



NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

- Who:** County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works
- What:** A Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared and issued for the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works, Creston Road Bridge over Quail Creek Replacement Project. The purpose of this project is to replace the existing, structurally deficient bridge which was damaged during January 2023 storm events and temporarily repaired to preserve public access. The proposed permanent bridge would consist of a 75-foot-long, 38 feet wide, single-span, precast, prestressed voided slabs supported on seat type abutments founded on a pile cap and driven steel HP piles. Traffic will be accommodated during construction with a temporary detour via South El Pomar Road. Construction activities would occur over a period of 9 months and are anticipated to begin in May of 2026. Construction will be scheduled during the non-rainy season when conditions are dry, or creek flows are at their lowest, however creek diversion and dewatering may be required. Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure project impacts are less than significant. The project location is located within the El Pomar-Estrella Subarea of the North County Planning Area, Supervisorial District 5, approximately 5 miles east of Highway 101 in a rural, unincorporated area of the county.
- Where:** Copies of the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration and all the associated documents referenced in the Mitigated Negative Declaration are available for review at on the County's website at <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/public-works/forms-documents/environmental-determinations>, as well as at the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works, 976 Osos Street, County Government Center Room 206, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408.
- Comments:** The 30-day review and comment period for the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration begins on March 2, 2025 and ends on April 1, 2025. Written comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the review period and should be addressed to: William Fox, Environmental Specialist, wafox@co.slo.ca.us, County Government Center, Room 206, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408.
- Public Hearing:** The County of San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing to consider the adoption of the Mitigated Negative Declaration. The hearing is tentatively scheduled sometime in 2025. Interested persons can access the Board of Supervisor's agenda at <http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/bos/BOSagenda.htm> to locate the date of the public hearing for this project.

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Project Title & No. Creston Road Bridge over Quail Creek Replacement Project, 300714/ED24-106

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED: The proposed project could have a "Potentially Significant Impact" for environmental factors checked below. Please refer to the attached pages for discussion on mitigation measures or project revisions to either reduce these impacts to less than significant levels or require further study.

☐ Aesthetics	☒ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☒ Public Services
☐ Agriculture & Forestry Resources	☒ Hazards & Hazardous Materials	☐ Recreation
☒ Air Quality	☒ Hydrology & Water Quality	☐ Transportation
☒ Biological Resources	☒ Land Use & Planning	☒ Tribal Cultural Resources
☒ Cultural Resources	☐ Mineral Resources	☐ Utilities & Service Systems
☐ Energy	☐ Noise	☐ Wildfire
☒ Geology & Soils	☐ Population & Housing	☒ Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation, the Environmental Division Manager finds that:

- ☐ The proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- ☒ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will 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 will be prepared.
- ☐ The proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ 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 EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

William Fox

Prepared by (Print)

Kate Shea

Reviewed by (Print)

Signature

Signature

2/26/2025

Date

2/26/2025

Date

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Project Environmental Analysis

The County's environmental review process incorporates all of the requirements for completing the Initial Study as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The Initial Study includes staff's on-site inspection of the project site and surroundings and a detailed review of the information in the file for the project. In addition, available background information is reviewed for each project. Relevant information regarding soil types and characteristics, geologic information, significant vegetation and/or wildlife resources, water availability, wastewater disposal services, existing land uses and surrounding land use categories and other information relevant to the environmental review process are evaluated for each project. Exhibit A includes the references used, as well as the agencies or groups that were contacted as a part of the Initial Study. The County Public Works Department uses the checklist to summarize the results of the research accomplished during the initial environmental review of the project.

Persons, agencies or organizations interested in obtaining more information regarding the environmental review process for a project should contact the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department, 976 Osos Street, Rm. 206, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93408-2040 or call (805) 781-5252.

A. Project

DESCRIPTION:

The County of San Luis Obispo (County) Public Works Department, with funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and oversight by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), proposes to replace the existing, structurally deficient Creston Road over Quail Creek Bridge (RD-4067-BR1). The Creston Road Bridge over Quail Creek Replacement Project (project) is located on Creston Road approximately three miles southeast of the City of Paso Robles. The purpose of this project is to permanently repair the bridge which was damaged during January 2023 storm events and temporarily repaired to preserve public access.

The project footprint consists of an approximate 4.05-acre area and contains the right-of-way for the proposed project, all areas of ground disturbance, and potential staging areas. Staging is proposed on Creston Road, within County right-of-way, and within adjacent fields that have been previously disturbed by grading and would not require improvements (e.g., grading, leveling).

The existing single-span bridge is 20 feet long and 23 feet wide. The new bridge would be a 75-foot-long, 38 feet wide, single-span, precast, prestressed voided slabs supported on seat type abutments founded on a pile cap and driven steel HP piles. The increased width is proposed to accommodate two 11-foot-wide travel lanes, two 6-foot-wide shoulders, and concrete post and beam rails, which would improve safety for agricultural equipment that uses the bridge.

The existing bridge would be demolished and a temporary construction detour would be required.

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ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER(S): County right-of-way and APN 033-181-017 to northwest, APN 033-181-020 and 033-221-006 to the southwest, APN 033-181-021 to the northeast, and APN 033-221-005 to the southeast

Latitude: 35.573092

Longitude: -120.606942

Supervisory District # 5

B. Existing Setting

Plan Area: North County

Sub: El Pomar/Estrella

Comm: Rural

Land Use Category: Agriculture Residential Suburban

Combining Designation: Flood Hazard

Parcel Size: 4.05 acre

Topography: Nearly level to steeply sloping

Vegetation: Rural, oak woodland, riparian

Existing Uses: Transportation

Surrounding Land Use Categories and Uses:

North: Agriculture; Residential Rural

East: Agriculture; residential

South: Agriculture Residential Rural;

West: Residential Rural ;

C. Environmental Analysis

The Initial Study Checklist provides detailed information about the environmental impacts of the proposed project and mitigation measures to lessen the impacts.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

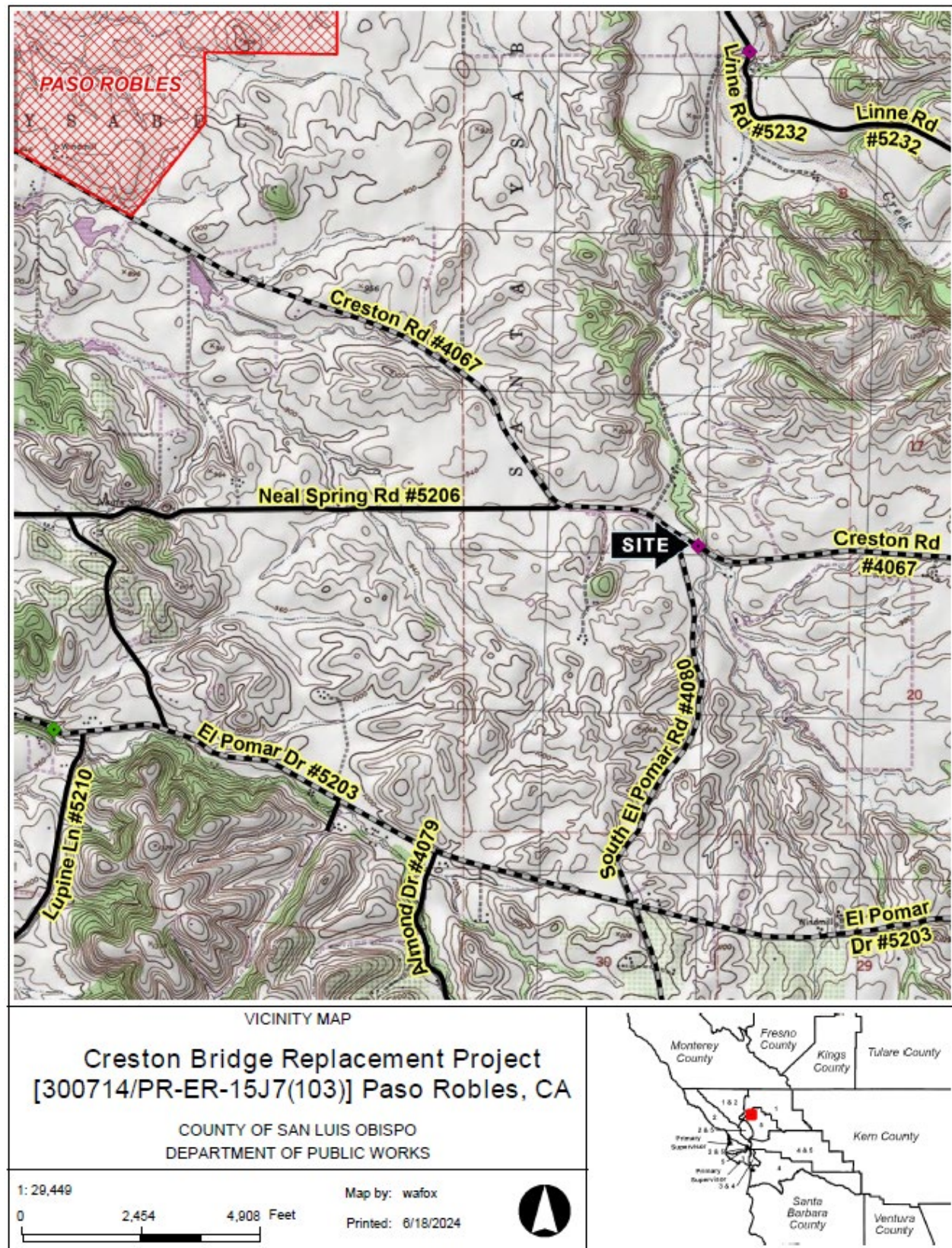


Figure 1 – Vicinity map

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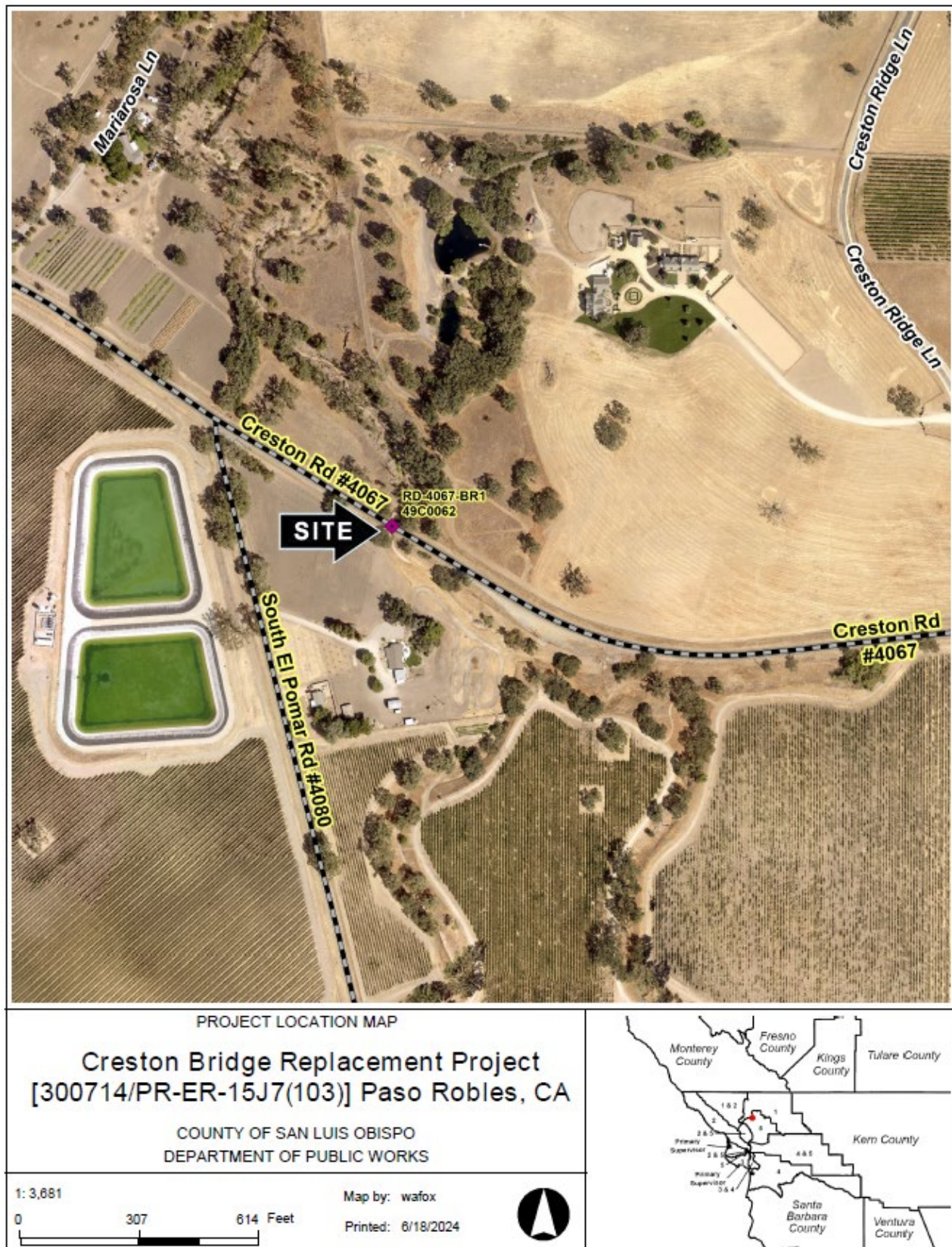


