shallow soils that would be disturbed. Chemical analyses for soil shall be performed by an analytical laboratory certified by the California Department of Public Health Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program. A licensed professional shall review the results of the soil investigation and provide recommendations on additional investigation activities, if any, and soil management recommendations shall be implemented during project construction, if applicable. The analytical results of the soil investigation shall be compared to hazardous waste criteria

and health and safety thresholds for construction workers. If the analytical results exceed thresholds for construction workers, the County shall oversee that provisions for soil handling and disposal comply with the Caltrans Soil Management Agreement for Aerially Deposited Lead-Contaminated Soils.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-6

Risk Management Plan. Based on the results of the preconstruction soil characterization, the construction contractor shall implement a Risk Management Plan (RMP) that shall identify special soil management and disposal procedures and/or construction worker health and safety procedures to be implemented during project demolition and construction activities to reduce exposure to hazardous materials. The RMP shall include all necessary procedures to ensure that excavated soils are stored, tested, managed, and disposed of in a manner that is protective of human health and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The County shall ensure that the RMP includes available data from any pre-project construction soil sampling activities. The County shall provide the RMP to the construction contractor and ensure that the contractor follows the RMP. The RMP shall consider and include the following requirements:

- Excavation, transportation, and placement operations shall result in no visible dust.
- A construction “Exclusion Zone” shall be identified where hazardous materials may be stored. A temporary security fence shall be installed to surround and secure the exclusion zone.
- Air quality shall be monitored during excavation of soils contaminated with hazardous constituents.
- Staging of hazardous materials shall comply with the requirements in CCR Title 22, Sections 6626.250 to 66265.260.
- If temporary stockpiling of hazardous materials is necessary, the construction contractor shall:
 - Cover the stockpile with plastic sheeting or tarps;
 - Install a berm around the stockpile to prevent runoff from leaving the area; and
 - Locate the stockpile away from the unnamed tributary and the Tres Pinos Creek watershed area.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

c. Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

The proposed project is not located within 0.25 mi of an existing or proposed school, and there are no schools within the project area. The closest school to the project site is Panoche School District and is located approximately 12 mi west at 31441 Panoche Road in Paicines (San Benito County Office of Education n.d.). Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not result in any impacts associated with emitting hazardous emissions or handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mi of an existing or proposed school. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

d. Would the project 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?

The proposed project site is located in a rural area of San Benito County. The EnviroStor website was accessed to determine if a hazardous materials site was located within or near the project site. There are no hazardous materials sites within or adjacent to the project site. The nearest hazardous materials site is 2.7 mi south of the project site and is a State response cleanup site. As such, the proposed project is not located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

e. Would the project be 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?

There are no airport land use plans identified by the County near the proposed project site. Furthermore, there are no public airports or public use airports within 2 mi of the project site. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for

people residing or working in the project area within an airport land use plan or within 2 mi of an airport. No impact would occur, and no mitigation measures are required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

f. Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

The County adopted the San Benito County Operational Area in August 2015. The proposed project would not interfere with any portion of the adopted plan, and the project site is not within an adopted emergency evacuation plan. Panoche Road is the major road to evacuate rural residents if an emergency (i.e., wildland fire) were to occur. Emergency access on the road would be maintained during construction by keeping one lane open on the existing bridge. Demolition of the existing bridge would not be completed until after the proposed bridge is completed and functional. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure TR-1** would ensure that temporary impacts of project construction associated with emergency access would be less than significant by requiring the development of a Transportation Management Plan (TMP). Once the new bridge is built and the Panoche Road is realigned, the old bridge and Panoche Road approaches would be closed and removed. This type of construction would ensure that Panoche Road remains open during project construction, reducing the potential impact of closing down the only emergency evacuation route from the project area. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures would be required.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

g. Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

The proposed project site is located in a State Responsibility Areas (SRA) High Fire Hazard Severity Zone according to CAL FIRE mapping. As such, CAL FIRE would respond to wildfires in the project vicinity. During construction of the proposed project, construction equipment being used has the potential to generate sparks that could result in the commencement of a wildfire. In accordance with **Mitigation Measure HAZ-7**, BMPs would be implemented to reduce the potential for spark generation during construction activities. The proposed project would not alter the risk or impacts of wildland fires to residences as compared with the existing conditions. With incorporation of **Mitigation Measure HAZ-7**, potential impacts involving wildland fires would be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation.

