DICKENSON FERRY ROAD
BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT
Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

Prepared for
County of Merced
Department of Public Works
Road Division

July 2014
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ENVIROMENTAL CHECKLIST

Initial Study

1. **Project Title:** Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement Project

2. **Lead Agency Name and Address:** Merced County Department of Public Works

3. **Contact Person and Phone Number:** Joe Giulian, P.E., Project Engineer (209) 385-7601

4. **Project Location:** Dickenson Ferry Road / Quinley Avenue

5. **Project Sponsor’s Name and Address:** Merced County Department of Public Works 715 Martin Luther King Jr. Way Merced, CA 95341

6. **General Plan Designation(s):** Agricultural (A)

7. **Zoning Designation(s):** General Agriculture (A-1)

**Introduction**

The County of Merced (County) proposes to replace the existing Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge (Bridge No. 39C0095) that crosses Bear Creek, widen the bridge approaches, realign the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue, and relocate the O’Donnell Lateral Canal (proposed project). The primary objective is to replace the existing structure to improve public safety. The existing bridge has reached the end of its lifespan and a bridge repair or rehabilitation is no longer feasible. The project also serves to improve safety and increased sight distance by improving the roadway approaches to the bridge and realigning of the Dickenson Ferry Road/Quinley Avenue intersection. The current sufficiency rating of the bridge is 18.7 which was a significant drop from the previous rating of 36.0 in June of 2008 and is expected to continue to deteriorate at an increased rate. The structure was inspected by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and has been posted for the following limits:

- 3 tons per all vehicle/truck/trailer combinations.
Project Location

The proposed project is located approximately 5 miles west of the City of Merced (see Figure 1-1), and is comprised of the area occupied by the existing Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge over Bear Creek as well as a 250-feet boundary around all the project components, including the existing bridge (project site). The project site incorporates areas that will potentially be affected by demolition of the existing bridge, construction of the new bridge, realignment of the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue and the staging areas (Figure 1-2).

Regionally, the proposed project is located in California’s Central Valley, within a rural agricultural area of central Merced County. Land uses adjacent to the project site consist of agriculture (corn, etc.), grazing land, rural residences, undeveloped land and the O’Donnell Lateral irrigation canal. The nearest residence is located approximately 360 feet southwest of the existing bridge site and residents will be relocated as part of the project. The next closest residents are located approximately 450 east (near the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue) of the existing bridge location.

The study area corresponds to the Atwater, CA U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 Minute topographic quadrangle map and is in portions of Township 7 South, Range 12 East, Section 36; Township 7 South, Range 13 East, Section 31; Township 8 South, Range 12 East, Section 1; and Township 8 South, Range 13 East, Section 6. Elevation at the study area ranges from 120 to 125 feet above mean sea level (msl).

Purpose and Objectives of the Proposed Project

The purpose of the proposed project is to:

- Remove the existing structure, which has been determined to be both structurally deficient and functionally obsolete, and reconstruct with a bridge that will provide adequate and safe vehicle access;
- Provide a new structure that will be wider and meet current design standards for the traffic using this roadway;
- Widen bridge approaches to conform with the new, wider bridge structure; and
- Realign the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue to current design standards and provide a smooth vertical transition to and from the bridge.

Project Description

This section describes the proposed project and the design of the bridge that was developed by a multi-disciplinary project development team to achieve the project’s purpose and objectives while avoiding or minimizing environmental impacts.
Dickenson Ferry Bridge Replacement Project, 207511.11

Figure 1-1
Regional Location

SOURCE: DeLorme Street Atlas, 2000; and ESA, 2012
The proposed project is divided into two phases, a bridge replacement phase and a canal realignment phase, which are more fully described below.

**Bridge Replacement Phase – Bridge/Roadway Design**

The existing two-lane bridge is an 87-foot long 5-span timber structure. The bridge has a total width of 22 feet and a clear width of 20 feet. The bridge was constructed in 1949 with four rows of piles supporting the structure within the channel and a row of pile supports on each end of the bridge. The vertical alignment of Dickenson Ferry Road west of the bridge drops rapidly to match the grade of the adjacent ground. The horizontal alignment experiences an almost immediate 90-degree turn to the north as the paved portion of Dickenson Ferry Road turns into Quinley Avenue. Immediately west of Quinley Avenue, Dickenson Ferry Road becomes a narrow dirt roadway.

The replacement bridge will cross Bear Creek and will consist of a three-span flat-slab bridge and will measure 39 feet wide and 105 feet long. Additionally, the replacement bridge will require two bent sections within the channel. Each section will be supported by seven-bridge piles. Bridge design will be consistent with Load Resistant Factor Design (LRFD). The bridge piles are expected to be approximately 15 inches in diameter and therefore will occupy approximately 3.93 square feet of aquatic surface each. Based on preliminary bridge design, the new bridge piles proposed are expected to occupy 55.02 square feet (0.001263 acres) of aquatic surface area (14 piles) within the channel portion of Bear Creek.

Dickenson Ferry Road will be widened to 32 feet for a length of approximately 600 feet on both sides of the bridge (see Figure 1-2). On the east side of the bridge, the road surface (Asphalt Concrete pavement) will be tapered to match the existing cross section. On the west side of the bridge, the Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue intersection will be realigned. A significant amount of fill will need to be imported to provide for a smooth vertical transition to the existing grade. Additional project design detail (including a proposed bridge profile) is provided in Figures 1-3 through 1-4.

The replacement bridge would include east and west abutments, approximately eight-feet deep at abutment 4 and twelve-feet at abutment 1, supported by piles and will include a 36-inch high concrete barrier railing (Type 736). The installation of the required roadway approach rail which connects to the concrete bridge railing will necessitate the realignment of four adjacent levee bank roadways. An existing residence located southwest of the new structure will be acquired and removed.

The proposed project will also include the installation of a single streetlight to address public safety concerns at the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue. The new streetlight will meet all County standards regulating outdoor lighting in order to minimize spill-over light impacts on adjacent properties.
NEW BRIDGE
LATERN REALIGNMENT

Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement Project - BRLS-5939 (078)
Merced County, CA

Direct Effects
Indirect Effects
O'Donnell Lateral Easement
Main Alignment

New Bridge
Staged Area
Staging Area

Figure 1-2
Project Impact Area

SOURCE: Merced County, 2008; Bing Maps, 2009; ESRI, 2009; and ESA, 2012
Dickenson Ferry Bridge Replacement Project, 207511.1
Figure 1-3
Bridge Layout

Curve Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Δ</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>L</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;C&quot;</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>45° 52' 13&quot;</td>
<td>19.55</td>
<td>29.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;D&quot;</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>45° 52' 15&quot;</td>
<td>19.55</td>
<td>29.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;E&quot;</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>45° 27' 40&quot;</td>
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<tr>
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<td>&quot;F&quot;</td>
<td>12.00</td>
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<td>39.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;G&quot;</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>45° 00' 00&quot;</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>43.25</td>
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Source: Quincy Engineering, Inc., 2013 Dickenson Ferry Bridge Replacement Project.
Environmental Checklist

Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement Project

ESA / 207511.11
Final IS/MND July 2014

Canal Realignment Phase

Approximately 800 feet of the O’Donnell Lateral, an irrigation canal owned and operated by the Merced Irrigation District (MID), will be relocated and piped as a result of this project. Modifications will be made to the irrigation system for the agricultural property on the northwest corner for the project (see Figure 1-2).

Right-of-Way Acquisition and Agricultural Land Conversion

The construction of the new bridge, approaches, and realignment of the MID canal will require right-of-way acquisition from up to five adjacent parcels and the relocation of residents from a single residential unit located southwest of the bridge site. Property acquisition necessary for the proposed project is identified below in Table 1. A review of County Assessor’s office data indicates that affected parcels are not under active Williamson Act contracts. While construction of the proposed project will result in the loss of 3.9 acres of agricultural land, the proposed project has been designed to minimize the amount of acreage converted and does not affect the overall productivity of the larger parcel. The County has contacted the parcel owners and expressed their interest in purchasing a portion of their land.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APN/Address</th>
<th>Type of Acquisition</th>
<th>Land Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>056-200-010</td>
<td>Partial - Along Quinley Avenue (see Figure 1-2)</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>056-200-011</td>
<td>Partial - Along Dickenson Ferry Road (see Figure 1-2)</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>056-200-018</td>
<td>Partial - Along O’Donnell Lateral Canal (see Figure 1-2)</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>065-020-017</td>
<td>Partial – Between Bear Creek and O’Donnell Canal (see Figure 1-2)</td>
<td>Agricultural/Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>065-020-030</td>
<td>Partial – Along Dickenson Ferry Road (see Figure 1-2)</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Utility Relocation

Electrical and telephone utilities will need to be relocated as part of the proposed project. The County is coordinating with all utility service providers to manage relocation of affected utilities and to minimize service disruptions.

Demolition and Construction

Construction of the bridge needs to occur during summer months when the water is lowest and storm flows do not occur down Bear Creek. However, installation of the realigned irrigation canal must occur during winter months when the MID is not delivering irrigation water to customers. The canal realignment phase of the project will commence first. This phase will start after November 1st and be completed by March 1st to avoid impacts with MID customers.

The proposed project will not involve permanent modification or alteration of Bear Creek, however permanent rock slope protection may be required at the bridge supports to prevent scour to the
new bridge supports. During bridge construction access to the creek will be required to remove the existing bridge wood piers and to provide temporary support for bridge falsework. The superstructure of the new bridge will be positioned to allow 100 year flood flows to pass under the new bridge with a minimum of 2 feet of freeboard.

It is anticipated that excavators, dozers, cranes, pavers, dump trucks, concrete trucks, concrete pumps, pile driving hammers, and pile driving equipment may be required to construct the new bridge. Construction is anticipated to be completed within two construction seasons.

**Detour Route**

The County has indicated that it will be acceptable to close the existing roadway and detour traffic during construction. Traffic will be detoured around the project site to existing County roadways (see Figure 1-5).

**Construction Staging Area**

The construction staging area would be located on the west approach of the bridge south of and adjacent to the existing County right-of-way, in an already disturbed portion of land (see Figure 1-2).