Figure 2 – Project location – aerial view

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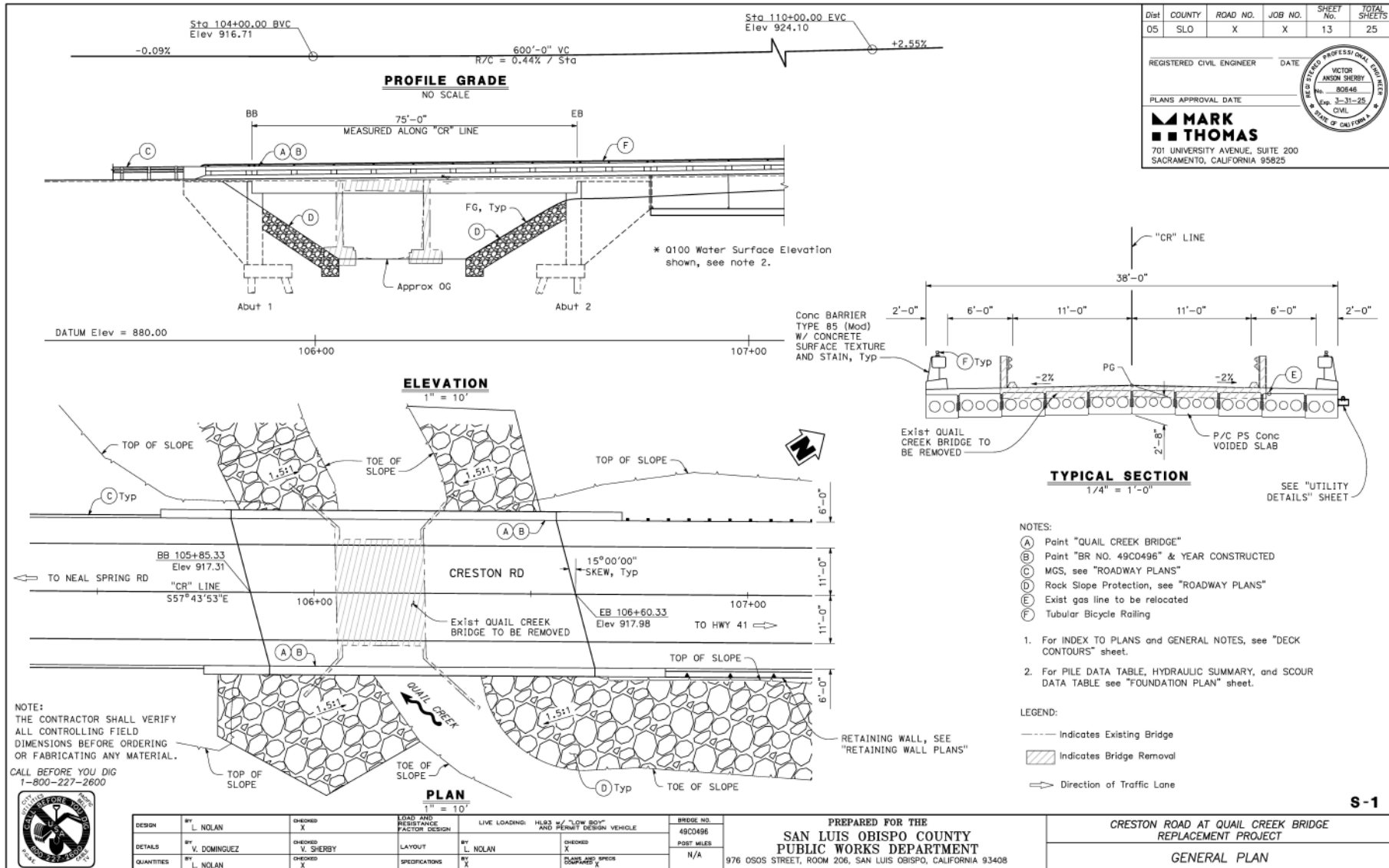


Figure 3 – Project plan view

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(a) Aerial view looking over Creston Road bridge (center of view).

Figure 5. Site photographs

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist



(b) Existing Creston Road Bridge looking west.



(c) Existing Creston Road Bridge looking east.

Figure 5. Site photographs (continued)

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(d) View looking north of existing bridge and downstream of Quail Creek channel.

Figure 5. Site photographs (continued)

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist



(e) View looking south of existing bridge and upstream stream of Quail Creek channel.

Figure 5. Site photographs (continued)

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

I. AESTHETICS

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

*Setting**California Scenic Highway Program*

The California Scenic Highway Program was created by the State Legislature in 1963 with the intention of protecting and enhancing the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. Scenic Highways within San Luis Obispo County include US 101, State Route 46 (SR 46), portions of State Route 41 (SR 41), State Route 1 (SR 1), and Lake Nacimiento Drive. The project site is located approximately 6 miles from SR 46 and 4 miles from SR 41, neither on or in close proximity to a designated scenic highway or sections of highway designated as eligible. (California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] 2018).

County of San Luis Obispo Land Use Ordinance

The County of San Luis Obispo Land Use Ordinance (LUO) also defines a Sensitive Resource Area (SRA) combining designation that applies to areas having high environmental quality and special ecological or educational significance. The project is not in an SRA combining district.

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Existing Conditions

The project is located in a rural residential and agricultural area southeast of the city of Paso Robles. The project site is surrounded by rural residences, agriculture, and undeveloped land. The existing bridge spans Quail Creek, a seasonal stream with a sparse riparian canopy.

The proposed concrete bridge would be consistent with the current bridge aesthetics. The proposed bridge structure would be designed in accordance with applicable County, AASHTO, and Caltrans design guidelines and standards.

The project is not located on a designated scenic highway and is not within a designated scenic area.

Discussion

(a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

A scenic vista is generally defined as a high-quality view displaying good aesthetic and compositional values that can be seen from public viewpoints and may be officially or informally designated by public agencies or other organizations. Vistas are inherently expansive views, usually from an open area or an elevated point. A substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista would occur if the project would significantly degrade the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads or other public areas. The project site is not designated as an SRA by the County's LUO and is not located in the view of a scenic vista. Therefore, the project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, and no impacts would occur.

(b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The project is not in or near a designated state scenic highway. The project would not damage scenic resources such as rock outcroppings or historic structures. Tree removals required for construction would be limited to localized effects within the footprint of grading for the new bridge foundations. The trees proposed to be removed for construction include valley oaks on both sides of Creston Road. Where tree removals are proposed, there are other trees that will remain in place that will be visible from Creston Road, so the project's tree removals are not expected to result in a significant impact on aesthetics.

(c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (public views are those that are experienced from 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?

The project is in a rural area. As described in (a), the project would not degrade the character or quality of public views from surrounding roads or from the bridge itself. The existing bridge is deteriorated, and the project would improve the scenic quality of the bridge without altering its rural character. Tree removals required for construction would have negligible aesthetic effects, removing a small number of trees without appreciably altering the character of the views from surrounding roads, therefore impacts would be less than significant.

(d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The project does not include installation of lights or surfaces that would create glare and therefore would not adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area; therefore, no impacts would occur.

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Conclusion/Mitigation

The project is not located within a scenic vista and is not within the viewshed of a designated scenic highway. Implementation of the project would not result in an adverse change in the existing visual character of the project area or affect day or nighttime views. Therefore, potential impacts related to aesthetic resources would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are required.

II. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>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 Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:</i>				
(a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The project site is in the El Pomar Agricultural Preserve Area. Lands bordering and in the vicinity of the project site are mapped as agricultural land use. Active agricultural land uses border the project area and both sides of Creston Road. There are lands currently under Williamson Act Contracts in the vicinity of the project site adjoining Creston Road southeast and southwest of the project area, accessed off South El Pomar Road.

Mapped soil units in the project area include Lockwood shaly loam, 0 to 2 percent slope and Arbuckle-Positas complex, 50 to 75 percent slopes, bordering Quail Creek. Lockwood shaly loam is considered prime farmland if irrigated while the Arbuckle-Positas complex is not considered prime farmland.

“Forest land,” as defined at Public Resources Code Section 12220(g), is land that can support 10-percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.

“Timberland,” as defined at Public Resources Code Section 4526, or “timberland production zone,” as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g), mean areas which have been zoned pursuant to Section 51112 or 51113 that are used for growing and harvesting timber.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation’s (CDOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California’s agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and current land use. According to the FMMP, the project site is located on land designated as “Other Land”. FMMP classifies “Other Land” as low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than forty acres. (CDOC 2020).

Williamson Act

The Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agriculture or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments which are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value.

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Discussion

- (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?*

Project impacts would primarily be in County right-of-way. Creston Road and County right-of-way are included in areas mapped as agricultural land use and portions of the County right-of-way have a mapped soil unit that is a prime farmland soil. However, the existing road and right-of-way consists of ruderal land maintained as transportation infrastructure. These areas are not currently used for agricultural purposes and would not be suitable for agricultural use.

Designated farmland is present adjacent to County right-of-way and will be used for a temporary construction easement (TCE) on adjoining parcels. The TCE would be restored to pre-existing conditions upon completion of construction and no permanent impacts to existing farmland would result from the project. Therefore, the project would not convert farmland to non-agricultural use, and impacts would be less than significant.

- (b) *Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?*

The project would not conflict with existing zoning, would not affect access to or use of nearby agricultural lands and/or Williamson Act contract properties. A temporary construction detour would result in longer commutes to/from some active agricultural lands bordering Creston Road. This would be a temporary impact and would not prevent access or create a conflict with agricultural use or zoning. In terms of operational impacts, the project would enhance use of Creston Road bridge for agricultural equipment by widening the existing shoulders. This is expected to enhance safety for agricultural vehicles, including those associated with Williamson Act contract parcels near the project site; therefore, no impacts would occur.

- (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))?*

There are no designated forest lands or timberland at or near the project site, and the project would not impact or conflict with forest land or timberland. Approximately four valley oak trees ranging from 4-12 inches DBH located in County right-of-way designated for removal to accommodate the new bridge are part of the vegetated areas bordering Quail Creek but are not part of a managed natural area, including forest land or timberland; therefore, no impacts would occur.

- (d) *Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?*

The project site and surrounding area is not designated or zoned for forest land uses and does not meet the definition of forest land established in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g). Since the project site does not support forest land, the removal of up to four trees would not result in the loss or conversion of forest land; therefore, no impacts would occur.

- (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?*

The project would not involve other changes that could result in conversion of farmland or forest land to other uses. The project would enhance agricultural uses in the vicinity, including existing agricultural land uses and Williamson Act contract parcels, by improving agricultural vehicle use and safety at the Creston Road bridge.

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Therefore, the project would not result in the conversion of Farmland or forest land, and no impacts would occur.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project will not adversely affect agricultural, forest, or timberlands. TCEs in agricultural fields on adjoining parcels will be restored to pre-existing conditions in accordance with the TCE terms developed with the landowners. A temporary bridge closure would be required during construction, with traffic accommodated with a short detour. From an operational perspective, the project would improve safety for agricultural vehicles by widening the bridge shoulders. Therefore, the project would not result in significant impacts related to agriculture and no mitigation measures are required.

III. AIR QUALITY

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

Setting

San Luis Obispo County is in non-attainment status for ozone and particulate matter 10 micrometers in size and smaller (PM₁₀) under the California standards. This means that the state air quality standards for ozone and PM₁₀ are not being met. The County's Clean Air Plan describes strategies to reduce emissions of these pollutants with the goal of improving air quality to meet the state standards by the earliest possible date.

In regard to the federal standards, while the eastern portion of the County is in non-attainment status for ozone, the western portion of the County, including the project site, is in attainment status under the federal standards. Therefore the discussion in this section focuses on the state standards.

The San Luis Obispo (SLO) Air Pollution Control District's (APCD) Clean Air Plan (CAP) provides guidance for long-term emissions, cumulative effects, and countywide programs developed with the goal of reaching acceptable air quality levels. The CAP states that consistency analysis is generally required for large residential

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and commercial projects or industrial developments. Air quality improvement strategies in the Clean Air Plan that may potentially be applicable to Public Works projects are those aimed at reducing the use of fossil fuels and reducing vehicle travel.

For project-specific emissions analyses, the current guidance is the SLOAPCD CEQA Air Quality Handbook (2012) with administrative updates (2017, 2021/22 and 2023). The Handbook provides daily and quarterly air pollutant significance thresholds that apply to project operations and construction and specifies mitigation measures to address threshold exceedances. These include diesel idling restrictions for on-road and off-road construction vehicles and equipment, control measures for any grading activities that would generate airborne dust or disturb naturally occurring asbestos, and control measures for disturbance of hydrocarbon-contaminated soils, demolition of asbestos-containing buildings and structures, and demolition of structures coated with lead-based paint.

Naturally occurring asbestos (NOA) is identified as a toxic air contaminant by the CARB. Serpentine and other ultramafic rocks are abundant throughout the state and may contain NOA. Serpentine bedrock is not present in the project area, and the project is not located within an area with known potential for NOA to occur.

Lead is a concern if sandblasting or heat gun removal techniques will be used to remove lead paint; these removal methods require a Lead Work Plan approved by APCD. Lead-based paint could be present in bridge or pavement paint. Paint samples from the bridge and pavement striping were analyzed for lead; no lead-based paint (LBP) was detected during surveys (H&F 2024).

SLOAPCD regulates demolition of asbestos-containing structures with greater than 1% asbestos content. Samples to analyze asbestos containing materials (ACM) were collected from the Creston Bridge concrete deck, rails, and concrete. No Asbestos-containing Material (ACM) were detected as part of the survey (H&F 2024).

A referral was submitted to the SLOAPCD and the County received a response on November 5, 2024. SLOAPCD's recommendations are incorporated below.

Discussion

(a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

The source control measures in the Clean Air Plan are not directly applicable to the project. The project would not affect population growth or vehicle use such as by generating new traffic or increasing vehicle miles. Accordingly, the project does not conflict with the Clean Air Plan. Additionally, the project would improve conditions for alternative modes of transportation by including 6-foot-wide shoulders on the new bridge that would enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety (part of the CAP transportation control measures). Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would be consistent with the air quality goals and objectives included in the County's CAP, and impacts related to consistency with applicable air quality plans would be less than significant.

(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?

Construction activities could generate temporary increases in local air pollution and have the potential to increase ozone and PM₁₀ emissions. Construction equipment exhaust includes reactive organic gases (ROG) and oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) that are precursors of ozone. Construction-related sources of PM₁₀ emissions include diesel particulates and dust from demolition and ground-disturbing activities.

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The proposed project's potential construction emissions were modeled using CalEEMod, Version 2022.1.1 (County 2024a) and are compared to applicable SLOAPCD thresholds in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of project emissions estimated in CalEEMod to APCD thresholds.

Threshold Criteria	ROG and NOx (combined)	Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM ₁₀)	Fugitive Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀)
Project Daily Emissions ⁽¹⁾	3.08 lbs/day	0.12 lbs/day	0.16 lbs/day
Project Q1 Emissions ⁽¹⁾	0.35 tons	0.01 tons	0.03 tons
Project Q2 Emissions ⁽¹⁾	0.39 tons	0.01 tons	<0.005 tons
SLO County APCD Daily Threshold	137 lbs/day	7 lbs/day	N/A
SLO County APCD Q1 Threshold	2.5 tons	0.13 tons	2.5 tons
SLO County APCD Q2 Threshold	6.3 tons	0.32 tons	N/A
Thresholds Exceeded?	No	No	No

1. The project's potential construction emissions were modeled using CalEEMod, Version 2022.1.1.

As shown in Table 1, the CalEEMod emissions estimates for the project are substantially below the daily and quarterly SLOAPCD thresholds for criteria air pollutants.

No operational increases in emissions would result from the project because it would not increase traffic or vehicle miles traveled. Therefore, potential impacts would be less than significant.

(c) *Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?*

Sensitive receptor locations include schools, parks and playgrounds, day care centers, nursing homes, hospitals, and residential dwelling units. The nearest sensitive receptors to the project site are residences located less than 1,000 feet from the area of disturbance. Construction activities may temporarily expose sensitive receptors to construction-related pollutants.

Construction contractors must comply with state laws regarding diesel engine idling. These regulations apply to diesel-powered construction vehicles and equipment used for the project and would help minimize the potential for exposure to nearby sensitive receptors. The regulations include a five-minute idling restriction and the requirement to post signs in designated queuing areas and job sites to remind drivers and operators of the idling limit.