Significance Determination: Potentially Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures:

Mitigation Measure HAZ-7 **Fire Prevention Best Management Practices.** During construction, the construction contractor shall ensure the following Best Management Practices (BMPs) to address fire prevention are implemented: installation of spark arrestors on construction equipment; storage of flammable materials in areas away from natural vegetation; limiting of construction activities that could generate sparks on windy days; posting of “No Smoking” signs in the construction area; and providing fire extinguishers in construction areas.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

4.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv. Impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.10.1 Impact Analysis

The analysis provided in this section is based on the Location Hydraulic Study Report (WRECO 2013) and the Supplemental Location Hydraulic Report (WRECO 2021) (refer to Appendix E).

a. Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

Pollutants of concern during construction include sediments, trash, petroleum products, concrete waste (dry and wet), sanitary waste, and chemicals. During construction activities, excavated soil would be exposed, and there would be an increased potential for soil erosion and transport of sediment downstream compared to existing conditions. During a storm event, soil erosion could occur at an accelerated rate. Additionally, construction-related pollutants such as liquid and petroleum products and concrete-related waste, could be spilled, leaked, or transported via storm runoff into adjacent drainages and into downstream receiving waters. Any of these pollutants have the potential to be transported via stormwater runoff into receiving waters (i.e., Tres Pinos Creek).

Project construction is scheduled to occur from July 2025 to October 2025 and from July 2026 to October 2026. Construction within the Tres Pinos Creek is anticipated to take a total of

approximately 2.5 months. The creek is fed by nearby underground springs; therefore, it typically has water flowing year-round. If water is flowing in the creek at the time of construction, it shall be necessary to divert flow around the work area. The proposed project would use a 5 ft diameter pipe culvert upstream of the proposed bridge, diverting water downstream of the existing bridge. After construction is complete, the contractor would remove the pipe culvert and restore all disturbed areas within the creek to preconstruction conditions. Conducting construction activities when there is no or low flow in Tres Pinos Creek would reduce the potential for construction activities to contribute pollutants to downstream receiving waters.

During construction, the total disturbed area would be approximately 3.2 ac. Because the proposed project would disturb greater than 1 ac of soil, the proposed project is subject to the requirements of the Construction General Permit, as specified in **Compliance Measure WQ-1**. In compliance with the Construction General Permit, the construction contractor would be required to prepare a SWPPP and implement Construction BMPs during construction activities. Construction BMPs would include Erosion Control and Sediment Control BMPs designed to minimize erosion and retain sediment on site, as well as Good Housekeeping BMPs to prevent spills, leaks, and discharge of construction debris and waste into receiving waters. Construction BMPs are anticipated to include, but not be limited to, temporary fiber rolls, silt fences, hydroseed erosion controls, and concrete waste management.

Furthermore, as specified in **Mitigation Measure BIO-10**, the proposed project would construct temporary decking or an alternative system over Tres Pinos Creek during demolition of the existing bridge in order to prevent debris from dropping into the water.

With implementation of **Compliance Measure WQ-1** and **Mitigation Measure BIO-10**, which would minimize erosion and prevent the discharge of sediment into receiving waters, construction of the proposed project would not degrade surface water quality. The proposed project would result in a less than significant impact associated with the violation of water quality standards or waste discharge requirements.

According to the Geotechnical Investigation Report (see Appendix D) prepared for the proposed project at the planned location of the new bridge, groundwater is expected to be relatively deep. Due to deep groundwater levels in the project area, groundwater dewatering is not anticipated during construction. Therefore, the proposed project impacts associated with the violation of groundwater quality standards or waste discharge requirements would be less than significant.

Pollutants of concern during operation of the proposed project include suspended solids/sediments, nutrients, pesticides, heavy metals, oil and grease, toxic organic compounds, and trash and debris. The proposed project would result in a net increase in impervious surface area of approximately 0.19 ac. An increase in impervious surface area would increase the volume of runoff during a storm, which would increase the amount of pollutants discharged into downstream receiving waters. Operation of the proposed project would be subject to the postconstruction requirements of the Construction General Permit, as specified in **Compliance Measure WQ-2**. The Construction General Permit requires that the postconstruction runoff match preconstruction runoff for the 85th percentile storm event and requires preservation of the preconstruction drainage density of receiving waters. Furthermore, the Construction General Permit requires the implementation and

maintenance of postconstruction BMPs to reduce pollutants in stormwater discharges. Additionally, replacing the existing bridge with a longer and taller bridge would reduce the potential for future scouring at the bridge foundations, which would reduce sediments in the water and improve water quality.