**Permits and Approvals Needed**

The County will approve the construction drawings, prepare bid documents, and manage construction of the proposed project and will also prepare and certify the initial study/mitigated negative declaration (IS/MND) as the lead agency. Additionally, the following permits, reviews, consultations, and approvals (see Table 2, below) would also be required to be completed or approved prior to the commencement of construction activities associated with the proposed project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Permit/Approval</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California Department of Fish and Wildlife</td>
<td>Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement</td>
<td>Permit application to follow CEQA process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board</td>
<td>General construction activity stormwater discharge permit</td>
<td>File Notice of Intent and prepare Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) required prior to construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board</td>
<td>Section 401 Water Quality Certification</td>
<td>Permit application to follow CEQA process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>Section 404 Nationwide Permit</td>
<td>Permit application to follow CEQA process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
<td>Section 7 Consultation for Threatened and Endangered Species</td>
<td>Natural Environment Study Report (NES) and Biological Assessment (BA) prepared as basis for informal/formal consultation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As part of the proposed project, the County will need to ensure that the construction contractor implement the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District’s Regulation VIII Control Measures designed to reduce construction-related air quality emissions.
WEST DICKENSON FERRY ROAD
SOUTH QUINCY AVENUE

PROJECT LOCATION

S. Buhach Road
Oak Avenue

Detour Route
Detour Sign
Road Closed Sign
Project Location

0.250

Figure 1-5
Detour Route

SOURCE: Bing Maps, 2009; ESRI, 2010; and ESA, 2012
Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The proposed project could potentially affect the environmental factor(s) checked below. The following pages present a more detailed checklist and discussion of each environmental factor.

☐ Aesthetics ○ Agricultural and Forestry Resources ○ Air Quality
☐ Biological Resources ○ Cultural Resources ○ Geology, Soils and Seismicity
☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions ○ Energy ○ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
☐ Hydrology and Water Quality ○ Land Use and Land Use Planning ○ Mineral Resources
☒ Noise ○ Population and Housing ○ Public Services
☐ Recreation ○ Transportation and Traffic ○ Utilities and Service Systems
☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by Lead Agency)
On the basis of this initial study:

☐ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ I find that 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.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a “potentially significant impact” or “potentially significant unless mitigated” impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier 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, no further environmental documentation is required.

Signature: _______________________________ Date: 5-22-14

Joe Giulian, P.E. County of Merced
Printed Name For
Environmental Checklist

Aesthetics

<table>
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<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. AESTHETICS — Would the project:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☑</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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Discussion

a) The project site is located on and adjacent to the Bear Creek and is surrounded by relatively flat land that is in agricultural production. This intersection is utilized by agricultural-related operations and local rural residences. The Merced County General Plan Background Report identifies views of the Coast Range and Sierra Nevada foothills as scenic vistas in the County. However, implementation of the proposed project will result in replacement of the existing bridge structure with a similar structure and roadway approaches at similar elevations to the existing roadway infrastructure. No additional elevated facilities (i.e., cellular towers, storage tanks, or utility lines, etc.) are associated with the proposed project. Consequently, implementation of the proposed project will not result in the construction of any new structures that would alter or block views of the Coastal Range and Sierra Nevada foothills. This is a less-than-significant impact and no mitigation measures are required.

b) A review of the current Caltrans Map of Designated Scenic Routes indicates that there are two officially designated state scenic highways within Merced County. Interstate 5 (I-5) in western Merced County (north of State Route 152) and State Route 152 (west of I-5) are both officially designated state scenic highways. These highways are not located within the vicinity of the proposed project site. Furthermore, Dickenson Ferry Road is not identified as a scenic roadway under any County or State planning document. Consequently, the proposed project would have no impact on scenic resources associated with a scenic highway or roadway and no mitigation measures are required.

c) The visual context of the area surrounding the project site consists of rural agricultural lands and waterways. No public view points or areas (i.e., parks, recreation areas) are located in the vicinity of the project site. The nearest existing residential location is approximately 360 feet southwest of the project site. However, this residence is to be acquired, with residents to be relocated as part of the proposed project. Additional rural
residences are located approximately 0.1 miles east of the project site. Viewer groups include motorists, agricultural workers, and adjacent residences. Vehicle traffic along local roadways is related to surrounding land uses (agricultural and rural residential) and these motorists are considered less sensitive to visual conditions compared to motorists travelling along a scenic roadway.

Construction of the proposed project would result in temporary changes in local visual conditions, such as clearing and grading of vegetation at the project site. However, implementation of the proposed project also includes revegetation of affected areas. Given that these construction-related activities are considered short-term in nature and that project site conditions would be revegetated to the extent feasible, construction-related visual impacts are considered less-than-significant and no mitigation measures are required.

Since the proposed project is a replacement of an existing bridge, there would be no permanent changes to existing views; however, it would result in a slight widening of the bridge to meet current design standards. No other new structures would be added as part of the project and the proposed project would include a similar bridge structure at a similar elevation as the existing bridge. These changes in views would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. This is a less-than-significant impact and no mitigation measures are required.

d) The project site is located within a rural setting where current lighting is minimal, with roadway vehicles and scattered rural residential land uses generating the primary sources of nighttime light and daytime glare in the project vicinity. While the proposed project will include a single streetlight to address public safety concerns at the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue, the new streetlight will be required to meet all County standards regulating outdoor lighting in order to minimize spill-over light impacts on adjacent properties. Consequently, the proposed project will not result in any changes that would introduce significant new sources of light and glare (i.e., billboards, spot lights, etc.) to the vicinity of the project site. Additionally, the proposed bridge/roadway project is not associated with a land use change or additional vehicle trips that would generate additional sources of light or glare. This impact is less-than-significant and no mitigation measures are required.

References
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), 2012. Caltrans Map of Designated Scenic Routes.

Agricultural and Forest Resources

Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potentialy Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES —
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state’s inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the project:

a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

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?

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?

Discussion

a) The Department of Conservation’s (DOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) has designated land on the project site as “Prime”, “Unique”, and “Farmland of Local Importance” (see Figure 1-6). Between 2010 and 2012, the County had a small net increase in land designated as “Important Farmland” by 2,016 acres. The primary reason for this increase is due to the conversion of land to newly irrigated (field and row crops, including irrigated hay and corn) farmland categories within the eastern half of the county (DOC, 2014). As part of the proposed project, 3.9 acres of agricultural lands, classified as important farmlands, will be converted to non-agricultural uses. The proposed project has been designed to minimize these farmland impacts by keeping the project features close to parcel boundaries in an effort to maximize the productive acreage of each affected parcel (see Figure 1-6). The proposed project’s contribution to the loss of farmland in Merced County is considered minimal. This is a less-than-significant impact, with no mitigation measures required.
b) A review of the Merced County Assessor’s office data indicates that the parcels affected by the proposed project are not under active Williamson Act contracts. As discussed above, the proposed bridge replacement project is considered necessary to improve local roadway circulation and public safety. The proposed project’s contribution to the loss of farmland in Merced County is considered minimal, with no resultant conflicts with agricultural zoning or an active Williamson Act Contract anticipated. This is a less-than-significant impact, with no mitigation measures required.

c, d) Land uses surrounding the project site include agricultural lands. However, the project site is not within an area zoned for forestland or timberland and would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land. Consequently, there is no impact and no mitigation measures are required.

e) Land uses adjacent to the proposed project site include additional agricultural lands in active production. Outside of the converted acreage identified above under Items “a and b”, the proposed project does not propose any new land uses or the permanent conversion of existing agricultural lands or result in any other actions that would impact additional adjacent agricultural lands. This impact is less-than-significant and no mitigation measures are required.

References

NEW BRIDGE LATERAL REALIGNMENT

Quinley Avenue
O'Donnell Lateral
Bear Creek
Gure Lateral
Dickenson Ferry Road
Quinley Avenue

IMPORTANT FARMLAND TYPES
- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Unique Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance

Direct Effects
- O'Donnell Lateral Easement Relocated
- O'Donnell Lateral Main Alignment
- Edge of Pavement
- New Bridge Cut and Fill
- Staging Area

FIGURE 1-6
Important Farmlands within the Study Area

SOURCE: Merced County, 2008; Bing Maps, 2009; ESRI, 2009; FMMP, 2012; ESA, 2014
Air Quality

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

**Would the project:**

- a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?
- b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?
- c) 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 (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?
- d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?
- e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?

### Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Discussion

a) The project site is located in unincorporated Merced County and within the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). The SJVAPCD is the regional government agency charged with improving the health and quality of life for all Valley residents through efficient, effective and entrepreneurial air quality management strategies. The most recently adopted air quality plan is the SJVAPCD 2007 Ozone Plan, a plan identifying strategies for SJVAPCD to reach attainment for State and national ozone standards (SJVAPCD, 2007).

The primary objective of the proposed project is to improve public safety and roadway circulation by replacing the existing Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge at Bear Creek. The proposed project would not increase roadway capacity or service capabilities that would induce unplanned growth or remove an existing obstacle to growth. The proposed project would not increase long-term traffic levels and there would be no operational impacts to air quality. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with the region’s air quality management plans and would be considered a *less-than-significant* impact and no mitigation measures are required.

b) The San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB) is surrounded by mountains on three sides with an opening only to the north. Predominant winds are from the north during the summer and from the south during the winter. Due to these topographic conditions, air movement through and out of the basin is restricted, which results in pollutant accumulation over time.
Since the proposed project would not add lanes or increase capacity, it would only affect local air pollutants during construction (approximately 10 months for both project phases). The proposed project would not affect long-term air pollutant emissions in the area or stationary air pollutant sources.

**Construction**

The primary concern to the SJVAPCD during construction would be the PM10 emissions from dust-generating activities. On September 25, 2008, EPA redesignated the San Joaquin Valley to attainment for the PM10 National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) and approved the PM10 Maintenance Plan.

Per the SJVAPCD’s Guide for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts (GAMAQI), the SJVAPCD’s approach to CEQA analysis of construction impacts is to require implementation of effective and comprehensive control measures rather than to require detailed quantification of emissions. Standard Regulation VIII control measures, described below, will be required during construction to minimize fugitive dust and avoid nuisance issues with sensitive receptors.

**Regulation VIII Control Measures.** As appropriate to this project, the following controls are required to be implemented at all construction sites (SJVAPCD, 2002):

- All disturbed areas, including storage piles, which are not being actively utilized for construction purposes, shall be effectively stabilized of dust emissions using water, chemical stabilizer/suppressant, covered with a tarp or other suitable cover or vegetative ground cover.

- All on-site unpaved roads and off-site unpaved access roads shall be effectively stabilized of dust emissions using water or chemical stabilizer/suppressant.