Construction activities may generate fugitive dust. Implementation of the SLOAPDC standard dust control measures would ensure potential effects to sensitive receptors are reduced to less than significant.

Based on close proximity of construction areas to sensitive receptors, in addition to the state-required diesel idling requirements, the County will implement Mitigation Measures AQ-1 through AQ-6 to minimize impacts to nearby sensitive receptors to the extent feasible. These include locating staging and queuing areas for construction vehicles at least 150 feet away from nearby residences/other receptors to the extent feasible, and using alternatively fueled equipment to the maximum extent practicable. Therefore, the project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

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- (d) *Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?*

The project would not result in any odors beyond those typically associated with construction projects. Those odors would be short-term and limited to the immediate construction area. This potential impact is less than significant.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not have operational effects on air emissions. The project would result in temporary construction-related air quality impacts, but the estimated maximum daily and quarterly construction emissions would be well below the SLOAPCD pollutant thresholds. Close proximity to residences triggers potential air quality concerns for sensitive receptors. Project construction would be subject to standard diesel idling restrictions codified in state law, and standard mitigation measures would be implemented to address the potential for adverse effects to sensitive receptors, including more stringent diesel idling measures, dust control measures (as provided in the SLOAPCD CEQA Handbook, SLOAPCD 2023). With incorporation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1 through AQ-6, potential air quality impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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 US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

A Biological Resources Assessment (BRA) was prepared for the project to address special-status species and natural communities within the project area (SWCA 2024a). The BRA describes vegetation communities, special-status species of plants and wildlife, migratory birds, and jurisdictional areas potentially impacted by the project. This information was supplemented with site visits and a literature review, including generating a list of special-status species within a 5-mile radius of the site in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB March 2024).

Habitat Types

The project site includes the following land covers: disturbed/developed/agricultural, wild oats and annual brome grassland, mixed oak forest woodland, and valley oak riparian woodland. Quail Creek flows through the project area, providing unvegetated creek channel habitat. Developed land includes the existing bridge and roads, and residential development. Ruderal and disturbed lands generally border paved areas in County right-of-way.

The creek channel in the project area is incised and bordered by steep slopes. Channel substrate consists of poorly sorted silt, sand, and gravel. Quail Creek is considered ephemeral but the project site may experience flash flows conditions during the winter months.

Disturbed, developed, and agricultural land cover dominates the project area. Disturbed and developed area includes the road right-of-way, a private residence and adjacent ATV course and a small section of RSP material on the north bank of Quail Creek to the southeast of the bridge. Although disturbed areas were mostly bare, ruderal vegetation was present in exposed locations and included common early successional species such as Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*), fiddlenecks (*Amsinckia* spp.), bur clover (*Melilotus indicus*), and filaree (*Erodium* spp.), as well as those typically found in restoration seed mixes (i.e., hydroseed), such as ripgut grass (*Bromus diandrus*), wild oat (*Avena fatua*), and rye grass (*Festuca perennis*).

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Agricultural lands within the project area include grazing lands, fruit orchards, and fallow fields, as well as two lined retention basins outside the southwest perimeter of the project site.

Wild oats and annual brome grasslands primarily occurs in narrow strips along the banks of Quail Creek and in the northeast portion of the project area and is dominated by wild oats, filaree, and wild mustard species (*Brassica* spp.).

Mixed oak woodland is characterized by a mix of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), blue oak (*Q. douglasii*), and valley oak (*Q. lobata*), which occur north of Creston Road. The understory assemblage was dominated by western poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), and annual grasses.

Valley oak riparian woodland primarily occurs along the banks of Quail Creek north of the Creston Road bridge. The herbaceous layer is dominated by western poison oak and poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). The banks of Quail Creek south of the Creston Road bridge were relatively free of woodland vegetation and, as such were mapped as wild oats and annual brome grassland.

Given surrounding developed land uses, the creek and riparian zone provide important wildlife movement, shelter, and foraging habitat.

Special-Status Flora

Based on the literature review for this project, 61 special-status plant species have been documented in the nine queried USGS quadrangles in the vicinity of the project site. There is potentially suitable habitat present for 15 of these special-status plant species within the project site.

None of these species are federally or state-listed; five have a CNPS Rare Plant Rank (RPR) of 1B, one has a RPR of 2B, and nine have a RPR of 4. The project site falls outside of the known elevation range for three of these species, and nine were not observed during field surveys conducted during the blooming period.

Of the three remaining species, the project site contains only marginally suitable habitat because it lacks rocky outcrops, chaparral/coastal scrub habitat, or seasonal wetlands, meadows, or seeps, which these species prefer. Additionally, only one of these species, Lemmon's jewelflower (*Caulanthus lemmonii*) has a CNDDDB occurrence within 5 miles of the project site and it is a historic occurrence from 1960 approximately 4.8 miles northwest of the project site. Based on this information, it was determined that special-status plant species are unlikely to occur in the project site.

Special-Status Fauna

Based on a CNDDDB query and a review of existing literature, 35 special-status animal species have been documented in the nine queried USGS quadrangles in the vicinity of the project site; however, there are only CNDDDB occurrences for 12 of these species within 5 miles of the project site. Of these, there is suitable habitat at or near the project site for a total of eight species. These species are western spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*), southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*), Northern California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*), white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), and San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*). The project site does not provide suitable nesting habitat for golden eagles or prairie falcon: these species are only likely to occur transiently in the project site. The project site does support suitable habitat for other migratory nesting birds and raptors. Due to a lack of vernal pools the project area does not provide suitable habitat to support vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*).

The project site contains marginally suitable aquatic dispersal habitat for California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), and there are two ponds within dispersal distance. However, based on data from the CNDDDB and

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Thomson et al. (2016) there appears to be a gap in their distribution between the Santa Lucia Mountain Range and the Temblor Mountain Range. Based on the lack of records in that region of the County, the possible presence of introduced predatory fish in the adjacent ponds, and presence of only marginal aquatic dispersal habitat in the project site, California red-legged frogs were determined to be unlikely to occur. The project site also provides marginally suitable habitat for southwestern pond turtle, but only if water is present, and the nearest CNDDDB mapped occurrence for this species is 5.3 miles northwest from the project site. Based on these factors, as well as the ephemeral nature of Quail Creek, this species is considered unlikely to occur in the project site.

The mixed oak woodlands and valley oak riparian forest adjacent to Quail Creek potentially provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat for raptors. There are documented CNNDDB occurrences for golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*; CDFW fully protected), white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*; CDFW fully protected), and prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*; CDFW Watch List) within 15 miles of the project site. While these species are unlikely to nest within the project vicinity, there is potential for them to forage on a transient basis.

Direct and indirect impacts to special-status botanical and wildlife species may occur if they are present on-site at the time of construction. Based on appropriately timed surveys, no special-status botanical species are expected to occur; however, impacts to and removal of individual oak trees may occur. Although no special-status species were observed directly within the project area, it was determined that there is potential for the following special-status species to be present within the project site: Western spadefoot, southwestern pond turtle, Northern California legless lizard, American badger, San Joaquin kit fox, and nesting birds including several special-status raptor species. Aquatic species are considered unlikely to occur unless there is ponded or flowing water present. Additionally, the proposed project will result in temporary and permanent impacts to jurisdictional waters.

Jurisdictional Areas and Permits

The aquatic feature within the project area is Quail Creek. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) jurisdiction in freshwater systems are the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) or the landward limit of wetlands. The OHWM in Quail Creek in the project area was delineated in accordance with the USACE Arid West procedures (SWCA 2024b). No federal wetlands (i.e., three-parameter wetlands) occur in the project area. Areas below OHWM are under the jurisdiction of the USACE as well as Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The jurisdictional boundary for California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is the riparian bank, which was delineated as the landward dripline of the riparian vegetation community (SWCA 2024b).

Discussion

- (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?*

There is potential for adverse effects to the special-status species listed above from temporary and permanent project impacts. Construction impacts would be configured to avoid and minimize habitat impacts, and fencing would be used to prevent inadvertent construction impacts in adjacent areas.

American badger and San Joaquin Kit Fox may be impacted directly or indirectly during construction, which poses several direct risks, such as vehicle / equipment strikes and destruction of resources, such as dens. Further, construction may impact or deter use of habitat, yielding it unsuitable for these species. No sign of kit fox or badger, such as dens or scat, were observed during surveys. Project operations are not expected to impact potential occurrence or habitat conditions for American badger and San Joaquin Kit Fox.

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The project site provides marginally suitable habitat for northern California legless lizard and southwestern pond turtle and suitable habitat for western spadefoot. Occurrence in the channel for southwestern pond turtle and western spadefoot is considered unlikely unless there is ponded or flowing water present during construction. Construction activities pose risks for direct and indirect impacts to these species. For example, reptiles basking on roadways and in channel and bank areas will be especially vulnerable to vehicle strikes. Reptiles can be slow-moving, both because of behavioral adaptations to be camouflaged from predators and because of their ectothermic nature. This trait presents crushing hazards in the presence of relatively fast-moving equipment or even foot traffic. All special-status reptiles and amphibians presumed to be in the project site rely heavily on burrows for shelter from the elements, protection from predators, and/or reproduction. Heavy equipment and ground-disturbing activities may collapse burrow systems or completely remove them, resulting in injury or death of the inhabitants or exclusion by the removal of a vital resource. Vegetation may also be removed as a result of construction activities. Ectotherms rely on vegetative cover for temperature regulation. Vegetation also provides habitat for prey species and cover from predators. If flowing or ponded water is present, aquatic species have the potential to be displaced or harmed during diversion and dewatering activities.

Impacts to individuals of special-status species would be avoided and minimized through implementation of appropriate pre-construction surveys and biological monitoring during construction. These include standard construction monitoring requirements for special-status wildlife that would be implemented by a qualified biologist. The special-status wildlife monitoring requirements ensure that a qualified biologist would be on-site and would be monitoring for other special-status species with potential to occur on site. Standard nesting bird surveys during the bird nesting season, generally February 1 through September 1, would address potential occurrence of special-status birds, including migratory birds, and would also document any unlikely evidence/occurrence of bat use of the area.

With incorporation of these standard species monitoring and habitat avoidance, restoration, and mitigation approaches detailed in Mitigation Measures BR-1 through BR-18, the project impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

- (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 US Fish and Wildlife Service?*

The project would result in temporary construction impacts to approximately 0.99 acre of ruderal and agricultural land, 0.89 acre of Wild Oats and Annual Brome Grassland, 0.06 acre of Mixed Oak Forest and Woodland, and 0.06 acre of Valley Oak Riparian Woodland. The project would result in permanent construction impacts to approximately 0.85 acre of ruderal and agricultural land, 0.05 acre of Wild Oats and Annual Brome Grassland, 0.08 acre of Mixed Oak Forest and Woodland, and 0.01 acre of Valley Oak Riparian Woodland. Temporary construction impacts would be restored to pre-existing conditions. Sensitive natural communities in the project area include the creek channel (areas below the OHWM), the riparian bank and valley oak riparian woodland habitat bordering Quail Creek. The project has been designed to avoid and minimize temporary and permanent impacts to areas below the OHWM and in the riparian community bordering the creek, with a temporary impact on 0.27 acres and permanent impact of 0.006 acres below the OHWM. The project would have a temporary impact on 0.03 acres and permanent impact of 0.009 acres of riparian bank. Indirect impacts from construction activities would be avoided and minimized with implementation of standard best management practices, including environmentally sensitive area (ESA) fencing, sedimentation and erosion controls, and measures to prevent debris from falling into the channel during construction and bridge demolition activities.

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Temporary construction impacts to riparian bank and native oak trees will be minimized to the extent feasible. Permanent impacts to native oak woodland will be mitigated by planting replacement trees in accordance with the County's standard practice. Replacement trees would be located in County right-of-way in the project area or in similar settings in the general vicinity, with the goal of replacing the existing tree functions as close to the project area as feasible. With the inclusion of Mitigation Measures BR-4, BR-13, BR-14, and BR-18, the project impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

- (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?*

There are no state or federally protected wetlands in the project area. The project would not have hydrologic effects in upstream or downstream areas that may support wetlands. Therefore, the project would have no impact on state or federally protected wetlands.

- (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?*

The new bridge foundations would be set further apart than the existing foundations, resulting in an increase in the bridge opening width and an increase in bank area bordering the channel. The restored habitat areas would be beneath the new bridge but would provide an incremental increase in wildlife habitat. The project would have a temporary impact on 0.27 acres and permanent impact of 0.006 acres below the OHWM. The project would have a temporary impact on 0.03 acres and permanent impact of 0.009 acres of riparian bank. The ephemeral nature of Quail Creek means that creek flows and ponded water are only present for a short duration following heavy precipitation events and therefore the project would not interfere substantially with movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species. The project area does not provide suitable nursery areas for aquatic species. The project would not alter channel hydrology and therefore would not affect the condition of upstream or downstream nursery areas. Construction disturbance would interfere with use of the creek corridor by non-aquatic species on a temporary basis. Standard construction measures would limit the extent of the construction disturbance and restoration of temporarily disturbed areas would restore the pre-existing functions.

Nesting bird activity could occur in vegetation communities in the project area as construction is scheduled to occur during the nesting season (generally February 1 through September 1). Impacts to nesting birds would be avoided by removing potentially suitable nesting vegetation ahead of construction and outside the bird nesting season if feasible, by conducting pre-construction surveys of vegetation communities in the vicinity during the appropriate nesting seasons, and using appropriate measures to avoid impacts to active nests during construction.

The project is expected to improve the condition of the bridged area as a wildlife corridor by widening the bridge abutments; this is expected to result in an incremental improvement in undercrossing conditions for wildlife compared to existing conditions. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BR-2, BR-4, BR-6, BR-7, BR-9, BR-16 would reduce impacts to less than significant with mitigation.

- (e) *Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?*

The project would not conflict with any local policy or ordinance protecting biological resources such as oak woodland. Native oak trees that are removed for the project would be replaced in accordance with the County's standard practice. Mitigation Measure BR-3 identifies avoidance and replanting requirements for

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trees impacted or removed within the project area. A pre-construction review of construction access and staging areas would be conducted with the contractor to minimize impacts to native oak trees to the maximum extent possible. With implementation of Mitigation Measure BR-3, the project would result in less than significant impacts with mitigation.

- (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?*

There are no Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) or other conservation plans directly applicable to the project. Therefore, the project would not conflict with any approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plans, and no impacts would occur.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project site is generally a disturbed, ruderal environment due to the surrounding land uses and roadways in the project vicinity. Oak woodland habitat bordering Quail Creek provides a narrow corridor of habitat for wildlife. The creek channel in the project area is deeply incised and bordered by steep slopes. Project impacts have been reduced to avoid and/or minimize impacts to riparian habitats (the creek channel and riparian bank). The project would have a temporary impact on 0.27 acres and permanent impact of 0.006 acres below the OHWM. The project would have a temporary impact on 0.03 acres and permanent impact of 0.009 acres of riparian bank. Permanent impacts to riparian and oak woodland communities are limited to a small area of road relocation to improve safety. Temporary construction impacts to approximately 0.28 acres would be restored to pre-existing conditions, including stable slopes and native vegetative cover.