Implementation of **Compliance Measure WQ-2** and replacement of the existing bridge, reducing scour, and thereby reducing suspended sediments in Tres Pinos Creek, would result in an overall beneficial impact to water quality. With the implementation of **Compliance Measure WQ-2**, the potential operational impacts to surface and groundwater quality related to waste discharge requirements and water quality standards would be less than significant.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures:

Compliance Measure WQ-1 **Construction General Permit.** Prior to commencement of construction activities, the proposed project shall obtain coverage under the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities (Order No. 2009-0009-DWQ, as amended by 2010-0014-DWG and 2012-0006-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000002) (Construction General Permit) or any other subsequent permit. This shall include submission of Permit Registration Documents (PRDs), including a Notice of Intent (NOI) for coverage under the permit to the SWRCB via the Stormwater Multiple Application and Report Tracking System (SMARTS). Construction activities shall not commence until a Waste Discharge Identification Number (WDID) is obtained from SMARTS. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) shall be prepared and implemented to address all construction-related activities, equipment, and materials that have the potential to affect water quality. The SWPPP shall identify the sources of pollutants that may affect the quality of stormwater and include Best Management Practices (BMPs) to ensure that the potential for soil erosion, sedimentation, and spills is minimized and to control the discharge of pollutants in stormwater runoff as a result of construction activities. Upon completion of construction, a Notice of Termination (NOT) shall be submitted via SMARTS.

Compliance Measure WQ-2 **Postconstruction Construction General Permit Requirements.** Final design of the proposed project shall comply with the postconstruction requirements of the Construction General Permit. A Postconstruction Water Balance Calculator shall be submitted as part of the PRDs that are submitted to the SWRCB via SMARTS. In compliance with the postconstruction requirements of the Construction General Permit, the project engineers shall design the

proposed project so that postconstruction runoff is equal to or less than pre-project runoff for the 85th percentile storm event or the smallest storm event that generates runoff, whichever is larger. Additionally, the project engineer shall design the proposed project to preserve the preconstruction drainage density of Tres Pinos Creek.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

b. Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

As discussed above, groundwater is expected to be relatively deep. Due to deep groundwater levels in the project area, groundwater dewatering is not anticipated during construction. Therefore, construction of the proposed project would not impact existing groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge.

The proposed project would increase impervious surface area by 0.19 ac, which would decrease infiltration to recharge the aquifer/groundwater and increase stormwater runoff. However, the proposed project is not located within a groundwater basin; therefore, stormwater runoff at the project site does not currently infiltrate and contribute to aquifer/groundwater recharge. Furthermore, the proposed project does not require the use of water, such as for irrigation or landscaping, and therefore would not decrease infiltration through the use of existing water supplies. Therefore, operation of the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact associated with the depletion of groundwater supplies or interference with groundwater recharge. No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: Refer to **Compliance Measure WQ-2** under Response 4.10.a, above.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

c. Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

i. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;

During construction activities, excavated soil would be exposed and disturbed, drainage patterns would be temporarily altered during grading and other construction activities, and there would be an increased potential for soil erosion and transport of sediment downstream when compared with existing conditions. Additionally, during a storm event, soil erosion could occur at an accelerated rate. As discussed in Response 4.10.a, above, and specified in **Compliance Measure WQ-1**, the

Construction General Permit requires preparation of a SWPPP and implementation of construction BMPs to reduce impacts to water quality during construction, including those impacts associated with soil erosion and siltation. Construction BMPs are anticipated to include, but not be limited to, temporary fiber rolls, silt fences, hydroseed erosion controls, and concrete waste management.

Additionally, if water is present in Tres Pinos Creek during construction, the creek would be channelized during construction so that it is shifted away from the location of any pier/abutment work. Stream diversion would be required during construction of the pier supports, as water in this section of Tres Pinos Creek generally flows year-round. The proposed project anticipates the use of culverts upstream of the proposed bridge, diverting water downstream of the existing bridge. Separating construction activities from the river flow and channelizing the flow would reduce the potential for erosion to occur within the river. For these reasons, adherence to **Compliance Measure WQ-1** would ensure that construction of the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact related to altering the existing drainage pattern of the project site during construction activities in a manner that would result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site.