- All land clearing, grubbing, scraping, excavation, land leveling, grading, cut and fill, and demolition activities shall be effectively controlled for fugitive dust emissions utilizing application of water or by presoaking.

- With the demolition of buildings up to six stories in height, all exterior surfaces of the building shall be wetted during demolition.

- When materials are transported off-site, all material shall be covered, or effectively wetted to limit visible dust emissions, and at least six inches of freeboard space from the top of the container shall be maintained.

- All operations shall limit or expeditiously remove the accumulation of mud or dirt from adjacent public streets at the end of each workday. The use of dry rotary brushes is expressly prohibited except where preceded or accompanied by sufficient wetting to limit the visible dust emissions. Use of blower devices is expressly forbidden.

- Following the addition of materials to, or the removal of materials from, the surface of outdoor storage piles, said piles shall be effectively stabilized of fugitive dust emissions utilizing sufficient water or chemical stabilizer/suppressant.
• Within urban areas, trackout shall be immediately removed when it extends 50 or more feet from the site and at the end of each workday.

• Any site with 150 or more vehicle trips per day shall prevent carryout and trackout.

With implementation of these required controls, PM10 impacts from construction of the proposed project would be less-than-significant and no additional mitigation measures are required.

**Operations**

The proposed project would not result in the increased capacity of a roadway or result in a land use that generates additional vehicle trips. Consequently, the proposed project would not increase long-term traffic levels. There would be no impact to air quality under full operation of the proposed project and no mitigation measures are required.

c) As discussed above under Item b, the proposed project would result in minimal air pollutant emissions during the short-term duration of construction. In addition, the proposed project would not result in any operational activities or emissions. Therefore, the proposed project would not 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. Consequently, this impact is less-than-significant and no mitigation measures are required.

d) As noted above under Item b, the proposed project would not generate substantial pollutant concentrations with implementation of Regulation VIII Control Measures and, therefore, would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. This impact would be less-than-significant and no additional mitigation measures are required.

e) Generally, the types of projects or activities that pose potential odor problems include refineries, chemical plants, wastewater treatment plants, landfills, composting facilities, and transfer stations. The proposed project is a bridge replacement project that is located within a largely rural area that would not create substantial/long-term objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people. This impact would be less-than-significant and no mitigation measures are required.

**References**


San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD), 2002. *Guide for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts (GAMAQI)*.
Biological Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES — Would the project:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</table>

Introduction

The following section provides a summary of the complete environmental and regulatory information collected for the Natural Environment Study Report (Caltrans, 2013) prepared for the County of Merced and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

Studies conducted by ESA biologists for the Natural Environment Study (NES) included background research to determine the special-status species and their habitats potentially occurring in the study area, a focused biological survey that included conducting an inventory of plant and animal species observed within and adjacent to the project site, and mapping of the potential waters of the U.S.

Background research consisted of a literature review of the following resources:

- United States Geological Survey (USGS) “Atwater, California” and eight surrounding 7.5 minute topographic quadrangles: Cressey, Winton, Yosemite Lake, Merced, El Nido, Sandy Mush, Turner Ranch, and Arena;
• Color aerial photography of the study area and vicinity;

• California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) reported occurrences of special-status species within the Atwater, California and eight surrounding quads (California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2013);

• United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) list of threatened and endangered species with the potential to occur in or be affected by projects in the Atwater, California and eight surrounding quads; and

• Pertinent published and unpublished literature.

During the focused biological survey, ESA biologists walked transects through the entire study area spaced closely to obtain 100 percent visual coverage of the habitats present. A botanical survey was conducted according to the Guidelines for Assessing the Effects of Proposed Projects on Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants and Natural Communities (CDFW 2000). All plant species encountered during the survey were identified to the taxonomic level necessary to determine whether or not they were special-status species. Potential waters of the U.S. occurring in the study area were determined according to methods outlined in the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual (USACE 1987) and the Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Arid West Region (Version 2.0) (USACE 2008).

Study Area Habitat Descriptions

Terrestrial habitat types within the study area include disturbed, agricultural, ruderal grassland, and urban development. Aquatic habitat types include riverine (perennial stream, intermittent, and ephemeral drainages). Figure 1-7 identifies the location of these habitats within the study area. Detailed descriptions of these habitats are provided below.

Disturbed: Disturbed habitats within the study area are located along the banks of the earthen-lined irrigation canal running parallel to Bear Creek, the shoulders of and banks of Dickenson Ferry Road and South Quinley Avenue, as well as the banks and shoulders of surrounding gravel and dirt agricultural roads. These disturbed areas are either void of vegetation or vegetated primarily with weedy grasses and forbs typical of disturbed areas and waste places. Dominant grass species observed during the field visit included ripgut brome (Bromus diandrus), wild oat (Avena sp.), soft chess (Bromus hordeaceus), and Italian ryegrass (Lolium multiflorum). Dominant forb species included star thistle (Centaurea solstitialis), prickly lettuce (Lactuca serriola), Russian thistle (Salsola tragus), milk thistle (Silybum marianum), and alkali mallow (Malvella leprosa). Animal species observed in the disturbed habitat included western fence lizard (Sceloporus occidentalis), mourning dove (Zenaida macroura), and American crow (Corvus brachyrhynchos). Raccoon (Procyon lotor) tracks and river otter (Lutra canadensis) tracks were observed within this habitat. Several mammal burrows, likely of California ground squirrel (Spermophilus beecheyi), were observed under the bridge and elsewhere within the disturbed and ruderal habitats.

Agricultural: Agricultural fields surround the project site and are the dominant land cover type in the area. During the field visit, several of the fields to the north and south of the project site and adjacent areas were being used to grow an unknown grain crop while other fields to the north had
been recently harvested and/or disked. Agricultural fields, such as hay fields and row crops, have high foraging habitat value for wildlife species such as Swainson’s hawk (Buteo swainsoni) and other raptors. Red-tailed hawks (Buteo jamaicensis) were observed flying over the agricultural fields in and adjacent to the project site.

**Ruderal Grassland:** The ruderal grassland habitat within the project site consists of both sides of the channel portion of Bear Creek and the property west of Bear Creek. Ruderal grasslands consist of a mix of non-native annual grasses and forbs that include Bermuda grass (Cynodon dactylon), Johnsongrass (Sorghum halepense), wild oats, curlydock (Rumex crispus), stork’s bill (Erodium sp.), and yellow star-thistle. There are several valley oaks (Quercus lobata) scattered along the tops of the banks of Bear Creek. Ruderal grassland may provide habitat for common species such as rock pigeon (Columba livia), house sparrow (Passer domesticus), house finch (Carpodacus mexicanus), and mourning dove. Species observed in these habitats during the site visit included western scrub jay (Aphelocoma californica) and killdeer (Charadrius vociferous). Ruderal grassland within the study area appears to be regularly disturbed by the maintenance of the levy roads surrounding the creek. These areas are unlikely to support special-status plant species.

**Urban/Developed:** Within the project site, urban areas are landscaped with ornamental species, paved, or otherwise developed and generally lack natural vegetation. These urban areas include the paved and unpaved roadways and rural residential uses. Urban environments generally provide limited habitat for common wildlife species such as American crow, house mouse (Mus musculus), and opossum (Didelphis virginiana).

**Special-Status Species**

Special-status species are those plants and animals that, because of their recognized rarity or vulnerability to various causes of habitat loss or population decline, are recognized by federal, state, or other agencies as deserving special consideration. Some of these species receive specific legal protection pursuant to federal or state endangered species legislation. Others lack such legal protection, but have been characterized as “sensitive” on the basis of adopted policies and expertise of state resource agencies or organizations with acknowledged expertise, or policies adopted by local governmental agencies such as counties, cities, and special districts to meet local conservation objectives.

**Potentially Affected Listed and Proposed Species**

A list of special-status plant and animal species that have the potential to occur within the vicinity of the study area was compiled based on data in the CNDDB (CDFW, 2013a and b), CNPS Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (CNPS, 2013), and the USFWS List of Federal Endangered and Threatened Species that may be Affected by Projects in the “Atwater, California” and eight surrounding 7.5 minute topographic quadrangles: Cressey, Winton, Yosemite Lake, Merced, El Nido, Sandy Mush, Turner Ranch, and Arena (USFWS, 2013). Conclusions regarding habitat suitability and species occurrence are based on a reconnaissance-level area assessment conducted by ESA biologists, as well as existing literature and databases described previously.
Figure 1-7
Habitats within the Study Area

SOURCE: Microsoft Imagery, 2013; ESA, 2013
Dickenson Ferry Bridge Replacement Project, 207511.11
Table 3 (below) provides a summary of the special-status plants, animals, and critical habitat designations that are considered to have a “Medium” or “High Potential” to occur within the project site and surrounding area. Special-status species with a “Low” or “Unlikely” probability to occur within the study area are not identified in the table.

**TABLE 3  
SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES THAT MAY OCCUR IN THE STUDY AREA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Name/ Common Name</th>
<th>Federal/ State/ CNPS Status</th>
<th>Specific Habitat Present/ Absent</th>
<th>Species Present/ Absent</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reptiles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western pond turtle</td>
<td>--/SSC/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>The portion of Bear Creek within the study area provides marginal habitat for this species. Although this species was not observed in the project site during surveys, it could migrate into the site from upstream or downstream areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actinemys marmorata</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giant garter snake</td>
<td>FT/ST/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>Bear Creek provides potential aquatic dispersal habitat for this species. Potentially suitable upland habitat is also present along the banks of the creek.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thamnophis gigas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mammals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pallid bat</td>
<td>--/SSC/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>The existing bridge may provide roosting habitat for this species; however, this species or sign of this species was not observed during surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antrozous pallidus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western red bat</td>
<td>--/SSC/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>The existing bridge and the mature trees within the project site may provide roosting habitat for this species; however, this species or sign of this species was not observed during surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasiurus blossevillii</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquin kit fox</td>
<td>FE/ST/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>The banks of Bear Creek and the surrounding agricultural fields may provide a movement corridor and foraging habitat for this species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulpes macrotis mutica</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Birds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-colored blackbird</td>
<td>--/SSC/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>The patches of Arundo donax along the banks of Bear Creek may provide marginal nesting habitat and the surrounding agricultural fields may provide foraging habitat; however, this species was not observed during the surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agelaius tricolor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western burrowing owl</td>
<td>--/SSC/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>Small mammal burrows within the levee banks within the project site may provide habitat for this species, however, this species or sign of this species was not observed during surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athene cunicularia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swainson’s hawk</td>
<td>--/ST/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>The mature valley oak trees within the project site, along the banks of Bear Creek, could provide suitable nesting habitat while the surrounding agricultural fields could provide suitable foraging habitat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buteo swainsoni</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain plover</td>
<td>--/SSC/--</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>This species may use the surrounding agricultural fields for winter habitat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charadrius montanus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plants</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford’s arrowhead</td>
<td>--/--/1B.2</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Potentially Present</td>
<td>Bear Creek provides suitable habitat for this species. Although this species was not observed in the project site during surveys, it could become established in the project site from existing populations upstream or downstream of the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagittaria sandfordii</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1 Raptors, migratory birds, and nesting birds are protected by a variety of Federal and State laws.  
Absent [A] means no further work needed. Present [P] means general habitat is present and species may be present. Status: Federal Endangered (FE); Federal Threatened (FT); Federally Proposed Threatened (FPT); State Threatened (ST); State Species of Special Concern (SSC); CNPS List 1B.2 (1B.2 = Fairly endangered in California (20-80% occurrences threatened).
Discussion

a) The following sub-sections provide a discussion of potential effects to special-status plant and animal species.