Standard mitigation measures would be implemented during construction to protect sensitive habitats, special-status species, and water quality. These include measures such as conducting surveys before and during construction by a qualified biologist; delineating environmentally sensitive areas beyond the approved project impact area as no-disturbance zones; implementing standard construction practices pertaining to sedimentation and erosion controls, equipment refueling and maintenance, spill response, trash management, and having a qualified biologist monitor construction activities to ensure compliance with all environmental measures. The project will also incorporate avoidance and minimization measures proposed through informal consultation with United States Fish and Wildlife (County 2024b).

Implementation of these Mitigation Measures BR-1 through BR-18 would reduce potential adverse effects to biological resources to a less than significant level with mitigation.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Regional Conditions

The project vicinity was historically occupied by the Salinan, with the northernmost subdivision of the Chumash, the Obispeño (after Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa), bordering to the south. However, the precise location of the boundary between the Chumashan-speaking Obispeño Chumash and their northern neighbors, the Hokaan-speaking Salinan, is currently the subject of debate (SWCA 2024).

As defined by CEQA, a historical resource includes:

1. A resource listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR).
2. Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant. The architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural records of California may be considered to be a historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence.

Existing Conditions

The following inventories were examined for cultural resources: historic topographic maps and aerial photographs, National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), California Register of Historical Resources, California Inventory of Historic Resources, California State Historical Landmarks, California Points of Historical Interest, California Office of Historic Preservation Historic Property Directory and Determinations of Eligibility, and Native American Sacred Lands Files. A records search of the Central Coast Information Center (CCIC) was conducted on February 1, 2024. The records search covered a one-half mile radius around the project area and included archaeological and historical resources, locations and citations for previous cultural resources studies, as well as a review of the State Office of Historic Preservation's historic properties directory. No previously conducted cultural resource surveys were identified with a 1/2-mile buffer of the project area. The CCIC records search indicated that no previously identified cultural resources are within the project area.

No historical buildings, structures or sites listed in the California Register of Historical Resources are located in or near the project area. The Creston Road Bridge at Quail Creek (Bridge No. RD-4067-BR1) is the sole historic-period built-environment resource in the project architectural APE. It has been shown to lack historical significance under National Register Criteria A-D, as well as under California Register Criteria 1-4. Similarly, it has not otherwise been demonstrated to constitute a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA. No historic properties or historical resources are present in the architectural APE. The Historical Resources Evaluation

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Report for this project therefore proposes a Finding of No Historic Properties Affected (SWCA 2024). These were determined to be ineligible for listing, and by letter dated December 11, 2024, the State Historic Preservation Office concurred with that determination.

An Archaeological Survey Report (ASR) (SWCA 2024) was completed for the project. The cultural resource investigations included all areas of potential project effects. Cultural resource investigations in support of this project also included consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission regarding proximity of any designated sacred lands (February 6, 2024), outreach to Native American groups and/or individuals who may have knowledge of cultural resources in the project area (March 25, 2024) under Assembly Bill 52 pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), review of previously conducted studies in the vicinity, and a site-specific field survey.

Discussion

(a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?

There are no historical resources listed in or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (which can include resources such as buildings, structures, districts, or sites) in the project impact area. This includes the bridge itself, which was determined by Caltrans not to be an eligible resource, and existing residential buildings and farm structures near the project site. Therefore, the project would have no impact on historical resources.

(b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?

Although the project would result in ground disturbance within a riparian area, based results of the ASR, there are no known resources and the project is not expected to cause an adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource. However, there is some potential for inadvertent discovery of unknown cultural resources if present within the work area during construction. Mitigation Measures CR-1 through CR-4 will be implemented to address initial ground disturbance and inadvertent discovery of previously unknown cultural resources and require that in the event an unknown cultural resource site is encountered, all work within the vicinity of the find must be halted until a qualified archaeologist evaluates the nature, integrity, and significance of the find. Based on implementation of Mitigation Measures CR-1 through CR-4, construction activities would not result in adverse impacts to known or unknown resources and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

(c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

The ASR did not identify any previously discovered or evidence of human remains within the project area. Further, the project would be required to comply with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, which outlines the protocol for inadvertent discovery of human remains. California 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 Section 5097.98. The County Coroner must be notified of the find immediately. If the human remains are determined to be prehistoric, the coroner will notify the California NAHC, which will determine and notify a Most Likely Descendant (MLD). The MLD shall complete the inspection of the project site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials. Based on required compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, impacts related to disturbance of human remains would be less than significant.

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Conclusion/Mitigation

No archaeological or historical resources are known or expected to occur within or adjacent to the project site. In the event previously unanticipated resources are discovered during construction, implementation of CR-3 and CR-4 would reduce potential impacts to less than significant. As requested by the Xolon-Salinan Tribe and Salinan Tribe of Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties, initial ground disturbing activities would be monitored by an archaeologist and a tribal representative (see Tribal Cultural Resources). With the inclusion of Mitigation Measures CR-1 through CR-4, potential adverse impacts to cultural resources would be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

VI. ENERGY

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Energy considerations under CEQA are intended to evaluate projects with respect to the goals of decreasing energy consumption and reliance on fossil fuels, and increasing reliance on renewable energy sources (CEQA Guidelines Appendix F). Relevant factors for consideration can include energy consumption required for the project, compliance with energy standards, and effects of the project on local and regional energy supplies, electricity demand, and transportation energy requirements.

Local Energy Plans and Policies

The County COSE establishes goals and policies that aim to reduce VMT, conserve water, increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, and reduce associated GHG emissions. The County COSE provides the basis and direction for the development of the *County of San Luis Obispo EnergyWise Plan* (County EWP), which outlines in greater detail the County's strategy to reduce government and community-wide GHG emissions through a number of goals, measures, and actions, including energy efficiency and development and use of renewable energy resources.

The County LUO includes a Renewable Energy Overlay combining designation to encourage and support the development of local renewable energy resources, conserving energy resources and decreasing reliance on environmentally costly energy sources. The project site is not located within the Renewable Energy Overlay combining designation.

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This bridge replacement project was evaluated for impacts to energy. The replacement bridge does not require the installation or modification of an energy source.

Discussion

- (a) *Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?*

From an operational perspective, the project would not increase the capacity of the bridge or any regional roads. By including wider shoulders, the project would increase safety for pedestrian and bicycle travel over the bridge, which could encourage non-fossil-fuel based modes of local transportation that would reduce fossil fuel consumption.

Consideration of the project's energy requirements and energy use efficiencies primarily pertain to construction-generated vehicle and equipment consumption. Construction vehicle emissions have been evaluated for the project as part of the evaluation described in the Air Quality section, and would be designed and managed to avoid wasteful or unnecessary consumption of fuel that would contribute to air emissions. Therefore, the project is not expected to contribute to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of fossil fuels, and thus impacts would be less than significant.

- (b) *Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?*

The County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element (2010) outlines measures to achieve the County's energy efficiency goals. They pertain to sustainable energy supply, building efficiency and conservation practices, waste reduction, and increased use of renewable energy resources. These County goals are not directly relevant to the project.

However, as discussed in the Air Quality section, the County APCD's Clean Air Plan includes approaches for controlling transportation-related air emissions. The project is consistent with the Plan goal of increasing opportunities and convenience for bicycling and walking as a means of reducing vehicle traffic. The project would improve safety for bicycling and pedestrian alternatives to vehicle transit for local travel and is therefore consistent with the Clean Air Plan; therefore impacts would be less than significant.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project is not expected to result in significant impacts to energy resources. The project is consistent with the goals in the Clean Air Plan to encourage increased bicycle and pedestrian transportation modes and may have a beneficial effect by reducing vehicle-related energy consumption. The Air Quality section addresses construction-related consumption of fossil fuels and recommends project-specific Mitigation Measures that may avoid wasteful or unnecessary fuel consumption. Therefore, potential impacts related to energy would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

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VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(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.	☐	☐	☒	☐
(ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The entire County is mapped as a seismically active area based on the USGS Seismic Design Standards. The project site is not near the Alquist-Priolo Fault zone. The closest fault to the project site is over 3.5 miles away to the west, just east of the city of Paso Robles and mapped as “Potentially Capable – Inferred”.

Soil types in the project area include Lockwood shaly loam, 0 to 2 percent slope and Arbuckle-Positas complex, 50 to 75 percent slopes. Results from geotechnical studies conducted by Earth Mechanics, Inc. are discussed below.

The project site is mapped as having moderate soil liquefaction risk and low landslide risk.

The project site is within the western portion of the Salinas Valley. The Salinas Valley is a large fluvial valley formed by the Salinas River. The Salinas Valley is part of a northwest-southeast trending trough-like basin that formed between the Temblor Range uplift on the northeast and an extensive uplift to the southwest that became the Santa Lucia Mountains. The age of the rocks varies from Mid to Late Mesozoic (160 million years old) to Holocene alluvium (11,000 years old to present day), with a very complex geologic structure due to the abundant faulting and folding from the San Andreas Fault system. The geologic formations in the area in descending stratigraphic order are: Surficial Alluvial Valley and Channel Deposits, Holocene (Qa and Qg), Older Surficial Alluvial Channel and Terrace Deposits, Holocene-Pleistocene (Qoa), and Paso Robles Formation, Pleistocene, (QTp). The project area is generally underlain by Pleistocene to late Pliocene-age alluvial sediments of the Paso Robles formation. The Paso Robles Formation consists of dissected, locally deformed valley deposits with a maximum thickness of more than 4000 feet (Dibblee, 1973). The valley deposit is composed of pebble gravel, sand, and clay derived from the La Panza Range and from mountains west of Salinas Valley. The Paso Robles formation unconformably overlies Pliocene-age marine sediments. (Earth Mechanics, 2024) Based on the geotechnical survey and the design plans, no unique paleontological resources or unique geologic features will be impacted by the project.

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Discussion

- (a) *Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:*
 - (a-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.*
 - (a-ii) *Strong seismic ground shaking?*
 - (a-iii) *Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?*
 - (a-iv) *Landslides?*

In regard to (a-i to iv), the project purpose is to ensure that the Creston Road Bridge meets current design standards, including seismic-related potential for bridge failure and soil liquefaction, settlement, and landslides resulting from seismically produced ground shaking. This is part of the basic project purpose and is being informed by site-specific geotechnical data and a detailed engineering design that ensures conformance with State and Federal seismic design standards. Therefore, the project is not expected to have a risk of loss, injury, death or other adverse effects related to seismic hazards and impacts are expected to be less than significant.

- (b) *Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?*

The project would result in the temporary disturbance of over an acre and would be required to obtain coverage under the Construction General Permit, which requires preparation of a water pollution control plan (WPCP) or Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The plan would describe how sedimentation and erosion controls would be used during construction to prevent adverse effects to adjacent resource areas.

The site has steep slopes bordering Quail Creek that would require proper application of erosion controls and may warrant more rigorous monitoring and maintenance compared to flatter sites. There are no other unique conditions or constraints that would require non-standard approaches to sedimentation and erosion controls. With incorporation of Mitigation Measure GS-1, BR-1, BR-6, BR-13 and BR-14, the project would not result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil; therefore, impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

- (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?*

See response in (a); the project will ensure that the bridge is stable under potential seismic risks, including liquefaction. Site-specific geotechnical information would be used in the project design to ensure the bridge is stable during seismic events. Based on project design and required compliance with applicable roadway design standards, the project would not result in risk related to potential ground-failure events; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

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- (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?*

The mapped soil units at the site have low erodibility and low shrink-swell potential. Substantial portions of the project area have historic fill, which is also presumed to have low shrink-swell potential as it was placed for construction of Creston Road and the existing bridge. Therefore, the project would not create substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property as a result of development on expansive soils and impacts would be less than significant.

- (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?*

The project does not include installation of new septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems and therefore will have no impacts.

- (f) *Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?*

The project would not impact geologic units that have paleontological sensitivity. Based on the engineering drawings, the project would impact Pleistocene to Holocene alluvium at depth for driven HP pilings to support the new bridge foundations. This impact would not destroy any unique paleontological resources or unique geologic features; therefore no impacts would occur.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would be designed to meet current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards, which have been developed to establish the minimum requirements necessary for road design to safeguard the public health, safety and general welfare through structural strength, stability, access, and other standards. Compliance with AASHTO, Caltrans, and other applicable standards would ensure that risks to people and structures, including those related to seismic hazards and unstable soil conditions, have been properly safeguarded against. Therefore, potential impacts related to geological hazards are considered less than significant.

The project would not disturb geological units with paleontological sensitivity. As proposed, project disturbance would not impact any sensitive geologic units through driven HP piles for the new bridge foundations and removal of the existing poured concrete bridge abutments.

Standard construction measures would be implemented to control sedimentation and erosion, Mitigation Measures BR-1, BR-6, BR-13, BR-14 and GS-1. These measures would reduce potential impacts from soil erosion to a less than significant level. Therefore, potential impacts related to geology and soils would be less than significant with mitigation.

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VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions are broadly recognized as contributing to an increase in the earth's average surface temperature and long-term changes in climate. Potential GHG emissions associated with the project would be limited to burning fossil fuels from construction vehicles and equipment.

State Regulatory Setting

Assembly Bill (AB) 1279 (the California Climate Crisis Act) was signed into law in September 2022. This law established the revised GHG reduction goals, including the following:

- Achieve net zero GHG emissions as soon as possible, but no later than 2045;
- Maintain net negative GHG emissions thereafter (following 2045); and
- Reduce statewide anthropogenic GHG to at least 85% below 1990 levels by 2045.

The 2008 Scoping Plan was first approved by the CARB on December 11, 2008, and is updated every 5 years. The most recent update released by the CARB is the 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality (2022 Scoping Plan), which was finalized and adopted in December 2022. The 2022 Scoping Plan lays out the strategies for achieving carbon neutrality and reducing anthropogenic (i.e., human caused) GHG emissions by 85% below 1990 levels no later than 2045, as directed by AB 1279 (CARB 2022).

The passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act (2006), recognized the need to reduce GHG emissions and set the GHG reduction goal for the State of California into law. The law codifies the statewide goal of reducing GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. This is to be accomplished by reducing GHG emissions from significant sources via regulation, market mechanisms, and other actions.

Regional Regulatory Setting

In January 2021, the SLOAPCD released interim Greenhouse Gas Guidance. The interim guidance replaces previous thresholds of significance for GHG emissions that were based on a 2020 planning horizon. Current recommended options for CEQA consideration of GHG emissions include: (a) consistency with a qualified climate action plan; (b) no net increase; and (c) lead-agency-adopted defensible CEQA GHG emissions

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thresholds. Generally, these approaches pertain to new commercial and residential development and vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which are not relevant for the project.