The proposed project would increase impervious surface area by 0.19 ac. Increases in impervious surface area decrease infiltration and increase the volume of runoff during a storm event that can lead to changes in downstream erosion and siltation patterns. As specified in **Compliance Measure WQ-2**, the proposed project would comply with the postconstruction requirements of the Construction General Permit to ensure that postconstruction drainage would not result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site. In addition, scour countermeasures would be accomplished by leaving either all or a portion of the existing east abutment in place and removing the west abutment. The existing east abutment is in good condition and can be used to protect the stream bank and prevent erosion of the creek bank, which would reduce erosion and siltation on and off the project site. With implementation of **Compliance Measure WQ-2**, potential impacts related to on- or off-site erosion or siltation during project operations would be less than significant.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: Refer to **Compliance Measures WQ-1** and **WQ-2** under Response 4.10.a, above.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

- ii. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;*

During construction, soil would be disturbed and compacted, and drainage patterns would be temporarily altered, which can increase the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff and increase the potential for localized flooding compared to existing conditions. As discussed in Response 4.10.a, above, and specified in **Compliance Measure WQ-1**, the Construction General Permit requires preparation of a SWPPP and implementation of construction BMPs to control and direct surface runoff on site. By controlling and directing surface runoff on site, the BMPs would direct additional runoff into the Tres Pinos Creek, which has additional capacity. Because additional runoff during construction would be channeled to the Tres Pinos Creek, construction activities would not result in

on- or off-site flooding. With adherence to **Compliance Measure WQ-1**, construction impacts related to altering the existing drainage pattern of the site or area or increasing the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on or off site would be less than significant.

As discussed above, the proposed project would permanently increase the impervious surface area by 0.19 ac. While an increase in impervious surface area may increase the rate of surface runoff, the proposed project would be required to implement **Compliance Measure WQ-2**, which requires postconstruction runoff to be equal to or less than pre-project runoff for the 85th percentile storm event. Therefore, adherence to **Compliance Measure WQ-2** would reduce postconstruction impacts related to altering the existing drainage pattern of the site or area or increasing the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on or off site to a less than significant level.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: Refer to **Compliance Measures WQ-1 and WQ-2**, under Response 4.10.a, above.

Significance Determination After Mitigation: Less than Significant Impact

iii. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or

As discussed under Response 4.10.a, above, earthwork activities would compact soil (which can increase stormwater runoff during construction), drainage patterns would be temporarily altered during grading and other construction activities, and construction-related pollutants (e.g., liquid and petroleum products and concrete-related waste) could be spilled, leaked, or transported via storm runoff into adjacent drainages and downstream receiving waters. The proposed project would be required to implement **Compliance Measure WQ-1**, and the Construction General Permit requires preparation of a SWPPP and implementation of construction BMPs to control stormwater runoff, including the discharge of pollutants. With adherence to **Compliance Measure WQ-1**, potential impacts related to the creation or contribution of runoff that would exceed the capacity of the stormwater drainage system or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff would be less than significant.

As discussed under Response 4.10.b, above, due to the depth of groundwater, groundwater dewatering is not anticipated during construction. Therefore, potential impacts associated with the introduction of substantial sources of polluted runoff from groundwater dewatering during construction would be less than significant.

As discussed above under Response 4.10.c.i, operation of the proposed project would result in a permanent increase of impervious surface area of 0.19 ac compared to existing conditions. However, the proposed project would maintain the overall on-site drainage patterns and continue to direct surface runoff to Tres Pinos Creek. The proposed project would be required to implement **Compliance Measure WQ-2** (which requires postconstruction runoff to be equal to or less than pre-

project runoff for the 85th percentile storm event) and implementation of post construction BMPs to reduce pollutants in stormwater. With adherence to **Compliance Measure WQ-2**, potential postconstruction, project-related impacts associated with excess runoff exceeding the capacity of the existing storm drain system and contributing substantial additional sources of pollutants to the storm drain system would be less than significant.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: Refer to **Compliance Measures WQ-1 and WQ-2** under Response 4.10.a, above.

Significance Determination After Mitigation: Less than Significant Impact

iv. Impede or redirect flood flows?

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) the proposed project is designated as Zone A, which comprises areas that are subject to inundation by the 1 percent annual chance flood event (100-year floodplain).

The proposed project includes improvements within the 100-year floodplain. The existing 87 ft long bridge would be replaced with a 132 ft long bridge so that the abutments for the proposed bridge could be constructed farther from the banks of the creek. The proposed project would also reduce the number of piers in the channel from two to one. These improvements would increase the channel capacity of Tres Pinos Creek to carry flood flows and decrease water surface elevation relative to the existing condition.