Special-Status Plants

Bear Creek provides marginal habitat for Sanford’s arrowhead (see Table 3). As the field survey was conducted outside the normal blooming period for this species (May-October) and this species is a perennial plant, identification focused on vegetative features (i.e. leaves and recurved pedicels). Although this species has not previously been observed in the study area, it could disperse into the project site prior to construction from surrounding populations. Ground disturbing activities could potentially impact special-status species if they are present on the project site at the commencement of the construction period. However, implementation of the various species avoidance measures as set forth in Mitigation Measure BIO-1 “Conduct Pre-construction Plant Surveys” prior to construction of the proposed project would reduce or avoid impacts to special-status plant species to a less-than-significant level.

Special-Status Wildlife – Reptiles

Giant Garter Snake (GGS) is a federally- and state-listed threatened species and as such is protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act and the California Endangered Species Act. Potential aquatic habitat for this species within the project site includes Bear Creek and the O’Donnell Lateral Canal. Although no GGS were observed during field surveys of the project site, they are very difficult to observe and negative survey results are not conclusive to determine absence of the snake. GGS could potentially utilize Bear Creek for aquatic dispersal habitat.

Habitat loss as a result of the proposed project is not expected to adversely affect GGS as the area of impact is very small and the new bridge piers are not expected to decrease the suitability of potential dispersal habitat over existing conditions. However, dewatering and other construction activities could potentially impact GGS if they were present in the project site. Potential impacts include direct harm to GGS that may come into contact with construction personnel and/or equipment, temporarily inhibiting movement of GGS through the project site, as well as exposure of GGS to increased chance of predation or physical harm if they were to become trapped in the dewatered area or were trying to escape or move around the dewatered area. However, implementation of pre-construction surveys, species avoidance measures, and water quality best management practices as set forth in Mitigation Measure BIO-2a “Conduct Pre-construction GGS Surveys”, Mitigation Measure BIO-2b “Implement GGS Avoidance Measures” and Mitigation Measure HWQ-1 “Implement Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs)” (see Hydrology and Water Quality section), during the bridge replacement phase of the proposed project would reduce or avoid impacts to GGS to a less-than-significant level.

Canal realignment activities are required to occur during the November 1st through March 1st time period, which also coincides with the time period that GGS may be hibernating in
the study area. Similar to the bridge replacement phase of the proposed project, potential impacts may occur to GGS hibernating in the area through direct contact with construction personnel and/or equipment. However, with implementation of the species avoidance measures identified above (Mitigation Measure BIO-2b “Implement GGS Avoidance Measures”) and Mitigation Measure BIO-2c “Implement GGS Inactive Period Avoidance Measures” during the canal realignment phase of the proposed project would reduce or avoid impacts to GGS to a less-than-significant level.

The various GGS avoidance and minimization measures described in mitigation measures BIO-2b and BIO-2c are based on measures developed in coordination with the USFWS as part of informal consultation activities with Caltrans to address impacts to GGS. In a letter received on April 4, 2014 (USFWS, 2014), the USFWS concurred with Caltrans’ conclusion that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect GGS with implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures described in BIO-2b and BIO-2c.

Dispersal habitat for the western pond turtle occurs within Bear Creek. Potential impacts to this species would be a temporary loss of foraging and dispersal habitat. However, implementation of the various species avoidance measures and water quality best management practices as set forth in Mitigation Measure BIO-3a “Conduct Pre-construction Surveys for Western Pond Turtle”, Mitigation Measure BIO-3b “Implement Western Pond Turtle Avoidance Measures”, and Mitigation Measure HWQ-1 “Implement Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs)” (see Hydrology and Water Quality section), during construction activities (including dewatering activities) associated with the proposed project would reduce or avoid impacts to the western pond turtle to a less-than-significant level.

Special-Status Wildlife – Nesting Bats
Suitable roosting habitat for both pallid bat and Western red bat occurs under the bridge as well as within the mature trees scattered around the project site. If bats are found roosting, they will have to relocate to another suitable roost site potentially exposing them to increased stress and chance of predation. Other potential impacts to these species during project construction include the potential for destruction of individual bats, if present, and the loss of suitable nesting and foraging habitat. However, implementation of the various species avoidance measures as set forth in Mitigation Measure BIO-4a “Conduct Pre-Construction Survey for Bat Species”, and Mitigation Measure BIO-4b “Implement Bat Species Exclusion Measures Prior to Active Season” prior to the construction phase of the proposed project would reduce or avoid impacts to bat species to a less-than-significant level.

Special-Status Wildlife – San Joaquin Kit Fox
While the proposed project is not expected to result in a loss of San Joaquin Kit Fox (SJKF) habitat, construction activities resulting from the project could potential result in harm to individual SJKF if they were to enter the project site during the construction
phase of the project and encounter construction personnel or equipment. However, implementation of the various species avoidance measures as set forth in Mitigation Measure BIO-5 “Implement USFWS Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the SJKF Prior to or During Ground Disturbance” will reduce or avoid impacts to dispersing SJKF to a less-than-significant level.

Special-Status Wildlife – Nesting Songbirds, Raptors, and Western Burrowing Owls

Biological surveys of the project site resulted in no observances of western burrowing owls, Swainson’s hawks, or other active nests from migratory songbirds. However, a black phoebe was observed collecting nesting material and bringing it to a location near the boards around the bridge pilings. Additionally, whitewash and remnants of old nests were visible on the bridge. Similarly, suitable nesting habitat occurs for the Western burrowing owl along the levee banks within and adjacent to the project site, and suitable foraging habitat occurs in the adjacent agricultural fields. Suitable foraging habitat for Swainson’s hawk occurs in and adjacent to the project site, with several large mature valley oaks and a large eucalyptus providing suitable nesting habitat for this species. Construction activity within the vicinity of an active nest site can cause parent birds to abandon the nest. However, implementation of the various species/nesting avoidance measures as set forth in Mitigation Measure BIO-6a “Conduct Pre-construction Nesting Bird Surveys”, Mitigation Measure BIO-6b “Implement Avoidance Measures for Active Bird Nest Sites”, and Mitigation Measure BIO-6c “Conduct Pre-construction Surveys for Burrowing Owls and Avoid Loss or Disturbance of Active Nests” prior to the construction phase of the proposed project would reduce or avoid impacts to nesting songbird, raptor species, and Western burrowing owls to a less-than-significant level.

b) Bear Creek is considered a sensitive community within the project site. Bridge replacement activities would involve the installation of replacement piles within the creek channel and would result in direct permanent impacts to Bear Creek. The replacement piles are expected to occupy 55.02 feet squared (0.001263 acres) of aquatic surface area (14 piles) within the channel portion of Bear Creek. An additional 47.16 feet squared (0.00108 acres) of ruderal bank habitat (12 piles) would also be occupied, for a total of 102.18 feet squared (0.00235 acres) of habitat occupied. Overall, impacts to the creek channel are expected to be minor with new bridge piles replacing existing piles within Bear Creek.

Temporary impacts are also expected to occur within Bear Creek due to dewatering activities and access by construction equipment and personnel. Since bridge construction details have not been finalized, the entire segment of the Bear Creek within the project site was considered to potentially be temporarily impacted during dewatering and construction activities. The actual acreages of temporary impacts are expected to be less once construction methods (such as ingress/egress points in the channel) and the bridge design has been finalized. The potential area of temporary disturbance to the Bear Creek within the project site is approximately 0.57 acres (250 linear feet of channel with an
The habitat types on the project site are highly disturbed and therefore provide very limited opportunities for wildlife and plant species. No heritage trees or other sensitive natural communities would be affected by the proposed project. Additionally, implementation of post-construction re-vegetation activities as set forth in **Mitigation Measure BIO-2b “Implement GGS Avoidance Measures”** and **Mitigation Measure HWQ-1 “Implement Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs)”** (see Hydrology and Water Quality section) would reduce impacts to sensitive natural communities to a *less-than-significant* level.

c) Potential jurisdictional wetlands and other waters of the U.S. were delineated within the project site, with Bear Creek, the O’Donnell Lateral Canal, and a small roadside ditch considered potentially jurisdictional. Overall, permanent impacts to Bear Creek are expected to be minor with new bridge piles replacing existing piles within the creek channel. Temporary impacts to jurisdictional wetlands would also occur through dewatering activities. As part of the proposed project, the County will obtain the following permits prior to the implementation of construction activities (including both phases): a Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit from the USACE; a Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification Waiver from the Regional Water Quality Control Board; and a California Fish and Game Code 1600-1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) from the CDFW. All permit requirements will be implemented to mitigate for loss of waters of the U.S. and reduce impacts to water quality during construction; therefore, this impact is considered *less-than-significant*.

d) Bear Creek provides a movement corridor for areas between the San Joaquin River and Highway 33, where the Bear Creek is below ground. Bear Creek allows common aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species to safely disperse back and forth between suitable habitats to the east and west. Highways and roads can present an impassable barrier to many wildlife species and are hazardous for wildlife to cross. Relatively unimpeded waterways such as Bear Creek provide important movement corridors that allow dispersal and subsequent gene flow between wildlife populations separated by roads and populated areas. The proposed project would not remove, degrade or otherwise interfere substantially with the structure or function of Bear Creek or its creek corridor. Additionally, implementation of post-construction re-vegetation activities as set forth in **Mitigation Measure BIO-2b “Implement GGS Avoidance Measures”** and **Mitigation Measure HWQ-1 “Implement Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs)”** (see Hydrology and Water Quality section) would reduce impacts to Bear Creek to a *less-than-significant* level.

e) There are no trees within the project site. The proposed project would result in *no impact* to any plans or policies for the protection of biological resources or trees.

f) No habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans or other similar plans are applicable to the project site. There is *no impact*.
Mitigation Measures

Special-Status Plants

Mitigation Measure BIO-1: Conduct Pre-construction Plant Surveys. Within 30 days prior to construction, the County shall ensure that a qualified botanist shall conduct a preconstruction survey for Sanford’s arrowhead. If Sanford’s arrowhead is not found, then no further measures are necessary. If Sanford’s arrowhead is found in the project site, CDFW will be notified at least 10 days prior to dewatering or construction impacts in the vicinity of Sanford’s arrowhead in accordance with the California Native Plant Protection Act of 1977 (CDFW Code Section 1900-1913) to allow sufficient time to transplant the individuals to a suitable location.