The CalEEMod construction emissions estimates described in the Air Quality section included greenhouse gases. As described in the SLOAPCD CEQA Air Quality Handbook (2023), daily and quarterly construction emissions were amortized over a 30-year life of the project to get yearly project contributions to greenhouse gases. Project emissions would be substantially lower than the SLOAPCD recommended threshold of 930 tons/year.

Discussion

- (a) *Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?*

As described in the Air Quality section, a project referral was submitted to the SLOAPCD and their comments were incorporated into the evaluations in the Air Quality Section. The project is consistent with the Climate Action Plan, and will not result in new operational emissions or an increase in vehicle miles traveled. The proposed construction approach would require a temporary detour for traffic on South El Pomar Road for approximately 7 months of the 9-month construction duration. Based on the generally rural character of use of Creston Road, this is not expected to materially increase vehicle emissions contribution to GHGs. The project will generate greenhouse gas emissions throughout the duration of construction activities. With the inclusion of Mitigation Measures AQ-4 and AQ-5, project impacts will be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- (b) *Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?*

Overall project consistency with the County EWP and the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) prepared by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is evaluated below.

EnergyWise Plan Consistency

The County EWP includes numerous measures to reduce GHG emissions associated with energy use, motor vehicle use, water use, waste generation, and construction. It is important to note, however, that the County EWP is based on year 2020 GHG-reduction targets and has not yet been updated to reflect year 2030 GHG-reduction targets, per SB 32.

Proposed construction activities would require the use of energy in the form of diesel fuel and gasoline for worker and construction vehicles and equipment. Energy consumption would be limited to the temporary impacts of construction and would not represent a significant or wasteful demand on available energy resources. The proposed project would not include components which could increase energy consumption through operation. Therefore, construction and operation of the project would be consistent with goals and policies of the County's EWP.

2023 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

SLOCOG's 2023 RTP serves as the blueprint for regional land use and transportation development patterns. It includes visions, goals, and policies relevant to the proposed project. The project does not include development of retail, business, or commercial uses that would be open to the public; therefore, land use planning strategies, such as mixed-use development and planning compact communities, are generally not applicable. The proposed project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway and associated

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bridge crossing and does not include components that could increase population or associated VMT within the region, which is consistent with the 2023 RTP goals and policies related to VMT.

Based on the analysis provided above, the project would be consistent with applicable state and local policies and programs intended to reduce GHG emissions, and potential impacts would be less than significant.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not generate operational emissions or increase VMT, either of which would contribute to GHG emissions. Construction emissions would be comparable to typical construction projects and for a temporary duration, and CalEEMod emissions estimates are well below the SLOAPCD annual greenhouse gas emissions threshold. With the inclusion of Mitigation Measures AQ-4 and AQ-5, project impacts related to greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

Hazardous Materials Sites

The Hazardous Waste and Substances Site (Cortese) List is a planning document used by the state, local agencies, and developers to comply with CEQA requirements related to the disclosure of information about the location of hazardous materials release sites. The California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) maintains the EnviroStor database, which tracks DTSC cleanup, permitting, enforcement, and investigation efforts at hazardous waste facilities and sites with known contamination, such as federal superfund sites, state response sites, voluntary cleanup sites, school cleanup sites, school investigation sites, and military evaluation sites. The SWRCB maintains the GeoTracker database, which contains records for sites that impact, or have the potential to impact, water in California, such as Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites, Department of Defense sites, and Cleanup Program sites. The remaining data regarding facilities or sites identified as meeting the Cortese List requirements can be located on the CalEPA website: <https://calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/>.

Review of the Envirostor and County databases (SWRCB 2024) for hazards and hazardous materials indicate that the closest mapped RWQCB cleanup sites and/or underground storage tanks are at least two and a half miles south of the project site, east of Templeton.

Results of the environmental assessment of asbestos and lead-based paint for the project (H&F 2024) indicated that no asbestos containing materials (ACM) or lead-based paint (LBP) was detected on the bridge and road in the project area.

The site is not in close proximity to ultramafic rock outcrops known to contain naturally occurring asbestos (NOA).

Emergency Response Plans

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The County also has adopted general emergency plans for multiple potential natural disasters, including the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, Emergency Operations Plan (County EOP), Earthquake Emergency Response Plan, Dam and Levee Failure Plan, Hazardous Materials Response Plan, County Recovery Plan, and Tsunami Response Plan.

Wildfire Hazards

The County Safety Element provides a Fire Hazard Zones Map that indicates unincorporated areas in the county within moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs). The project is within a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The project site is in a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) responsibility zone. The closest CalFire station is in Paso Robles, located approximately 5 miles from the project site; the mapped response time is 5 to 10 minutes for Creston Road.

Discussion

- (a) *Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?*

The project would require limited quantities of hazardous substances, including gasoline, diesel fuel, hydraulic fluid, solvents, oils, paints, etc. during construction, which has the potential to result in an accidental spill or release. Construction contractors would be required to comply with applicable federal and state environmental and workplace safety laws for the handling, transport, and storage of hazardous materials, including California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 22, Division 4.5. Operation of the project would not require the routine use of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials. Therefore, impacts associated with the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be less than significant.

- (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?*

Construction activities have the potential to introduce hazardous materials into the area in the form of fuel from construction vehicles and equipment. Potential for spills or releases would be prevented with standard best management practices regarding equipment and vehicle refueling and maintenance, and appropriate spill response preparedness.

The contractor would be responsible for determining appropriate handling and disposal for any potentially hazardous materials as a result of bridge demolition.

Appropriate measures would be taken during bridge demolition to prevent bridge material from falling into the creek. This would include sheeting or other containment devices to capture any falling debris during demolition. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BR-5 and HZ-2, project impacts will be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- (c) *Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?*

The project site is not within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. The closest school is approximately 3.5 miles northwest of the project site on Beechwood Drive in Paso Robles. The project is not expected to result in hazardous emissions and would not use any acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste. Therefore, the proposed project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school, and no impacts would occur.

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- (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?*

Based on a query of the DTSC EnviroStor and SWRCB GeoTracker databases, there are no previously recorded hazardous materials or LUST sites located within or adjacent to the project site (SWRCB 2024). Therefore, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment related to disturbance of a hazardous materials site and no impacts would occur.

- (e) *For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?*

The project is not in an airport review area or within two miles of a public use airport. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing and working in the project area, and no impacts would occur.

- (f) *Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

The project site is not in an area subject to an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Notification of the project detour, duration, and status will be provided to affected landowners.

Construction is expected to take approximately nine months and the traffic detour is expected to be in place approximately seven months. The detour will be a maximum of 6 miles and about 10 minutes increased travel times for the farthest displaced travelers (those seeking to travel to/from properties immediately east of the bridge). The detour would not impede emergency access but would increase travel distances and response times by up to 6 miles and about 10 minutes. Construction notifications would be provided to fire departments, emergency responders, schools, transit companies, and local residents in accordance with the project Public Outreach Plan to ensure that project construction would not result in undue delays for emergency situations. CalFire provided comments based on early coordination on the project, indicating that the proposed bridge would meet applicable safety standards and that they do not have concerns with the temporary construction detour because there are other County roads that can be used. This notification is detailed in Mitigation Measure HZ-3, therefore, the project would not interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

- (g) *Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?*

As described in (f), the project would require a temporary construction detour that would not interfere with the ability to travel but may increase travel times between Creston Road and South El Pomar Road by up to 10 minutes. Construction detour notifications would be provided to local and state fire responders, both of which have responsibilities in the project vicinity. As stated in (f), CalFire provided comments based on early coordination on the project, indicating that they do not have concerns with the temporary construction detour because there are other County roads that can be used.

Standard construction measures to avoid parking vehicles in areas of dry vegetation would be implemented to reduce the potential for igniting brush fires, as detailed in Mitigation Measure HZ-1, therefore project impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

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Conclusion/Mitigation

The project's potential to have adverse effects due to the presence and/or handling of hazardous materials would be limited to construction-related fuel leaks and spills, for which the contractor would be required to develop and implement an appropriate hazardous materials spill containment and response plan, addressed in Mitigation Measure BR-5 and HZ-2. Standard construction measures would be implemented to reduce risk of hazards from use of vehicles and equipment in dry vegetation, Mitigation Measure HZ-1. Construction notifications would be provided to all local entities that could be potentially adversely affected by any confusion regarding the construction detour. This will minimize potential for safety risks due to emergency situations and is therefore included as a Mitigation Measure HZ-3. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BR-5 and HZ-1 through HZ-3 project impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials would be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:	☐	☐	☒	☐
(i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	☐	☒	☐	☐
(ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☒	☐	☐
(iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Surface Waters. Surface waters at the site consist of Quail Creek, an intermittent stream. Quail Creek, 2.3 miles downstream of the project site meets Huer Huero Creek before then reaching the Salinas River, approximately another 10.3 miles downstream.

The closest U.S. Geological Survey stream gauge to the project site is on the Salinas River approximately 3 miles upstream of the intersection with Huer Huero Creek. Hydraulic modeling has been conducted to confirm that there will be no adverse impacts to the flood plain due the project. The hydraulic evaluation also considered potential for scour of the new bridge foundations. The bridge foundations were designed to withstand the total anticipated scour values.

Quail Creek and Huer Huero Creek are not listed as impaired surface waters on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of impaired and threatened waters (2024). The Salinas River is listed for the following constituents: pH, sodium, chloride, and turbidity. The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) status is listed as "still required," for the Salinas River which means that EPA requires the development and approval of TMDLs to address the above listed impairments.

The existing bridge and adjacent road sections lack up-to-date stormwater features.

Flood Hazard Zones. The project is located within a FEMA Zone A (approximate floodplain with no base floodplain elevations determined). Avila and Associates created a 2-D HEC-RAS model of the proposed conditions. Approximately 50-ft upstream, the 100-year floodplain width is approximately 170-ft with a maximum depth of approximately 18.5-ft. Approximately 50-ft downstream, the 100-year floodplain width is approximately 120-ft with a maximum depth of approximately 16.5-ft.

Groundwater. The project site is the Salinas-Paso Robles Groundwater Basin; Paso Robles has been designated a subbasin and extends from San Luis Obispo County border with Monterey County in the north, Lake Nacimiento to the West, and to the Carrizo Plains to the South East. From the perspective of the State Division

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of Water Resources, the Paso Robles Basin has been designated a high-priority basin, and is subject to the requirement to develop a sustainable groundwater management plan. The County of San Luis Obispo and the City of Paso Robles jointly developed a plan for the sustainable management of the subbasin.

Discussion

- (a) *Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?*

From the list of established water quality impairments in Quail Creek, potential project-related effects would be limited to metals in stormwater runoff. Stormwater treatment would prevent direct runoff to the creek and provide pollutant removal via infiltration in vegetated drainage swales. This is expected to prevent the project from contributing to adverse water quality conditions in the creek. The project design would comply with the County's stormwater requirements, and construction activities would comply with the stormwater general permit, including implementation of a WPCP or SWPPP. As such, the project would improve stormwater treatment compared to existing conditions. Construction impacts on water quality would be controlled by use of standard BMPs to prevent erosion and transport of contaminants to the creek.

In regard to the other regional water quality issues of concern, the project would not generate sources of organic waste or use fertilizers that would impact nutrient and bacterial concentrations in the adjacent surface waters.

The construction stormwater plan would include spill response procedures for hazardous materials spills, and conditions regarding equipment and vehicle fueling and maintenance to prevent inadvertent releases that could adversely impact surface waters and groundwater. As such, the project is not expected to degrade groundwater quality. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BR-1, BR-5, and BR-12, project impacts will be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- (b) *Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?*

The project would not rely on groundwater supplies, would not alter surface flow conditions in the creek, and would not interfere with groundwater conditions or recharge. The project would generally be installed within the footprint of the original roadway alignment and would be limited to a marginal increase in impervious surface area at the project site. The marginal increase in impervious surface area would not interfere with groundwater recharge. The project does not include components that could impede recharge within Quail Creek. In addition, the project does not require any connections to water and would not require any long-term operational water use. Therefore, the project would not decrease groundwater supply or interfere with groundwater recharge, and impacts would be less than significant.

- (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:*

- (c-i) *Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?*

Construction activities have the potential to cause erosion and sedimentation from disturbed areas. Appropriate sedimentation and erosion controls would be used to ensure there is no substantial erosion or siltation. Operational impacts would be reduced compared to current conditions by incorporation of stormwater controls designed to current standards. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BR-1, BR-6, BR-13, and BR-14, impacts will be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

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- (c-ii) *Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?*

Construction of the permanent bridge will increase flow capacity underneath the roadway. The marginal increase in impervious surface of the new bridge deck is not anticipated to substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

- (c-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?*

The project would replace an existing bridge and road approaches with a slightly realigned bridge and road approaches. The project is not expected to result in a material increase in the amount of impervious surface. As described in (a), appropriate stormwater management features would be incorporated into the project design to prevent direct discharges of stormwater runoff from the road into the adjacent surface waters and would be appropriately sized to accommodate anticipated runoff in a manner that would prevent an increase of polluted runoff.

Construction runoff would be managed and controlled with standard BMPs to prevent the discharge of pollutants from the site during construction, including appropriate erosion control devices, dust control measures, fuel storage and handling requirements, and measures to cover and contain stockpiled materials. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BR-1, BR-5, BR-6, BR-11 BR-12, BR-13, BR-14, and BR-18 impacts will be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- (c-iv) *Impede or redirect flood flows?*

An estimated 575 CY of fill is to be removed from the 100-year floodplain. An estimated 30 CY of fill is to be placed in the floodplain. The fill is needed to regrade slopes that have eroded beyond what is recommended to be stable and to replace poor quality soils. Expansive soils were found on site in the vicinity of the abutment and will be replaced with structural fill. Re-grading to remove the existing abutments and provide stable contours around the proposed abutments would include the fill below the base flood elevation. Hydraulic modeling has been conducted to confirm that there will be no adverse impacts to the floodplain due to the project. Therefore, project impacts will be less than significant.

- (d) *In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?*

Temporary construction impacts for grading around the new bridge abutments would be stabilized prior to the rainy season. All construction-related equipment and debris would be removed upon completion of construction and prior to the rainy season to prevent any potential risk of pollution during high-flow events in the creek. The project is not located in a tsunami or seiche zone. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

- (e) *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?*

Compliance of the project with County stormwater requirements to ensure no adverse effects to water quality are described in (a). The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or affect groundwater conditions and therefore would not conflict or obstruct management of the nearby groundwater resource, therefore no impacts are anticipated.

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Conclusion/Mitigation

The project is in direct proximity to surface waters that support a variety of sensitive habitats (see Biological Resources section) and that have been impaired over time from a variety of stressors and surrounding land uses. The project is also in the 100-year floodplain with potential for significant effects on flood storage and flood water conveyance. Operational impacts of the project would be minimized by designing the project to maintain or improve the existing flood capacity and conveyance conditions at the bridge, and to treat stormwater runoff prior to discharge to adjacent surface waters. The potential for significant construction-related impacts would be mitigated with use of sedimentation and erosion controls as well as BMPs for good housekeeping, waste management and materials management to prevent hazardous materials or waste and debris from getting into the waterway. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures BR-1, BR-5, BR-6, BR-10, BR-11, BR-12, BR-13, BR-14, BR-18, GS-1, HZ-1, and HZ-2, impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be less than significant with mitigation.