Furthermore, in the existing condition, the existing bridge does not meet the FHWA's freeboard criteria of passing the 100-year flood or the 50-year flood with 2 ft of freeboard. In the existing condition, during a 100-year storm event, the available freeboard is -7.7 ft. As a result, the existing bridge is overtopped during a 100-year flood. The proposed project would raise the new bridge, expand the distance between the abutments, and reduce the number of piers as compared to the existing bridge, which would improve flood flows. In the proposed condition, the available freeboard would be 3.5 ft. As a result, the proposed project would allow for the passing of the 100-year flood under the bridge (refer to the Location Hydraulic Study Report provided in Appendix E).

Therefore, the proposed project would not impede or redirect flood flows, and impacts related to the placement of structures within a 100-year flood hazard area would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: Less Than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact

d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the project risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

The construction of the proposed project would result in a decrease in surface water elevation. According to the Supplemental Location Hydraulic Re (Appendix E), in its existing condition, the existing bridge would be overtopped during the 100-year flow. The proposed project would not be overtopped during the 100-year flow. Therefore, impacts related to risk of pollutant release flooding during storm events would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

Seiching is a phenomenon that occurs when seismic groundshaking induces standing waves (seiches) inside water retention facilities such as reservoirs and water tanks. Such waves can cause retention structures to fail and flood downstream properties. The water retention facilities closest to the proposed project are the Little Panoche Reservoir and the Paicines Reservoir, which are located approximately 17 mi and 13 mi northeast and northwest of the project site, respectively (USGS 2020). Due to the distance of the proposed project from the nearest water retention facilities, the risk associated with possible seiche waves is not considered a potential constraint or a potentially significant impact. No mitigation is required.

Tsunamis are generated wave trains generally caused by tectonic displacement of the sea floor associated with shallow earthquakes, sea floor landslides, rock falls, and exploding volcanic islands. The bridge is not located in a tsunami inundation area as identified by the DOC Tsunami Inundation Maps (DOC 2022). Due to the distance of the proposed project from the ocean (greater than 25 mi) and its location outside any tsunami inundation areas, the risk associated with tsunamis is not considered a potential constraint or a potentially significant impact. No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination: No Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: No mitigation is required.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: No Impact

e. Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

The project is within the jurisdiction of the Central Coast RWQCB. The Central Coast RWQCB adopted a Water Quality Control Plan (i.e., Basin Plan) (June 1971, with amendments effective on or before June 2019), which designates beneficial uses for all surface and groundwater within its jurisdiction and established the water quality objectives and standards necessary to protect those beneficial uses. As summarized below, the project would comply with the applicable NPDES permits and State and local regulations and would implement construction BMPs to reduce pollutants of concern and stormwater runoff. NPDES permits and associated BMPs are designed to ensure that the water quality objectives in the Water Quality Control Plan are not exceeded and that beneficial uses of receiving waters are not impaired.

As discussed above in Response 4.10.a, during construction activities, soil would be disturbed and there would be an increased potential for soil erosion compared to existing conditions.

Construction-related pollutants such as liquid and petroleum products and concrete-related waste could be spilled, leaked, or transported via storm runoff into adjacent drainages and into downstream receiving waters. As specified in **Compliance Measure WQ-1**, the proposed project would be required to prepare a SWPPP and implement construction BMPs during construction to control stormwater runoff, including the discharge of pollutants. Therefore, project construction would comply with the applicable NPDES permits and local and State regulations. The proposed project includes the installation of RSP on both sides of the creek banks to protect the abutments from hydraulic scour, which would reduce sediments in the water and improve water quality. The RSP would also prevent erosion of the creek banks. Because the proposed project would comply with NPDES requirements, including implementation of construction and postconstruction BMPs, the project would not result in water quality impacts that would conflict with the Central Coast RWQCB's Basin Plan. Therefore, impacts related to conflict with a water quality control plan would be less than significant.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was enacted in September 2014. The SGMA requires governments and water agencies of high- and medium-priority basins to halt overdraft of groundwater basins. The SGMA requires the formation of local groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) in high- and medium-priority basins. These agencies are required to adopt Groundwater Sustainability Plans to manage the sustainability of the groundwater basins. The project site is not located within a groundwater basin. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in impacts related to a conflict with or obstruction of a sustainable groundwater management plan.

Significance Determination: Less than Significant Impact

Mitigation/Compliance Measures: Refer to **Compliance Measure WQ-1** above.

Significance Determination after Mitigation/Compliance: Less than Significant Impact