Giant Garter Snake

Mitigation Measure BIO-2a: Conduct Pre-construction GGS Surveys. A qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey for GGS, no more than 24 hours prior to the start of construction activities (site preparation, de-watering, and/or grading). If construction activities stop for a period of two or more weeks, a new GGS survey shall be completed no more than 24 hours prior to the reinitiating of construction activities. The biologist shall monitor the site during de-watering activities; if a GGS is encountered during the construction period after the completion of de-watering activities, the monitoring biologist shall be notified and shall have the authority to stop localized construction activities until corrective measures have been taken to avoid harm to GGS.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2b: Implement GGS Avoidance Measures. The County shall ensure that the construction contractor implements the following GGS avoidance and minimization measures during the bridge replacement phase of the project:

- Worker Environmental Awareness Training. A USFWS approved biologist(s) will conduct environmental awareness training for all construction personnel prior to the start of ground-breaking activities. The training will cover life history of the GGS, how to identify species and their habitats, what to do if a GGS is encountered during construction activities, and penalties for not complying with biological minimization requirements.

- In Water Work. All in-water and bank-side construction activities shall be conducted during the active season for GGS (between May 1st and October 1st). Any work occurring after October 1st shall be restricted to bridge surface work with water quality controls in place.

- Dewatering Activities. Between May 1st and October 1st Bear Creek will be dewatered and then dried out for at least 15 consecutive days before workers excavate or fill the dewatered habitat. The County shall ensure that the dewatered habitat contains no puddle water and no longer continues to support GGS prey species (e.g., fish, tadpoles, and aquatic insects), which could detain or attract snakes into the area.

- Vegetation Clearing and Re-Vegetation. Any vegetation or ground clearing shall be confined to the minimum areas necessary within 200 feet of aquatic habitat. Upon completion of all construction activities, disturbed sections of Bear Creek and the O’Donnell Lateral Canal will be restored and re-vegetated (hydro-seeded) with native vegetation.
• **Temporary Fencing.** Temporary fencing (or similar devices which lack openings which might cause the GGS to become stranded or otherwise become entangled) shall be installed at the upstream and downstream limits of the construction area, to deter GGS from entering the project site and be harmed by construction activities. The fencing shall be installed regardless of whether or not there is aquatic habitat present during the time of construction to ensure that GGS do not enter the construction zone.

• **Erosion Control Matting.** No plastic, monofilament, jute, or similar erosion control matting that could entangle GGS will be used. Possible substitutions include coconut coir matting, tactified hydro seeding compounds, or other material approved by the USFWS.

• **Encountering GGS During Construction.** If a live GGS is encountered during construction activities, a USFWS-approved biologist will be notified immediately, and in coordination with the County/Construction Contractor will stop all construction activity in the vicinity of the GGS. The GGS will be monitored and allowed to leave on its own. Should the GGS not leave on its own accord within one working day, the USFWS and the CDFW will be contacted. If a dead or injured GGS is discovered, the County will immediately contact Caltrans, which in turn will notify the USFWS and the CDFW within one working day of the discovery. Written notification will be made to the USFWS within three calendar days and will include, at minimum, the date, time, location of the species, and known circumstances of its injury or death.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-2c: Implement GGS Inactive Period Avoidance Measures.** The County shall ensure that the construction contractor implements the following GGS avoidance and minimization measures prior and during the canal realignment phase of the proposed project:

• **Inspect and Monitor Burrows.** Between May 1 and October 1 (before construction begins on the canal relocation phase), a USFWS-approved biologist(s) will identify and monitor all burrows and other potential refugia for GGS. Following inspection, all burrows and other refugia that are expected to be disturbed or destroyed as a result of construction activities first will be excavated by hand and then carefully collapsed.

• **Exclusionary Fencing.** Between May 1 and October 1, and following the excavation and collapse of burrows and other refugia, exclusionary fencing (e.g. temporary silt fencing or other appropriate materials that will not cause the giant garter snake to become entangled) will be installed around the canal realignment work area. This will preclude any future excavation of burrows by small mammals, which will ensure that no new habitat is created in which the giant garter snake can find refuge during the inactive season when work on the canal realignment phase begins. The fencing also will ensure that equipment and personnel do not encroach past the boundaries of the construction footprint. Installation methodology and locations of the fencing will be determined in coordination with the USFWS-approved biologist(s).

• **Monitoring.** A USFWS-approved biologist(s) will be on-site daily to monitor all construction activities taking place during the inactive period.

**Western Pond Turtle**

**Mitigation Measure BIO-3a: Conduct Pre-construction Surveys for Western Pond Turtle.** No more than two weeks prior to the commencement of ground-disturbing activities, the County shall retain a qualified biologist to perform surveys for western pond turtle within suitable aquatic
and upland habitat within the project site. Surveys will include western pond turtle nests as well as individuals. The biologist (with the appropriate agency permits) will temporarily move any identified western pond turtles upstream of the construction area, and temporary barriers will be placed around the construction area to prevent ingress. Construction will not proceed until the work area is determined to be free of turtles and their nests. The results of these surveys will be documented in a technical memorandum that will be submitted to CDFW (if turtles are documented). If the pre-construction surveys do identify western pond turtle nests within areas that may be affected by site construction, species avoidance measures shall occur through implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-3b.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-3b: Implement Western Pond Turtle Avoidance Measures.** Should a western pond turtle nest be located within a work area, the County shall ensure that a qualified biologist (with the appropriate permits from the CDFW) relocate the eggs to a suitable facility for incubation and release hatchlings into the creek system in late fall. The biologist will be present on the project area during initial ground clearing, grading, and during all other construction activities.

**Bat Species**

**Mitigation Measure BIO-4a: Conduct Pre-Construction Survey for Bat Species.** A bat survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats prior to May 1st in order to put exclusionary measures into place before the active season of this species (no exclusionary efforts should be conducted during May 1st to August 31st of the construction year) and to prevent bats from utilizing the bridge structure. If no roosting bats are found, no further mitigation would be necessary;

**Mitigation Measure BIO-4b: Implement Bat Species Exclusion Measures Prior to Active Season.** If pallid bats or other bat species are detected within the roost at the time of implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-4a, excluding any bats from roosts will be accomplished by a qualified biologist prior to the removal of the bridge. The timing and other methods of exclusionary activities will be developed by the qualified biologist in order to reduce the stress on the bats to the amount feasible while taking into account project schedule. Exclusionary devices, such as plastic sheeting, plastic or wire mesh, can be used to allow for bats to exit but not re-enter any occupied roosts. Expanding foam and plywood sheets can be used to prevent bats from entering unoccupied roosts.

**San Joaquin Kit Fox**

**Mitigation Measure BIO-5: Implement USFWS Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the SJKF Prior to or During Ground Disturbance.** The County shall ensure that the construction contractor implement the applicable construction and operational requirements included in the *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* shall be adhered to in order to avoid any potential impacts to SJKF that may use the project site as a movement corridor.
**Nesting Songbirds, Raptors, and Western Burrowing Owls**

**Mitigation Measure BIO-6a: Conduct Pre-construction Nesting Bird Surveys.** Should project-related construction or grading activities be scheduled during bird nesting season (February 1 to August 31), pre-construction surveys would be required by a qualified wildlife biologist to identify active Swainson’s hawk nests within ½-mile of proposed construction activities and nests of other species within 250 feet of proposed construction activities. The surveys would be conducted no less than 14 days and no more than 30 days prior to the beginning of construction. The results of the survey would be emailed to CDFW at least three days prior to construction. Surveys would be conducted by a qualified biologist. For Swainson’s hawk surveys, guidelines provided in the *Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swanson’s Hawk Nesting Survey in the Central Valley* (Swainson’s Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, 2000) would be followed where possible.

If the pre-construction surveys do not identify any nesting raptors or other nesting migratory bird species within areas potentially affected by construction activities, no further mitigation would be required. If the pre-construction surveys do identify nesting raptors or other nesting bird species within areas that may be affected by site construction, nest avoidance measures shall occur through implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-6b.**

**Mitigation Measure BIO-6b: Implement Avoidance Measures for Active Bird Nest Sites.** Should active nest sites be discovered within areas that may be affected by construction activities, the County shall ensure that the construction contractor implement the following nest avoidance measures:

- If active nests are found, CDFW would be notified and construction-related impacts to nesting birds would be avoided by establishment of appropriate no-work buffers to limit project-related construction activities near the nest site. The size of the no-work buffer zone would be determined in consultation with the CDFW, although a ¼ mile buffer would be used when possible. The no-work buffer zone would be delineated by highly visible temporary construction fencing. In consultation with CDFW, monitoring of nest activity by a qualified biologist may be required if the project-related construction activity has potential to adversely affect the nest or nesting behavior of the bird(s). No project-related construction activity would commence within the no-work buffer area until a qualified biologist and CDFW confirms that the nest is no longer active.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-6c: Conduct Pre-construction Surveys for Burrowing Owls and Avoid Loss or Disturbance of Active Nests.** The County shall ensure that pre-construction surveys for burrowing owls are conducted by a qualified biologist (as approved by the CDFW) within 30-days prior to the start of work activities where land construction is planned in known or suitable habitat. If construction activities are delayed for more than 30 days after the initial preconstruction surveys, then a new preconstruction survey shall be required. All surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the CDFW/California Burrowing Owl Consortium survey protocols. If burrowing owls are discovered in the proposed project site vicinity during construction, the onsite biologist shall be notified immediately. Occupied burrows should not be disturbed during the nesting season (February 1 through August 31) unless a qualified biologist approved by the CDFW verifies through non-invasive methods that either: (1) the birds have not
begun egg-laying and incubation; or (2) that juveniles from the occupied burrows are foraging independently and are capable of independent survival.