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

Surrounding land uses consist of residential development, agriculture, and undeveloped land. The project was reviewed for consistency with policy and/or regulatory documents relating to the environment and appropriate land use. Referrals were sent to outside agencies to review for policy consistencies (e.g., CalFire for Fire Code, APCD for Clean Air Plan).

The project is in the North County Planning Area – El Pomar-Estrella Subarea Planning Area, which is addressed by the County Inland Area Plan. The North County Area Plan does not have specific policies for road or bridge projects. Standard Caltrans and County policies and BMPs would apply to the project. Mitigation Measures to ensure avoidance and minimization of impacts have been included in the project design to comply with the standards in the County General Plan and other applicable plans (e.g., the County Stormwater Management Program described in the Hydrology and Water Quality section). The project is not in the coastal zone and therefore would not require approval from the California Coastal Commission and/or the Local Coastal Program.

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Discussion

(a) *Physically divide an established community?*

The project would not physically divide an established community and would not alter existing transportation routes between communities. The proposed construction approach would require a temporary detour for traffic on South El Pomar Road for approximately 7 months of the 9-month construction duration. The project would help maintain an established travel way on Creston Road, therefore impacts would be less than significant.

(b) *Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?*

The project is compatible with the surrounding uses and would improve the safety of the bridge for the benefit of travelers and local agricultural uses. The project was found to be consistent with the applicable plans (listed in Exhibit A). The project would not conflict with the plans or policies of any of the referral agencies. The project would be required to implement Mitigation Measures AQ-1 through AQ-3, BR-1 through BR-18, GS-1, HZ-1 through HZ-3, and CR-1 through CR-4 to mitigate potential impacts, which is consistent with the identified plans and policies intended to avoid or mitigate adverse environmental effects. Upon implementation of the identified mitigation, the project would not conflict with other local policies or regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects; therefore, impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Conclusion/Mitigation

Implementation of the proposed project would not physically divide an established community. Upon implementation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1 through AQ-3, BR-1 through BR-18, GS-1, HZ-1 through HZ-3, and CR-1 through CR-4, the project would be consistent with the identified plans and policies intended to avoid or mitigate adverse environmental effects. Therefore, impacts related to land use and planning would be less than significant with mitigation.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally- important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

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Setting

The California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) requires that the State Geologist classify land into mineral resource zones (MRZ) according to the known or inferred mineral potential of the land (Public Resources Code Sections 2710–2796).

The three MRZs used in the SMARA classification-designation process in the San Luis Obispo-Santa Barbara Production-Consumption Region are defined below (California Geological Survey 2011a):

- **MRZ-1:** Areas where available geologic information indicates that little likelihood exists for the presence of significant mineral resources.
- **MRZ-2:** Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists. This zone shall be applied to known mineral deposits or where well-developed lines of reasoning, based upon economic-geologic principles and adequate data, demonstrate that the likelihood for occurrence of significant mineral deposits is high.
- **MRZ-3:** Areas containing known or inferred aggregate resources of undetermined significance. Based on the Mineral Land Classification Map prepared for the project area, the project site is located within the MRZ-3 designation.

There are no active mines, including active or past sand and gravel pits, within one mile of the project site. The closest mine to Quail Creek system is located more than 5 miles to the East of the project site, in the Salinas River system.

Discussion

- (a) *Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?*

Based on the Mineral Land Classification Map prepared for the project area, the project site is located within an area within the MRZ-3 designation (California Geological Survey 2011a), indicating that minerals within the project area have an undetermined significance. The project site is located within rural road travel way that would not likely be designated or developed for mineral extraction. There are no known valuable mineral resources in the project area.

The project would impact primarily disturbed lands within the County right-of-way and is not located within or near any known mineral resources; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

- (b) *Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?*

The project is not located within or near any delineated mineral resource recovery sites and would not affect access to any active recovery sites; therefore, no impacts would occur.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project impacts to mineral resources would be less than significant no mitigation measures are necessary.

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XIII. NOISE

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project result in:</i>				
(a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

As described in the Air Quality section, the project is within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors including private residences. Creston Rd is not a mapped roadway/SPRR or stationary source db area/road in the County's noise contour maps. The closest mapped source db area is in the City of Paso Robles, over 3 miles away.

The project is not in the vicinity of an airport plan area or a private airfield.

Discussion

- (a) *Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?*

The County noise standards provide an exception for construction noise sources provided such activities are limited to Monday through Friday from seven a.m. through nine p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from eight a.m. to five p.m. While County projects are not bound by the standards, the County strives to maintain consistency and would require the contractor to follow them to the maximum extent possible. From an operational perspective, the project would replace an existing bridge and approach lanes in generally the same location and orientation and would not increase or alter existing use of the road, so is not expected to increase operational noise levels associated with the project area. The project would not generate a substantial increase in temporary or permanent ambient noise levels; therefore, potential impacts would be less than significant.

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(b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project site include residences, including three directly adjoining the project site. The closest school (Virginia Peterson Elementary) is approximately 3.5 miles north-west of the project site; the school is not expected to be affected by construction-related noise.

The project would generate temporary construction noise for the duration of construction, which is expected to be approximately 9 months. Construction noise would be temporary in nature and would normally be limited to daylight hours. There is potential on construction jobs of this nature for occasional tasks to extend into nighttime hours. The public would be notified in advance to the maximum extent feasible in the unlikely event that occasional night work would be necessary.

The loudest anticipated construction activities are the HP pile driving work to install supports for the new bridge foundations. This activity would be for an expected duration of approximately 15 working days for pile-driving activities. Heavy construction equipment may generate intermittent ground-borne noise and vibration. Operation of the project does not include new features that could generate substantial ground-borne noise. Therefore, impacts related to exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or noise levels would be less than significant.

(c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

The project is not located in the vicinity of a private airstrip or a public airport; therefore, the project would not expose project occupants to excessive airport-related noise, and no impacts would occur.

Conclusion/Mitigation

Construction-generated noise would be temporary and intermittent, would occur in a location where road-related noise is expected, and is not anticipated to be excessive. Private residences in the vicinity may experience adverse effects for intermittent, temporary durations during construction. Daylight construction and use of standard construction hours would be adhered to the extent feasible and construction activities would be coordinated with the adjoining landowners. Therefore, potential impacts related to noise would be less than significant, and mitigation measures are not necessary.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The project site is located in a rural area of the County within the footprint of an existing road, Creston Road, over Quail Creek (riparian corridor). Land uses surrounding the project site are residential and agriculture.

Discussion

- (a) *Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?*

The project purpose is to improve the safety of the bridge. The project would not create new transportation networks or increase the capacity of Creston Road. As such the project would not have any impact on regional population growth, and no impacts would occur.

- (b) *Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?*

The project site does not contain any existing residences and the project would not require the demolition of any existing residential structures. Therefore, the project would not displace existing people or housing or necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere, and no impacts would occur.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not result in substantial or unplanned population growth and would not displace existing housing or necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. The project would have no impacts on population and housing and no mitigation measures are necessary.

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XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:	☐	☐	☒	☐
Fire protection?	☐	☒	☐	☐
Police protection?	☐	☒	☐	☐
Schools?	☐	☐	☒	☐
Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Fire Protection Services

As described in Section IX, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, the project is within a high Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The project site is in a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) responsibility zone. The closest CalFire station is in Paso Robles located approximately 5 miles from the project site; the mapped response time is 5 to 10 minutes for Creston Road near the project site.

Law Enforcement Services

As an unincorporated area of San Luis Obispo County, the project area is under the police protection jurisdiction of the County Sheriff from the Templeton Station, which is located in Templeton (at 356 N Main St, Templeton, CA 93465, a 5.4-mile, approximate 14-minute drive from the project site).

Public Schools

The closest public schools are located approximately 3.5 miles northwest of the project site on Beechwood Drive in Paso Robles.

Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

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The closest recreational facilities in the vicinity are passive recreational uses at Royal Oaks Meadows Park off Airport Rd, approximately 3 miles northwest of the project site. This park provides open space for dog walking, ball games, and other recreational amenities.

Discussion

- (a) *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services: Fire protection? Police protection? Schools? Parks? Other public facilities?*

There would be no increase in population or traffic as a result of the project. The proposed project would replace an existing bridge and road without changing their function or capacity, so would not affect existing police, fire, schools or other public services. The project would not add new residents or businesses and therefore would not result in the need for expanded or new services or facilities.

Temporary construction impacts on fire and emergency response are discussed in Section IX, Hazards and Hazardous Materials. A temporary construction detour would add up to 6 miles and about 10 minutes increased travel times for the farthest displaced travelers (those seeking to travel to/from properties immediately east of the bridge). The detour would not impede emergency access but would increase travel distances and response times by up to 6 miles and about 10 minutes. Construction notifications would be provided to fire departments, emergency responders, schools, transit companies, and local residents in accordance with standard County policies and in accordance with Mitigation Measure HZ-3.

Operational effects of the project on public services are expected to be positive by reducing the potential for catastrophic collapse of the bridge, which if it occurred, would create a public safety hazard. The new bridge would also improve public safety by providing 6-foot-wide shoulders, which would more safely accommodate use of the bridge by large agriculture equipment and pedestrian/bicycle traffic.

Therefore, project impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project is not expected to adversely affect public services; temporary construction detour effects on public safety would be addressed with implementation of community notifications as required by Mitigation Measure HZ-3. Therefore, project impacts related to public services would be less than significant with mitigation.

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XVI. RECREATION

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

As described in Section XV, Public Services, the closest recreational areas and parks in the vicinity of the project are accessed from Paso Robles northwest of the project site. There are no public facilities or access points for these or other recreational resource areas on or bordering the project area. Construction activities will involve temporary delays on Creston Rd.

There are no established pedestrian or bicycle trails on Creston Road. The proposed 6-foot-wide bridge shoulders would enhance safety for existing pedestrian and bike use of the bridge.

Discussion

- (a) *Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?*

The project would replace an existing bridge and would not result in increased use of or demand for nearby recreational facilities; therefore, no impacts would occur.

- (b) *Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?*

The project does not include recreational facilities or require construction or expansion of recreational facilities; therefore, no impacts would occur.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would improve the safety of travelers already using Creston Road on foot and bicycle. The project would not otherwise have an effect on existing recreational resources. Therefore, no impacts to recreation would occur, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

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XVII. TRANSPORTATION

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Senate Bill 743 and Vehicle Miles Traveled

Senate Bill 743, which was codified into the Public Resources Code section 21099, requires communities to achieve a 15% reduction in vehicle miles traveled. This resulted in a change in the CEQA Guidelines regarding the analysis of transportation impacts. As described in the December 2018 Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is considered the most appropriate metric to evaluate a project's transportation impacts under CEQA, replacing level of service and other similar metrics for consideration of significant environmental effects.

Regional Transportation Planning

SLOCOG holds several key roles in transportation planning within the county. As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), SLOCOG is responsible for conducting a comprehensive, coordinated transportation program, preparing an RTP/SCS, allocating state funds for transportation projects, and administering and allocating transportation development act funds required by state statutes. The RTP, adopted June 7, 2023, is a long-term blueprint of San Luis Obispo County's transportation system that identifies and analyzes the transportation needs of the region and creates a framework for project priorities. Chimney Rock Road has not been identified for planned multimodal roadway improvements in the 2023 RTP.

Local Transportation Planning

The County's Framework for Planning (Inland), Part I of the County LUCE, establishes goals and strategies to meet pedestrian circulation needs by providing usable and attractive sidewalks, pathways, and trails to establish maximum access and connectivity between land use designations. The LUCE sets forth policies and programs to address transportation impacts.

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Existing Conditions

The existing single-span bridge is 20 feet long and 23 feet wide. The new bridge would be a 75-foot-long, 38 feet wide. There are no established pedestrian or bicycle trails on Creston Road. The proposed 6-foot-wide bridge shoulders would enhance safety for existing pedestrian and bike use of the bridge.

Discussion

- (a) *Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?*

The project does not conflict with any program plans, ordinances, or policies addressing transportation facilities, including the City of Paso Robles circulation plan and the County's North County Area Plan Circulation Element.

In regard to VMT, the proposed bridge replacement is not expected to affect VMT because it is designed to improve the safety of the bridge, not add or remove capacity. Replacement of bridges is listed in Section F of the December 2018 Technical Advisory as one of the transportation project types that would not likely lead to a substantial or measurable increase in VMT, and therefore should not require an induced traffic analysis. There will be a marginal short-term increase in VMT associated with the temporary detour and construction operations.

The project is expected to have positive effects for safety for agricultural equipment, bicycles and pedestrians by adding 6-foot-wide shoulders to the bridge. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

- (b) *Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?*

Section 15064.3(b) of the CEQA Guidelines states that transportation projects that reduce, or have no impact on, vehicle miles traveled should be presumed to cause a less than significant impact on transportation. The proposed project would not permanently change transportation routes or the capacity of the existing road and would not have any permanent effect on vehicle miles traveled or traffic volumes. Therefore, the project would be consistent with Section 15064.3(b) and therefore impacts would be less than significant.

- (c) *Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?*

The project would not introduce new traffic uses. The project would incrementally reduce hazards by providing 6-foot-wide shoulders to accommodate agricultural equipment use of the bridge and improve pedestrian and bike traffic. The proposed bridge would be required to comply with relevant Caltrans and County Public Works requirements to avoid hazardous roadway design features. Based on required compliance with Caltrans and County Public Works Department requirements, the project would not result in hazards due to proposed roadway design features; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

- (d) *Result in inadequate emergency access?*

The new bridge would not alter emergency access. Emergency access would be accommodated at all times during construction by a short detour; notifications would ensure emergency responders and local residents are aware of the location, status, and schedule of the detour; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project does not conflict with any program plans, ordinances, or policies addressing transportation facilities, including the City of Paso Robles circulation plan and the County's North County Area Plan Circulation

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Element. The project would not generate vehicle trips that would exceed existing VMT thresholds. In addition, the project would be consistent with Caltrans and County Public Works Department design standards to avoid hazardous roadway design. Therefore, impacts related to transportation would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
(i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or	☐	☐	☒	☐
(ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

Approved in 2014, AB 52 added tribal cultural resources to the categories of resources that must be evaluated under CEQA. Tribal cultural resources are defined as either of the following:

1. Sites, features, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following:

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- a. Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the CRHR; or
 - b. Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k).
2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in Public Resources Code Section 5024.1.

The Cultural Resources section describes the cultural resources setting for the project site. Although there are no known historical or archaeological resources in the project area; areas along Quail Creek may be sensitive for archaeological resources. During County-coordinated Tribal consultation pursuant to Assembly Bill 52, The Xolon-Salinan Tribe and Salinan Tribe of Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties recommended that ground disturbing activities be monitored by a representative from each of their tribes.