If this criteria is not met, occupied burrows during the nesting season will be avoided by establishment of a no-work buffer of 250-foot around the occupied/active burrow. Where maintenance of a 250-foot no-work buffer zone is not practical, the County shall consult with the CDFW to determine appropriate avoidance measures. Burrows occupied during the breeding season (February 1 to August 31) will be closely monitored by the biologist until the young fledge/leave the nest. The onsite biologist shall have the authority to stop work if it is determined that construction related activities are disturbing the owls.

If criterion 1 or 2 above are met and as approved by CDFW, the biologist shall undertake passive relocation techniques by installing one-way doors in active and suitable burrows allowing owls to escape but not re-enter. Owls should be excluded from the immediate impact zone and within a 160-foot buffer zone by having one-way doors placed over the entrance to prevent owls from inhabiting those burrows.

After nesting season ends (August 31) and the burrow is deemed unoccupied by the biologist, passive relocation techniques shall take place. Construction activities may occur once a qualified biologist has deemed the burrows are unoccupied.

References


California Department of Transportation, 2013. Natural Environment Study and Biological Assessment for the Dickenson Ferry Road over Bear Creek Bridge Replacement Project; September 2013.


U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), 2014. Informal Consultation for the Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement Project, Merced County, California (California Department of Transportation, Local Assistance BRLO-5939(078))
Cultural Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
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<td>5. CULTURAL RESOURCES — Would the project:</td>
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<td>a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the</td>
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<td>significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?</td>
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<td>b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the</td>
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<td>significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?</td>
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<td>c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological</td>
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<td>resource or site or unique geologic feature?</td>
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<td>d) Disturb any human remains, including those intered outside of formal cemeteries?</td>
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Introduction

The following section provides a summary of the complete environmental and regulatory information collected for the Historic Property Survey Report (Caltrans, 2014) prepared for the County of Merced and Caltrans.

A record search was initially completed by the Central California Information Center (CCIC) staff of the California Historic Resources Information System (CHRIS) at California State University, Stanislaus on April 1, 1998. Because of the length of time between that initial record search and the preparation of this supplemental HPSR, an updated record search at the CCIC was performed on October 2, 2012.

Two previous projects had been documented within the current Area of Potential Effect (APE or study area), both related to this project. A Historic Resources Evaluation Report prepared by Byrd (1998) evaluated the O’Donnell Lateral for the California Register of Historical Resources and determined that the canal was not eligible. Also on file is a negative Archaeological Survey Report (ASR) prepared by Wesson (2001a) for the proposed project.

Several reports have been prepared for this project, which are not on file at the CCIC. These include:

1. Historic Property Survey Report, Dickenson Ferry Road at Bear Creek Bridge Replacement Project, prepared by Wesson (2001b);
2. Negative ASR, Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge over Bear Creek (Bridge No. 39C0095) Bridge Replacement Project, prepared by Wesson (2001a);
3. Bridge Evaluation of Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge at Bear Creek (Bridge No. 39C0095) prepared by Mikesell (2000);
4. Historic Architecture Survey Report, 6201 W. Dickenson Ferry Road prepared by Byrd (1999); and
5. Negative ASR, Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement at Eastside Canal (Bridge 39C0280) prepared by Werner (1999). (This report appears to have been mistitled. A review of the APE description is of the project area at Bear Creek/O’Donnell Lateral).

Neither the Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge (Bridge No. 39C0095) nor the O’Donnell Lateral have been officially filed as cultural resources with the CCIC. Both resources were recommended as not eligible by the authors (Byrd 1998, Mikesell 2000). Based on details provided in the studies listed above, Caltrans sent a letter (dated March 15, 2001) to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requesting State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurrence with the findings of ineligibility for the Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge, the residence at 1601 West Dickenson Ferry Road, and the O’Donnell Lateral. SHPO concurred with FHWA’s determination that the proposed project would have no effect on historic properties in a letter dated August 15, 2001. No previously recorded sites were identified within the study area (or within a half mile of the APE).

Discussion

a) The proposed project would not likely cause a significant impact to the eligibility of a historical resource. As discussed above, the cultural resource documents and evaluations concluded that the Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge and the O’Donnell Lateral Canal are not considered eligible for listing in the local, state or federal registers. No additional historic resources were identified within the project sites. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would result in no impacts to the significance of a historical resource (as defined in §15064.5) and no mitigation measures are required.

b) The records search of all pertinent survey and data performed at the CCIC did not identify any recorded archaeological resources on or near the project site. Additionally, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was contacted on February 9, 2012 and was requested to search their Sacred Lands File. The NAHC’s response dated February 14, 2012 stated that a record search of the sacred lands file failed to indicate the presence of Native American cultural resources within the project site. Although no archaeological remains have been identified within the project site, there is a chance that construction activities associated with the proposed project could result in accidentally discovering archaeological resources. Implementation of Mitigation Measures CR-1 “Discovery of Cultural Resources During Ground-Disturbing Activities” and Mitigation Measure CR-2 “Halt Work if Human Skeletal Remains are Identified During Construction” would ensure that previously unidentified cultural resources (including prehistoric, historic or paleontological subsurface cultural resources) are appropriately identified and protected in the event of an unexpected discovery. Therefore, the impact would be less-than-significant with incorporation of mitigation.

c) Paleontological resources are the fossilized evidence of past life found in the geologic record. Despite the tremendous volume of sedimentary rock deposits preserved worldwide, preservation of plant or animal remains as fossils is an extremely rare occurrence. Because of the infrequency of fossil preservation, fossils – particularly vertebrate fossils – are considered
to be nonrenewable resources. Because of their rarity, and the scientific information they can provide, fossils are considered highly significant records of ancient life.

No known paleontological resources or unique geologic features exist within the project site; therefore, the proposed project is not likely to destroy, either directly or indirectly, a unique paleontological resource or site, or geological feature. As described above under Item b), if such a resource should be encountered during construction, work would stop until the resource can be evaluated and a determination made of its significance and need for recovery, avoidance, and/or mitigation. With implementation of Mitigation Measures CR-1 and CR-2, the proposed project would result in a less-than-significant impact on paleontological resources or unique geologic features.

d) Based upon a records search, no human remains are known to exist within the project site. In the unlikely event that human remains are discovered, work within the area will be stopped and the Merced County Coroner will be notified immediately. Work will only resume after the investigation and in accordance with any requirements and procedures imposed by the Merced County Coroner. In the event that the bone most likely represents a Native American interment, the NAHC will be notified so that the most likely descendants can be identified and appropriate treatment can be implemented. Therefore, with the incorporation of Mitigation Measures CR-1 and CR-2, the proposed project would result in a less-than-significant impact with respect to disturbing any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure CR-1: Discovery of Cultural Resources During Ground-Disturbing Activities. The construction contractor shall cease work if prehistoric, historic or paleontological subsurface cultural resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities. If cultural resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, all activity in the vicinity shall cease until the discovery is evaluated by an archaeologist or paleontologist who meets the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior’s Qualification Standards. If the archaeologist/paleontologist determines that the resources may be significant, no further work in the vicinity of the resources shall take place until appropriate treatment is determined and implemented.

The need for archaeological and Native American monitoring during the remainder of the project will be re-evaluated by the archaeologist as part of the treatment determination, if deemed appropriate. The archaeologist shall consult with appropriate Native American representatives in determining appropriate treatment for unearthed cultural resources if the resources are prehistoric or Native American in nature. In considering any suggested mitigation proposed by the archaeologist in order to mitigate impacts to cultural resources, the project proponent will determine whether avoidance is necessary and feasible in light of factors such as the nature of the find, project design, costs, and other considerations. If avoidance is infeasible, other appropriate measures (e.g., data recovery) will be instituted.
Mitigation Measure CR-2: Halt Work if Human Skeletal Remains are Identified During Construction. If human skeletal remains are uncovered during project construction, work must immediately halt and the Merced County Coroner must be contacted to evaluate the remains; the procedures and protocols set forth in Section 15064.5 (e)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines must be followed. If the County Coroner determines that the remains are Native American, the project proponent will contact the NAHC, in accordance with Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, subdivision (c), and Public Resources Code 5097.98 (as amended by AB 2641). Per Public Resources Code 5097.98, the landowner shall ensure that the immediate vicinity, according to generally accepted cultural or archaeological standards or practices, where the Native American human remains are located, is not damaged or disturbed by further development activity until the landowner has discussed and conferred, as prescribed in this section (PRC 5097.98), with the most likely descendants regarding their recommendations, if applicable, taking into account the possibility of multiple human remains.

References


Byrd, David S., 1999. Historic Architectural Survey Report, 6201 W. Dickenson Ferry Road, Merced County, California, prepared by JRP Historical Consulting Services for Archaeological Services, Inc.


Mikesell, Stephen D., 2000. Bridge Evaluation, Bridge 39C-0095 Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge at Bear Creek, Merced, County, California, prepared by JRP Historical Consulting Services for URS.

Werner, Roger H., 1999. Negative ASR, Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement at Eastside Canal (Bridge 39C0280) Merced County, California, prepared by ASI Archaeology and Cultural Resources Management for County of Merced.

Wesson, Alex, 2001a. Negative ASR, Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge over Bear Creek (39C-0095) Bridge Replacement Project, prepared by URS for Merced County of Public Works, Road Division.

Wesson, Alex, 2001b. Historic Property Survey Report, Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge over Bear Creek (39C-0095) Bridge Replacement Project, prepared by URS for Merced County of Public Works, Road Division.
Geology, Soils, and Seismicity

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<td>6. GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND SEISMICITY — Would the project:</td>
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<td>a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:</td>
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<td>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.)</td>
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<td>ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?</td>
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<td>iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?</td>
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<td>iv) Landslides?</td>
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<td>b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?</td>
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<td>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?</td>
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<td>d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?</td>
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<td>e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?</td>
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</table>

Discussion

a.i–a.iv) The major land feature at the project site is the Bear Creek, a natural tributary of the San Joaquin River. The area surrounding the project site is relatively flat and is located in an area of low surface rupture or fault-related surface disturbance. According to the Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42, the project site is not located within a delineated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone (Bryant and Hart, 2007).