Discussion

- (a) *Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:*
 - (a-i) *Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?*
 - (a-ii) *A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.*

Pursuant to AB 52, the County provided notice to local California native tribes with geographic and/or cultural ties to the project region. Tribal consultation resulted in information being conveyed to the County about the archaeological sensitivity of the region and the recommendation that excavation activities be monitored by a representative of both the Xolon-Salinan Tribe and Salinan Tribe of Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties. The recommendation for presence of an onsite archaeological monitor and tribal monitoring during initial ground disturbance have been incorporated into Mitigation Measure CR1 and CR-2.

Based on the results of the ASR, there are no known cultural or tribal cultural archaeological resources within the project area (SWCA 2024). Mitigation Measures CR-3 and 4 have been identified to address inadvertent discovery of previously unknown cultural resources and require that in the event an unknown cultural resource site is encountered, all work within the vicinity of the find must be halted until a qualified archaeologist is retained to evaluate the nature, integrity, and significance of the find. In addition, the project would be required to comply with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, which identifies the proper protocol in the event of inadvertent discovery of human remains, including the cessation of work within the vicinity of the discovery, identification of human remains by a qualified coroner, and if the remains are identified to be of Native American descent, contact with the NAHC. Based on required compliance with the County LUO and California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, the project is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts to known or unknown cultural archaeological resources; therefore, impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

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Conclusion/Mitigation

No tribal cultural resources are known or expected to occur within or adjacent to the project site. In the event unanticipated sensitive resources are discovered during project activities, implementation of Mitigation Measure CR-3 and adherence with California Health and Safety Code procedures would reduce potential impacts to less than significant; therefore, potential impacts to tribal cultural resources would be less than significant. Initial ground disturbing activities would be monitored by an archaeologist and a tribal representative. With the inclusion of the Mitigation Measures CR-1 through CR-4, potential adverse impacts to cultural resources would be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

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

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Setting

Stormwater

Per the County's Stormwater Program, the County Public Works Department is responsible for ensuring that new construction sites implement BMPs during construction, and that site plans incorporate appropriate post-construction stormwater runoff controls. Construction sites that disturb 1 acre or more must obtain coverage under the SWRCB's Construction General Permit.

Underground and Overhead Utilities

There are underground and overhead utilities in the project area (communications and gas lines). The new bridge will have provisions for utilities to be placed under or on the bridge.

Water/Wastewater Facilities

There are no water or wastewater facilities in or near the project area.

Solid Waste Facilities

There are three landfills in San Luis Obispo County: Cold Canyon Landfill, located south of the city of San Luis Obispo; Chicago Grade Landfill, located near the community of Templeton; and Paso Robles Landfill, located east of the City of Paso Robles.

Discussion

- (a) *Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?*

The project would not require the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities. Portable chemical toilets would be available for use by construction crews. No new facilities are proposed and relocation of existing utilities are expected to have a less than significant impact.

- (b) *Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?*

The project does not require any connections to water and would not require any long-term operational water use. Project requirements for water would be limited to water for dust control during construction, which would be trucked to the site; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

- (c) *Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?*

The project does not require connection to any public or private wastewater treatment providers. Portable restrooms would likely be used by workers and other personnel throughout the construction period. As described in (a), the project would not require wastewater treatment or affect the capacity of existing wastewater treatment services, and no impact would occur.

- (d) *Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?*

Project generation of solid waste would consist of construction and demolition debris, including demolition of the existing bridge and removal of pavement on the approach roads. These materials would be disposed

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of in accordance with applicable regulations and are not expected to be in excess of local standards or capacity. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

- (e) *Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?*

As previously described, the project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway and would not result in the long-term generation of solid waste above existing conditions. Construction-related waste (i.e., excavated soils) would be disposed of according to federal and state regulations. The project operational impacts would not result in an increase in long-term solid waste and would be compliant with solid waste reduction statutes and regulations. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The County would require relocation of existing utilities supported by the existing bridge and its immediate vicinity. The project would have less than significant effects on utilities and other service systems and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XX. WILDFIRE

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:</i>				
(a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☒	☐

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Setting

As described in Section IX, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, the project is in a high Fire Hazard Severity Zone along Creston Road. The project site is in a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) responsibility area. The closest CalFire station is Paso Robles, located approximately 5 miles from the project site; the mapped response time is 5 to 10 minutes for Creston Road.

Discussion

(a) *Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

The project site is not in an area subject to an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Construction is expected to take approximately nine months and the traffic detour is expected to be in place approximately seven months. The detour will be a maximum of 6 miles and about 10 minutes increased travel times for the farthest displaced travelers (those seeking to travel to/from properties immediately east of the bridge). The detour would not impede emergency access but would increase travel distances and response times by up to 6 miles and about 10 minutes. Construction notifications would be provided to fire departments, emergency responders, schools, transit companies, and local residents in accordance with the project Public Outreach Plan to ensure that project construction would not result in undue delays for emergency situations. CalFire provided comments based on early coordination on the project, indicating that the proposed bridge would meet applicable safety standards and that they do not have concerns with the temporary construction detour because there are other County roads that can be used. Therefore, the project would not interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, and impacts would be less than significant.

(b) *Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?*

The project is in a high Fire Hazard Severity Zone along Creston Road. The project area is characterized by a generally flat topography and scattered oaks and riparian vegetation. The project would be limited to the construction of a permanent bridge over Quail Creek and would not result in the construction of any structures or buildings that could increase the potential for a wildfire to occur in the immediate or surrounding area. Construction activities would be required to be conducted in accordance with Chapter 33 of the 2022 CFC (Fire Safety During Construction and Demolition) to reduce the risk of wildfire ignition during short-term construction activities. Based on required compliance with CFC requirements, the project would not exacerbate wildfire risks; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

(c) *Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?*

The project may relocate overhead or underground utility lines adjacent to the project area. Construction activities would be required to be conducted in accordance with Chapter 33 of the 2022 CFC (Fire Safety During Construction and Demolition) to reduce the risk of wildfire ignition during short-term construction activities. Further, the project would not introduce new utility infrastructure or increase the density of existing overhead lines that could otherwise increase risk of wildfire ignition in the project area. Based on required compliance with CFC requirements, the project would not exacerbate wildfire risks; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

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- (d) *Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?*

As previously identified, the project site is characterized by generally flat topography with a low risk of landslides. Further, the project site is located within a 100-year flood zone.

The project includes the construction of a new permanent bridge crossing over Quail Creek. The purpose of the proposed project is to construct a safe bridge crossing over Quail Creek. The proposed bridge design is being informed by site-specific geotechnical data and a detailed engineering design that ensures conformance with state and federal design standards. The proposed bridge would be constructed in accordance with Caltrans and other applicable engineering standards to reduce risk associated with post-fire ground-failure events and therefore impacts would be less than significant.

Conclusion/Mitigation

Based on required compliance with CFC, Caltrans, and other applicable engineering requirements, the proposed project and associated activities would not result in significant adverse impacts related to wildfire, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	☐	☐	☒	☐

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	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

- (a) *Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?*

The project has the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment. Incorporation of Mitigation Measures related to Air Quality (AQ-1 through AQ-3), Biological Resources (BR-1 through BR-18), Cultural Resources (CR-1 through CR-4), Geology and Soils (GS-1), and Hazards and Hazardous Materials (HZ-1 through HZ-3) included in Exhibit B would ensure that the project would not substantially adversely affect air or water quality, reduce the number of fish and wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plant or animal species, and/or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or pre-history. Therefore, the anticipated project-related impacts are less than significant with mitigation.

- (b) *Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?*

The project does not propose a new or different use than the existing use of the bridge and approach sections along Creston Road. The project would be located within existing County right-of-way. Operational impacts would be comparable to the current conditions in terms of traffic, aesthetics, and environmental footprint, and would be improved from the perspective of stormwater treatment. The project would not contribute to cumulative floodplain impacts and would provide an incremental improvement in flood conveyance by reducing the footprint of structures adjacent to Quail Creek. The project would also improve safety for agricultural vehicles and pedestrian and bicycle traffic by including 6-foot-wide shoulders on the bridge. Construction-related impacts of the project would be temporary and of limited duration and scope. The project is not expected to have impacts that would be individually limited, but cumulatively considerable. Therefore, project impacts, when considered together with past, on-going, and future projects in the vicinity, would not be cumulatively considerable and would not compound or increase other environmental impacts. Therefore, all project-related impacts would be less than significant.

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- (c) *Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?*

The project has a substantial beneficial effect on human beings by replacing a bridge that has been temporarily repaired and therefore poses a potential safety hazard to life and property if not replaced with a new permanent bridge. The proposed bridge would provide a safe bridge meeting current design standards and would increase safety for agricultural vehicles and pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The project would not result in environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. Direct effects on human beings would be limited to the temporary need to use a detour around the construction site with potential minor increases in travel times. The anticipated effects of the project would not substantially conflict with any adjacent land uses. The project is not expected to have adverse effects, and is expected to have some beneficial effects on human beings. Therefore, the project does not have the potential to have environmental effects that could result in substantial adverse effects on human beings, and impacts would be less than significant.

Conclusion/Mitigation

With the implementation of the project-specific Mitigation Measures related to Air Quality (AQ-1 through AQ-3), Biological Resources (BR-1 through BR-18), Cultural Resources (CR-1 through CR-4), Geology and Soils (GS-1), and Hazards and Hazardous Materials (HZ-1 through HZ-3) included in Exhibit B, the project would have a less than significant impact on the environment with mitigation.

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Exhibit A - Initial Study References and Agency Contacts

The County Public Works Department has contacted various agencies for their comments on the proposed project. With respect to the subject application, the following have been contacted (marked with an ☒) and when a response was made, it is either attached or in the application file:

Contacted	Agency	Response
☐	County Public Works Department	Not Applicable
☒	County Environmental Health Services	No Concerns
☒	County Agricultural Commissioner's Office	No Concerns
☐	County Airport Manager	Not Applicable
☐	Airport Land Use Commission	Not Applicable
☒	Air Pollution Control District	In File**
☐	County Sheriff's Department	Not Applicable
☐	Regional Water Quality Control Board	Not Applicable
☐	CA Coastal Commission	Not Applicable
☒	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife	None
☒	CA Department of Forestry (Cal Fire)	In File**
☐	CA Department of Transportation	Not Applicable
☐	Community Services District	Not Applicable
☐	Other _____	Not Applicable
☐	Other _____	Not Applicable

** "No comment" or "No concerns"-type responses are usually not attached

The following checked ("☒") reference materials have been used in the environmental review for the proposed project and are hereby incorporated by reference into the Initial Study. The following information is available at the County Public Works Department.

☒ Project File for the Subject Application	☐ Design Plan
<u>County Documents</u>	☐ Specific Plan
☐ Coastal Plan Policies	☐ Annual Resource Summary Report
☐ Framework for Planning (Coastal/Inland)	☐ South County Circulation Study
☒ General Plan (Inland/Coastal), includes all maps/elements; more pertinent elements:	<u>Other Documents</u>
☒ Agriculture Element	☒ Clean Air Plan/APCD Handbook
☒ Conservation & Open Space Element	☐ Regional Transportation Plan
☐ Economic Element	☐ Uniform Fire Code
☐ Housing Element	☒ Water Quality Control Plan (Central Coast Basin – Region 3)
☒ Noise Element	☒ Archaeological Resources Map
☒ Parks & Recreation Element/Project List	☐ Area of Critical Concerns Map
☐ Safety Element	☐ Special Biological Importance Map
☐ Land Use Ordinance (Inland/Coastal)	☒ CA Natural Species Diversity Database
☐ Building and Construction Ordinance	☒ Fire Hazard Severity Map
☐ Public Facilities Fee Ordinance	☒ Flood Hazard Maps
☐ Real Property Division Ordinance	☒ Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey for SLO County
☐ Affordable Housing Fund	☒ GIS mapping layers (e.g., habitat, streams, contours, etc.)
☐ Airport Land Use Plan	☒ Other See reference list below.
☐ Energy Wise Plan	
☒ SLO Area Plan/San Luis Bay Inland SA	

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The following project-specific information and/or reference materials have been considered as a part of the Initial Study:

California Air Resources Board (CARB). 2022. 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality. December 2022. Available at: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/2022-sp.pdf>.

California Department of Conservation (CDOC). 2022. California Important Farmland Finder. Available at: <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF/>. Accessed February 2025.

California Department of Transportation and Department of Toxic Substances Control. 2016. Soil Management Agreement for Aerially Deposited Lead Contaminated Soils. State of California Environmental Protection Agency Docket No. ESPO-SMA 15/16-001.

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2018. California State Scenic Highway System Map. Available at: <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>.

California Geological Survey. 2011a. Update of Mineral Land Classification: Concrete Aggregate in the San Luis Obispo – Santa Barbara Production-Consumption Region, California. Available at: <https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/file/getfile/120384>. Accessed February 2025.

County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works (County). 2024a. Creston Road Bridge 300714 Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Technical Memo for CEQA; including CalEEMod reports dated 10/7/2024.

———. 2024b. Section 7 Review for the Proposed Creston Road at Quail Creek Bridge Restoration dated 12/6/2024

Dibblee, T.W., 2004, Geologic Map of the Creston and Shedd Canyon Quadrangles, San Luis Obispo County, California; Dibblee Foundation Map DF-136.

Earth Mechanics, Inc. 2024. Foundation Report Quail Creek Bridge (Replace), County Bridge No. RD-4067-BR14 San Luis Obispo County, California

H&F Environmental. 2024. Environmental Assessment of Asbestos and Lead-Based Paint, Creston Road at Quail Creek Restoration Project Paso Robles, California. April.

San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD). 2023a. *CEQA Air Quality Handbook; 2023 Administrative Update Version to APCD Board Adopted 2012 Version*. Available at: https://storage.googleapis.com/slocleanairorg/images/cms/upload/files/CEQA%20Handbook%202023_Final.pdf.

———. 2023b. CEQA Greenhouse Gas Thresholds & Guidance for the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District's 2012 CEQA Air Quality Handbook and Related Guidance on Use of Screening Tool, CalEEMod, and Local Reductions/Sequestration Projects & Offset Mix Calculator. August 9. Available at: https://storage.googleapis.com/slocleanairorg/images/cms/upload/files/2023UpdatedSLOCountyAPCDCEQA-GHG_Guidance%26Thresholds-FINAL-StandAloneVersion.pdf.

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SWCA. 2024. Archaeological Survey Report for the Creston Road over Quail Creek Bridge Replacement Project, Paso Robles, San Luis Obispo County, California. September.

SWCA. 2024a. Creston Road over Quail Creek Bridge Replacement Project Biological Resources Assessment. September.

SWCA. 2024b. Creston Road over Quail Creek Bridge Replacement Project Aquatic Resources Technical Memorandum. September.