The seismic hazard most likely to impact the project site is ground shaking due to a large earthquake on one of the major active regional faults. The nearest major fault to the project site is the Ortigalita Fault located in the Coast Range in western Merced County. The project site is within an area of the County that could be subject to severe damage associated with ground seismic shaking (Merced County, 2007). Liquefaction is a process whereby water in unconsolidated sand and other granular materials is subjected to pressure...
usually caused by ground motion. Since fluids are not compressible and granular materials are, especially when shaken, the water seeks release. As water moves out of materials such as sand it causes the granular material to flow and lose strength. Such materials, in effect, behave as quicksand. The ground literally flows out from under structures. Earthquake shaking is a major cause of liquefaction and has resulted in severe damage in areas of California. As noted above, the project site’s topography is relatively flat and is not located within a delineated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. Additionally, the probability of soil liquefaction actually taking place on the project site is considered to be a low to moderate hazard as the soils on the project site consist of clay loam soils and do not include sandy soils.

Land subsidence is the gradual lowering of the land surface due to loss or compaction of underlying materials and can result from extraction of groundwater, gas and oil. The County is identified as containing subsidence hazards near Los Banos and El Nido, south and southeast of the project site respectively (Merced County, 2007). The probability of seismic-induced soil liquefaction or ground failure taking place on the project site is considered to be a low to moderate hazard.

The project site includes the gently sloping banks of Bear Creek. Strong seismic ground shaking could contribute to the potential landslide activities within the project site. However, the proposed project would comply with Merced County building regulations and the 2007 California Building Code, which would minimize the potential effects of ground shaking. This impact is considered less-than-significant, with no mitigation measures required.

b) The proposed project involves removing the existing Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge and constructing a new bridge. Construction activities will involve earth moving activities. The project site covers a relatively small area and will not result in substantial loss of topsoil. Proposed project operations will not result in a significant increase in the potential for soil erosion over existing conditions. With adherence to Merced County Code Section 18.41.030, potential erosion impacts from construction activities will be less-than-significant, with no mitigation measures required.

c, d) The project site consists primarily of Burchell silty clay loam (0 to 1 percent slopes) soils. The project site does not contain soils that would be susceptible to lateral spreading, liquefaction, or collapse conditions. The banks of Bear Creek are gently sloping. Bear Creek banks contain vegetation. The potential for landslides along the banks of the Bear Creek within the project site is low. With adherence to all applicable codes and regulations, including the 2007 California Building Code, impacts associated with on-or off-site landslide, expansive soil conditions, and other soil hazard conditions would be minimized. The impact is considered to be less-than-significant, with no mitigation measures required.
e) The proposed project will connect to existing sewer systems; septic tanks will not be used as part of the proposed project, therefore there is no impact, with no mitigation measures required.

References


Soil Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture (SCS), 1990. Soil Survey of Merced County, California, Western Part.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
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<tr>
<td>7. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS —</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would the project:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?</td>
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Discussion

a, b) The purpose of the proposed project is to replace the existing Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge with a similar bridge type that ensures safe vehicle access across Bear Creek and to provide a new structure that will be wider and meet current design standards. The proposed construction phase of the project is focused within a relatively small area, considered short-term in duration, and would not generate substantial air quality (including greenhouse gas emission) pollutant concentrations. The proposed project would not increase roadway facilities or service capabilities that would induce unplanned growth or remove an existing obstacle to growth. Consequently, the proposed project would not increase long-term traffic levels and there would be no operational impacts associated with greenhouse gas emissions. Impacts are considered less-than-significant, with no mitigation measures required.
Energy

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<td>8. ENERGY — Would the project:</td>
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<td>a) Result in a substantial increase in overall or per capita energy consumption?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Result in wasteful or unnecessary consumption of energy?</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Require or result in the construction of new sources of energy supplies or additional energy infrastructure capacity the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Conflict with applicable energy efficiency policies or standards?</td>
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</table>

Discussion

a-e) The construction phase of the proposed project will result in the temporary (short term) use of energy in the form of fuels for construction equipment. The proposed project is required to ensure safe vehicle access across the bridge and to provide a new structure that will be wider and meet current design standards. The proposed project is not associated with the development of land uses (i.e., residential, commercial, etc.) that would increase the demand for local or regional sources of energy. The use of energy for construction-related activities is considered minimal and would not require the construction of new sources of energy or energy infrastructure for implementation of the proposed project. The proposed project will also not conflict with any energy efficiency policies or standards contained in the County’s General Plan or other applicable planning documents. The impact to energy resources is considered less-than-significant, with no mitigation measures required.
Hazards and Hazardous Materials

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS — Would the project:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?</td>
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<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>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 for people residing or working in the project area?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?</td>
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<tr>
<td>g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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Introduction

An Initial Site Assessment (ISA) was prepared for the proposed project and completed in November 2012 (Caltrans, 2012). The results of the ISA are incorporated into the discussion of the proposed project’s impacts below.

Discussion

a) Implementation of the proposed project would not lead to the direct, long-term use or disposal of any hazardous materials. Construction of the proposed project would potentially require the use of various types and quantities of hazardous materials. Construction activities will involve the use of petroleum-based fuels for maintenance and construction equipment, which would be transported to the site periodically by vehicle and would be present at the site for short periods of time. None of these materials would
be permanently stored on site. Furthermore, all hazardous materials used for the construction of the proposed replacement bridge would be used, stored, and transported according to applicable federal, state, and University requirements. While typical bridge restoration activities (including paint application and recycling, etc.) will include the use of a variety of hazardous materials, the construction contractor is obligated to store and handle these materials (and associated wastes) in compliance with all Federal, State, and local regulations, as well as in adherence to Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) worker safety standards, which includes worker training related to onsite personal safety, hazardous materials storage and handling procedures (including container labeling, completion of material safety data sheets, employee training, and emergency response procedures. Additionally, the construction contractor would be responsible for developing and implementing a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) (see Hydrology and Water Quality, below). Therefore, impacts associated with the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials, the release of hazardous materials into the environment, and the possibility of hazardous emissions into the environment near existing or proposed schools is considered **less-than-significant**, with no further mitigation measures required.

b) An ISA prepared for the proposed project concluded that no existing recognized environmental conditions\(^1\) (RECs) were identified on or adjacent to the project site that would present a hazard to the public or the environment. While the ISA did not identify any RECs, it did provide additional considerations for asbestos, lead based paint, residual agricultural impacts, and construction operations in the Bear Creek. As reported in the ISA, potential asbestos containing materials (ACMs) or lead based paint (LBP) were not observed at the project site, but the presence of potential ACMs or LBP on the existing bridge is unknown. The bridge was constructed in 1949. The ISA states that for structures built prior to 1978, analysis of construction materials is necessary to evaluate the structure for the presence and condition of potential ACMs or LBP. Based on the age of the bridge, it is highly probable that portions of the bridge infrastructure will contain ACMs or LBP.

Based on the review and limited reconnaissance of adjacent properties for the ISA, potential RECs were not observed on adjacent properties; however, the presence of potential RECs as a result of historical agricultural use is unknown. Should RECs as a result of historical agricultural use be present within adjacent properties, remediation of such RECs would not be required or undertaken as part of the proposed project. Bear Creek collects agricultural drainage, which may contain agricultural chemicals associated with pesticides, fungicides, or other chemicals applied to upstream or adjacent agricultural lands.

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\(^1\) The term recognized environmental condition means the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products on a property under conditions that indicate an existing release, a past release, or a material threat of a release of any hazardous substances or petroleum products into structures on the property or into the ground, ground water, or surface water of the property. The term includes hazardous substances or petroleum products even under conditions in compliance with laws. The term is not intended to include de minimis conditions that generally do not present a threat to human health or the environment and that generally would not be the subject of an enforcement action if brought to the attention of appropriate governmental agencies. Conditions determined to be de minimis are not recognized environmental conditions.
The scope for the ISA did not include verification of RECs based upon environmental sampling and laboratory analysis. Consequently, presence of potential RECs as a result of agricultural drainage to the Bear Creek is unknown. The ISA states that should RECs as a result of agricultural drainage be present within Bear Creek at the project site, remediation of such RECs would not be required or undertaken as part of the proposed project. However, because pile driving and other construction activities would take place within the channel, Bear Creek could pose potential health and safety issues during construction. Health and safety considerations for construction workers must be taken into account during development of health and safety plans for the proposed project.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures HAZ-1 “Safe Removal and Proper Disposal of Materials Contaminated by Lead” and Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 “Contamination of Soil and/or Groundwater” would be required to ensure there would not be 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 and reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.

c) The project site is not located within ¼ mile of a school. The project site is located in a rural area primarily surrounded by agricultural land and is not located within the vicinity of urban development. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

d) An ISA prepared for the proposed project included an extensive database records search for the project site and properties within a 1-mile radius of the project site. The ISA concluded that the project site was not identified in any of the databases searched and also did not identify any recognized environmental conditions that may result in a significant hazard to the public or the environment. However, the EDR environmental database report did identify two locations near the project site where abandoned drug lab waste was found. A Clandestine Drug Lab (CDL) database listing does not indicate that any illegal drug lab materials were or were not present there, and does not constitute a determination that the location either requires or does not require additional cleanup work. No abandoned drug lab waste was observed within the study area during the site inspection. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

e) The nearest airport to the project site is the Merced Regional Airport located over four miles east of the project site. The Merced Regional Airport is classified as a commercial service airport (City of Merced, 2007). The project site is not located within an adopted airport land use plan. No safety hazards are anticipated for workers at the project site and there is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

f) A private airstrip is located approximately 1.5 miles to the west; however, the project will not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

g) As described above, under the Project Description, the primary objective of the proposed project is to replace the existing bridge structure to improve public safety, since the existing
bridge has reached the end of its lifespan. The project also serves to improve safety and increased sight distance by improving the roadway approaches to the bridge and realigning of the Dickenson Ferry Road/Quinley Avenue intersection. Consequently, the proposed project would have a positive impact on ensuring that future emergency response actions and the implementation of evacuation plans along safe transportation routes is continued in Merced County. While the proposed project would result in a temporary road closure along Dickenson Ferry Road in the vicinity of the project site, a detour route is planned (see Figure 1-5, above on page 10) and will be noticed. Additionally, with implementation of a traffic control plan (see Mitigation Measure TRAF-1 “Implement Traffic Control Plan”, under the Transportation and Traffic Section, below), this impact is less-than-significant.

h) The project site is located within a portion of Merced County containing areas with minimal fire fuels. The fire threat in the vicinity of the project site ranges from no threat to a moderate threat of fire (Merced County, 2007). The area surrounding the project site contains irrigated agricultural lands that are typically not considered a good source of fire fuels. Additionally, the proposed project would not include activities that expose additional people or structures to the threat of fire. This is less-than-significant impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1: Safe Removal and Proper Disposal of Materials Contaminated by Lead. The County shall ensure, through the enforcement of contractual obligations, that work plans address procedures for the safe removal and proper disposal of materials contaminated with asbestos. Any identified LBP must be removed and disposed of in the proper waste facility. The demolition of the structures shall comply with the U.S. EPA National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) and the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District rules and regulations regarding lead.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2: Contamination of Soil and/or Groundwater. During construction activities for the proposed project, if contaminated soil and/or groundwater are encountered or suspected contamination is encountered, work should be stopped in the suspected area of contamination and the type and extent of the contamination be identified. If necessary, a remediation plan shall be implemented in conjunction with continued construction of the proposed project.