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2024. GeoTracker Database. Available at: <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>. Accessed November 2024.

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Exhibit B - Mitigation Summary

Mitigation Monitoring Plan

The purpose of a Mitigation Monitoring Plan is to provide a program to examine, document and record compliance with the environmental plans and specifications pertinent to the proposed project, in order to comply with Section 21081.6 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This plan provides the standards and methods necessary to ensure and document the implementation of the environmental mitigation measures which have been included in the project description as well as with the conditions of approval placed on project permits. Responsibility for ensuring successful implementation of the Mitigation Monitoring Plan lies with the County of San Luis Obispo, as the project proponent and Lead Agency for the project under CEQA. If the recommended mitigation measures and monitoring plan are implemented successfully, the potential significant adverse effects stemming from project construction will be reduced to a level of insignificance.

Mitigation monitoring will be carried out by the County's Environmental Programs Division. Upon approval of the CEQA document and issuance of all required permits, the Environmental Programs Division will assign internal responsibility for compliance with each mitigation measure to one or more members of the project team. Responsible parties include the Environmental Programs Division, the Project Manager (PM), the Resident Engineer (RE), and/or on-site monitors.

Mitigation measures are organized into project design, pre-construction, construction, and post-construction tasks. Compliance with mitigation measures is documented in the project file through written reports, accompanied by project photos where necessary. Post-construction monitoring of revegetation and other project components is documented by yearly reports, on a schedule typically determined by one or more of the project permits. Depending on the complexity of the post construction mitigation effort, tasks will be carried out by county staff or technical experts under contract to the County. Post-construction monitoring is typically conducted for three to five years, depending on permit requirements and success criteria.

Details of post-construction habitat restoration and mitigation, monitoring, and success criteria have been incorporated into a draft Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) for the project. The HMMP would be finalized based on permit requirements. Implementation and oversight of the HMMP would be provided by the County's Environmental Programs Division.

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Mitigation Measures

Air Quality Mitigation Measures

AQ-1 Projects with grading areas that are greater than 4 acres or are within 1,000 feet of any sensitive receptor shall implement the following mitigation measures to minimize nuisance impacts and to significantly reduce fugitive dust emissions:

- Reduce the amount of the disturbed area where possible.
- Use of water trucks or sprinkler systems, in sufficient quantities to prevent airborne dust from leaving the site and from exceeding the APCD's limit of 20% opacity for greater than 3 minutes in any 60-minute period. Increased watering frequency would be required whenever wind speeds exceed 15 mph. Reclaimed (non-potable) water should be used whenever possible. Please note that during drought conditions, water use may be a concern and the contractor or builder shall consider the use of an APCD-approved dust suppressant where feasible to reduce the amount of water used for dust control.
- All dirt stock-pile areas should be sprayed daily and covered with tarps or other dust barriers as needed.
- Permanent dust control measures identified in the approved project revegetation and landscape plans and/or specifications should be implemented as soon as possible following completion of any soil disturbing activities.
- Exposed ground areas that are planned to be reworked at dates greater than one month after initial grading should be sown with fast-germinating, non-invasive grass seed and watered until vegetation is established.
- All disturbed soil areas not subject to revegetation should be stabilized using approved chemical soil binders, jute netting, or other methods approved in advance by the APCD.
- All roadways, driveways, sidewalks, etc. to be paved should be completed as soon as possible, and building pads should be laid as soon as possible after grading unless seeding, soil binders or other dust controls are used.
- Vehicle speed for all construction vehicles will not exceed 15 mph on any unpaved surface at the construction site.
- All trucks hauling dirt, sand, soil, or other loose materials are to be covered or should maintain at least two feet of freeboard (minimum vertical distance between the top of the load and the top of the trailer) in accordance with California Vehicle Code Section 23114.
- "Track-Out" is defined as sand or soil that adheres to and/or agglomerates on the exterior surfaces of motor vehicles and/or equipment (including tires) that may then fall onto any highway or street as defined in the California Vehicle Code Section 23113 and California Water Code 13304. To prevent Track Out, designate access points and require all employees, subcontractors, and others to use them. Install and operate a "track-out prevention device" where vehicles enter and exit unpaved roads onto paved streets. The track-out prevention device can be any device or combination of devices that are effective at preventing track out, located at the point of intersection of an unpaved area and a paved road. If paved roadways accumulate tracked out soils, the track-out prevention device may need to be modified.

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- Sweep streets at the end of each day if visible soil material is carried onto adjacent paved roads. Water sweepers with reclaimed water should be used where feasible.
- All fugitive dust mitigation measures shall be shown on grading and building plans and/or specifications.
- The contractor or builder shall designate a person or persons whose responsibility is to ensure any fugitive dust emissions do not result in a nuisance and to enhance the implementation of the mitigation measures as necessary to minimize dust complaints and reduce visible emissions below the APCD's limit of 20% opacity for greater than 3 minutes in any 60-minute period. Their duties shall include holidays and weekend periods when work may not be in progress (for example, wind-blown dust could be generated on an open dirt lot). The name and telephone number of such persons shall be provided to the APCD Compliance Division prior to the start of any grading, earthwork or demolition.

AQ-2 Portable construction equipment, 50 horsepower (hp) or greater, used during construction activities may require California statewide portable equipment registration (issued by the California Air Resources Board) or an APCD permit. To minimize potential delays, prior to the start of the project, the APCD Engineering & Compliance Division should be contacted for specific information regarding permitting requirements.

AQ-3 In addition to the state-required diesel idling requirements, the County will comply with these more restrictive requirements to minimize impacts to nearby sensitive receptors:
To the maximum extent feasible, staging and queuing areas will not be located within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors. If staging areas must be located within less than 1,000 feet, then additional signage will be used to remind project personnel that construction activities are occurring within close proximity to sensitive receptors and that compliance with the said air quality regulations must be maintained at all times. The use of alternatively fueled equipment is recommended and will be used to the maximum extent practicable.

Biological Resources Mitigation Measures

BR-1 Prior to construction, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan or Water Pollution Control Plan will be prepared for the project in accordance with County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department requirements. Provisions of this plan will be implemented during and after construction as necessary to avoid and minimize erosion and stormwater pollution in and near the work area.

BR-2 Prior to construction, the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department will prepare a conceptual Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan that provides for appropriate restoration for temporary impacts and mitigation for permanent impacts to jurisdictional areas. Any revegetation will be conducted using native plant species. The HMMP will identify the specific mitigation sites and will be implemented immediately following project completion.

BR-3 Native oak trees greater than 4-inch-diameter at breast height (DBH) that are removed or trimmed for the project will be replaced in accordance with County practice. Replacement trees will be planted in County right-of-way in the project area or in similar settings in the general vicinity, with the goal of replacing the existing tree functions as close to the project area as feasible. Replanting will be completed as soon as it is feasible (e.g. irrigation water is available, grading has been completed in replant area(s)). Replanted areas will be either in

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native topsoil or areas where native topsoil has been reapplied. Only designated trees will be removed or trimmed without prior approval from the County Environmental Programs Division.

- BR-4** Prior to initiation of any construction activities, including vegetation clearing or grubbing, sturdy high-visibility fencing will be installed to delineate the specified project disturbance limits and protect environmentally sensitive areas (ESA). This ESA fencing will be placed so that unnecessary adverse impacts to the adjacent habitats are avoided, including oak woodland and riparian willow thicket. No construction work (including storage of materials) will occur outside of the specified project limits. The fencing will remain in place during the entire construction period, will be monitored periodically by a qualified biologist, and will be maintained as needed by the contractor.
- BR-5** Prior to construction, the contractor will prepare a Hazardous Materials Response Plan to allow for a prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. Workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.
- BR-6** Construction activities adjacent to Quail Creek and in riparian bank areas will be targeted to the dry season (generally May 1 through October 31) to the extent feasible to minimize potential water quality impacts to the creek and potential for sedimentation and erosion control issues due to precipitation events.
- BR-7** If feasible, vegetation within the project impact area will be removed during the fall or winter (September 2 to February 15) prior to construction, to minimize the potential for construction impacts to nesting birds.
- For construction activities proposed during the typical nesting season (February 1 to September 1), pre-construction nesting bird surveys will be conducted by qualified biologists no more than two weeks prior to the start of construction to determine presence/absence of nesting birds. Nesting bird surveys will continue throughout the construction period as needed until the end of nesting season.
- If active nests are encountered on site immediately prior to or during construction, an appropriate avoidance buffer will be established around the occupied nest(s). If the identified nest(s) belongs to a special-status species Caltrans and CDFW will be consulted. Avoidance will be accomplished by installation of high visibility orange construction fencing or flagging around the occupied areas with the appropriate setback. A qualified biological monitor will facilitate installation of the fence or flagging and will conduct periodic site visits to ensure that the fencing remains intact for the duration of construction activities in proximity to the active nest(s) and he or she will continue to monitor the nest(s). Construction activities will not occur within the nesting bird avoidance buffer area(s) until the biological monitor determines that either: a) all young have fledged and that the nest(s) are no longer occupied, or b) construction activity is not precluding nesting activity.
- BR-8** Prior to construction, all personnel will participate in an environmental awareness training program conducted by a qualified biologist. The program will include a description of the special-status resources within the project boundary. If appropriate, the biologist may train and designate a representative of the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department or other designee to provide crew training as needed during construction.

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- BR-9** Prior to construction, the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department will retain a qualified biological monitor(s) to monitor construction and ensure compliance with the avoidance and minimization efforts outlined in all project environmental documents. At a minimum, monitoring will occur during initial ground disturbance activities and vegetation removal.
- BR-10** If diversion and/or dewatering is required, the contractor will submit a diversion and dewatering plan for County approval prior to implementation. The plan will include use of screened intakes and pumping dewatering discharge to an appropriate location for storage/settling or filtering prior to discharge to an upland vegetated area. Dewatering activities will not discharge directly to the creek channel.
- BR-11** During construction, trash will be contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, trash and construction debris will be removed from the work areas. Vegetation removed from the construction site will be taken to a certified landfill to prevent the spread of invasive species. If soil from weedy areas (such as areas with poison hemlock or other invasive exotic plant species) must be removed offsite, the top 6 inches (152 millimeters) containing the seed layer in areas with weedy species will be disposed of at a permitted landfill.
- BR-12** During construction, the cleaning and refueling of equipment and vehicles will occur only within a designated staging area and at least 60 feet (20 meters) from riparian habitat, wetlands, or other aquatic areas. At a minimum, equipment and vehicles will be checked and maintained on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and avoid potential leaks or spills.
- BR-13** Prior to initiation of any construction activities bordering Quail Creek, including but not limited to clearing and grubbing, excavation, and bridge and foundation removal, sturdy exclusionary silt fencing will be installed around all areas of ground disturbance to prevent the movement of sediment from the disturbance area into the stream. The bottom of the fencing will be buried a minimum of 6 inches below the ground surface or otherwise secured to prevent gaps between the bottom of the fence and the ground. No construction work (including storage of materials) will occur on the stream side of the silt fence. The fencing will remain in place during the entire construction period and be maintained as needed by the contractor.
- BR-14** During construction, erosion control measures (e.g., silt fencing, fiber rolls, and barriers) will remain available onsite and will be utilized as necessary to prevent erosion and sedimentation beyond the project disturbance limits. No synthetic plastic mesh products will be used for erosion control and use of these materials onsite is prohibited. Erosion control measures and other suitable Best Management Practices used will be checked to ensure that they are intact and functioning effectively and maintained on a daily basis throughout the duration of construction. The contractor will also apply adequate dust control techniques, such as site watering, during construction to protect water quality. Stockpiled materials will be covered and contained if required to prohibit material migration.
- BR-15** During construction, no pets will be allowed on the construction site.
- BR-16** Prior to construction, a preconstruction survey shall be conducted during the appropriate blooming period to ensure special-status plant species are not present within the project area.

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- BR-17** Biological monitoring specified by Mitigation Measure BR-9 will include observations, monitoring, and appropriate response for American badger, southwestern pond turtle, Western spadefoot, Northern California legless lizard, San Joaquin kit fox, and any other special-status species, including plants and wildlife.
- BR-18** During bridge demolition, appropriate measures, such as tarps or nets, will be used to trap any demolition-related debris to keep it out of Quail Creek.

Cultural Resources Mitigation Measures

- CR-1** Prior to construction, an archaeologist will provide a pre-construction archaeological briefing to all construction crews prior to initiating ground disturbing activities. The briefing will provide guidance on historical and archaeological resources and appropriate procedures to follow if such finds are inadvertently exposed during the project.
- CR-2** During initial ground disturbance in native soil within the waterway, cultural resource monitoring shall be conducted by a qualified archaeologist, with advance notification provided to a representative from the Xolon-Salinan Tribe and the Salinan Tribe of Monterey, San Luis Obispo Counties to provide for the identification, evaluation, treatment, and protection of any cultural resources that are affected by or may be discovered during construction of the proposed project. "Initial ground disturbance" is defined as first-pass construction disturbance; once areas of native soil have been disturbed by construction and have been found not to contain cultural materials, archaeological and tribal monitoring is not necessary during subsequent construction disturbance. If the archaeological team, in direct coordination with the County and the tribes, determines the potential for encountering archaeological resources is negligible, archaeological monitoring may be reduced or cease at any time. The permittee shall allow each tribe to be equally represented in all tribal cultural monitoring. A monitoring schedule will be coordinated prior to construction to give each tribe equal representation while ensuring that site safety is maintained at a relatively narrow project site.
- CR-3** During construction, if previously unidentified cultural materials are unearthed, work will be halted in that portion of the project area until a qualified archaeologist can assess the significance of the find. Additional archaeological surveys will be needed if the project limits are extended beyond the present survey limits.
- CR-4** During construction, as specified by California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, if human remains are found on the project site, the person responsible for the excavation, or his or her authorized representative, will immediately notify the San Luis Obispo County Coroner's office, and the County Environmental office by telephone. No further excavation or disturbance of the discovery or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains (as determined by an Archaeologist and/or Native American monitor) will occur until the Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code 5097.98.

Geology and Soils

- GS-1** The contractor will restore all previously vegetated areas that are cleared during project activities through revegetation with appropriate native species.

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Hazards and Hazardous Materials Mitigation Measures

- HZ-1** Any staging or equipment/vehicle parking areas will be free of combustible vegetation and work crews will have shovels and fire extinguishers on site during all construction activities.
- HZ-2** The contractor will be responsible for appropriate handling, storage, management, and disposal of all waste, including hazardous and potentially hazardous materials, including but not limited to dewatering fluids, materials containing lead-based paint or asbestos, contaminants in soil, treated wood, asphalt, and bridge demolition debris.
- HZ-3** The contractor will be responsible for providing notifications to all parties potentially affected by the construction detour (e.g., adjoining and affected residents, bus services, postal services, fire departments, schools, and emergency responders). Advance notification will be provided as needed to keep potentially affected parties informed of the detour route, schedule, and any modifications for the duration of the construction period.