References


Hydrology and Water Quality

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<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
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<tr>
<td>10. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY — Would the project:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of a site or area through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or by other means, in a manner that would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of a site or area through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or by other means, substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on- or off-site?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>e) 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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?</td>
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<td>g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures that would impede or redirect flood flows?</td>
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<tr>
<td>i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>j) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?</td>
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Discussion

a, f) Bear Creek is the nearest body of water to the project site. Bear Creek flows east into the San Joaquin River. The O’Donnell Lateral, an irrigation canal owned and operated by the MID runs parallel to and into Bear Creek. The O’Donnell Lateral canal likely only drains into Bear Creek during heavy storm or flood events.

Development of the proposed project site has the potential to expose bare soil and potentially generate other water quality pollutants that could be exposed to precipitation and subsequent
Entrainment in surface runoff to Bear Creek. Prior to in-channel construction activities, the area of the channel where construction activities will occur will be dewatered. Construction activities involving soil disturbance, pile driving, excavation, cutting/filling, and grading activities could result in increased erosion and sedimentation to Bear Creek and waters downstream. Construction materials such as asphalt, concrete, and equipment fluids could be exposed to precipitation and subsequent runoff. If precautions are not taken to contain contaminants, construction could produce contaminated stormwater runoff (nonpoint source pollution), a major contributor to the degradation of water quality.

Construction is estimated to take approximately 10 to 12 months for both project phases. Prior to in-channel bridge replacement activities, the area of the channel where construction activities will occur will be dewatered. Dewatering the construction area will help minimize the potential for transport of sediments and pollutants from construction activities. Additionally, a variety of design measures (including, limiting the size and location of project staging areas away from the river channel) and compliance with federal, state, and local regulations regarding the storage, handling, use, and disposal of hazardous materials will significantly minimize these water quality impacts as part of the proposed project.

While erosion and inadvertent spills of oil or fuels from maintenance equipment could still be a source of contamination to Bear Creek and the O’Donnell Lateral, implementation of Mitigation Measure HWQ-1 “Implement Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs)” and compliance with Merced County’s Code Section 18.41.030, for dust and erosion control, will ensure that no project-related water quality impacts would occur. Therefore, the impact would be less-than-significant with incorporation of mitigation.

b) The project site is not actively used for groundwater recharge. The proposed project would not construct a significant amount of new impervious surfaces that would impede surface water drainage into the soil. This impact is less-than-significant, with no further mitigation measures required.

c, d, e) The proposed project would remove the existing bridge and replace it with a wider bridge that would result in a slightly greater impervious surface area. Additionally, the proposed project would realign and relocate maintenance access roads to the Bear Creek. The proposed project would result in a slight increase in runoff over existing conditions from the increase in surface area of the new bridge. However, the replacement bridge and realigned and relocated maintenance access roads would not result in a significant increase in drainage and erosion from the project site that would generate a substantial amount of runoff that would exceed the capacity of the Bear Creek or agricultural ditches near the project site. The replacement piers in the Bear Creek channel would not substantially redirect flows in the channel that would result in increasing the amount of erosion on- or off-site. This impact is less-than-significant, with no further mitigation measures required.

g, h, i) The proposed bridge replacement project will not construct housing or other structures that would result in the exposure of people or structures to 100-year flood hazards. Consequently, there is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.
j) The project site is not located near any tidally influenced water bodies nor is it near any large bodies of water that could be affected by a tsunami or seiche. Additionally, the project site is flat and the lack of water bodies nearby limits the possibility of a mudflow hazard to the project site. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure HWQ-1: Implement Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs). The County will ensure that the project contractor comply with the requirements of a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), Central Valley Region. As part of the permit, the contractor would be required to prepare and implement a SWPPP into their construction plans, prior to initiating construction activities, identifying BMPs to be used to avoid or minimize any adverse effects before, during, and after construction to surface waters. The following BMPs will be incorporated into the project as part of the construction specifications:

- Implement appropriate measures to prevent debris, soil, rock, or other material from entering the water. Use a water truck or other appropriate measures to control dust on applicable access roads, construction areas, and stockpiles.
- Properly dispose of oil or other liquids.
- Fuel and maintain vehicles in a specified area that is designed to capture spills. All fueling and maintenance of vehicles and other equipment (including staging areas), will be located at least 20 meters from Bear Creek and any other drainages on site.
- Fuels and hazardous materials would not be stored on site.
- Inspect and maintain vehicles and equipment to prevent the dripping of oil or other fluids.
- Schedule construction to avoid the rainy season as much as possible. Ground disturbance activities are expected to begin in the spring/summer of 2016. If rains are forecasted during construction, additional erosion and sedimentation control measures would be implemented.
- Maintain sediment and erosion control measures during construction. Inspect the control measures before, during, and after a rain event.
- Train construction workers in storm water pollution prevention practices.
- Revegetate disturbed areas in a timely manner to control erosion.
Land Use and Land Use Planning

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<tr>
<td>11. LAND USE AND LAND USE PLANNING — Would the project:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Physically divide an established community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?</td>
<td>☑</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?</td>
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Discussion

a) The proposed project will consist of the replacement an existing bridge structure and slight realignment of access roads. The proposed project will not divide an established community. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

b) The Merced County General Plan land use designation for the project site is Agricultural (Merced County, 2007). The new bridge and the realigned access roads will not interfere with the ability of the surrounding parcels to continue in agricultural production. While the proposed project does involve the relocation of a single family residential unit, the relocation activities will be completed with land owner participation and consistent with state and federal relocation guidelines. The proposed infrastructure project is consistent with local and regional plans and policies and would result in the same land uses as those currently identified within the project area once the proposed bridge replacement/canal realignment project is complete. This impact is less-than-significant, with no further mitigation measures required.

c) The project site is not located in an area covered by any habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

References

Mineral Resources

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<td>12. MINERAL RESOURCES — Would the project:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

a, b) According to Mineral Resource Zone maps produced by the California Division of Mines and Geology, the project site is located within a designated MRZ-3a zone for sand and gravel. Areas designated as MRZ-3a are classified as containing known mineral occurrences of undetermined mineral resource significance (Clinkenbeard, 1999). Further exploration of this area would be required to determine the significance of potential resources at the project site. However, the proposed project is a bridge replacement project that will remove the existing bridge and construct a new bridge. Construction activities would be temporary and operation of the project would not conflict with or limit access to mineral resources within areas surrounding the bridge site. This is a less-than-significant impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

References

Noise

**Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13. NOISE — Would the project:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Result in exposure of persons to, or generation of,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Result in exposure of persons to, or generation of, excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Result in a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) For a project located within an airport land use plan area, or, where such a plan has not been adopted, in an area within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the area to excessive noise levels?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) For a project located in the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introduction**

To describe noise environments and to assess impacts on noise-sensitive areas, a frequency weighting measure that simulates human perception is commonly used. It has been found that A-weighting of sound levels best reflects the human ear’s reduced sensitivity to low frequencies, and correlates well with human perceptions of the annoying aspects of noise. The A-weighted decibel scale (dBA) is cited in most noise criteria. Decibels are logarithmic units that conveniently compare the wide range of sound intensities to which the human ear is sensitive. **Table 4, Typical Noise Levels,** identifies decibel levels for common sounds heard in the environment.

Several time-averaged scales represent noise environments and consequences of human activities. The most commonly used noise descriptors are equivalent A-weighted sound level over a given time period (Leq); average day-night 24-hour average sound level (Ldn) with a nighttime increase of 10 dBA to account for sensitivity to noise during the nighttime; and community noise equivalent level (CNEL), also a 24-hour average that includes both an evening and a nighttime weighting. Noise levels are generally considered low when ambient levels are below 45 dBA, moderate in the 45 - 60 dBA range, and high above 60 dBA. Although people often accept the higher levels associated with very noisy urban residential and residential-commercial zones, they nevertheless are considered to be adverse levels of noise with respect to public health because of sleep interference.
### TABLE 4
**TYPICAL NOISE LEVELS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noise Level (dBA)</th>
<th>Outdoor Activity</th>
<th>Indoor Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90+</td>
<td>Gas lawn mower at 3 feet, jet flyover at 1,000 feet</td>
<td>Rock Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-90</td>
<td>Diesel truck at 50 feet</td>
<td>Food blender at 3 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-80</td>
<td>Gas lawn mower at 100 feet, noisy urban area</td>
<td>Garbage disposal at 3 feet, vacuum cleaner at 10 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>Commercial area</td>
<td>Normal speech at 3 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>Quiet urban daytime, heavy traffic at 300 feet</td>
<td>Large business office, dishwasher next room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-40</td>
<td>Quiet rural, suburban nighttime</td>
<td>Concert hall (background), library, bedroom at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Broadcast / recording studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Lowest threshold of human hearing</td>
<td>Lowest threshold of human hearing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Existing Noise Environment

The proposed project is located in a rural area primarily surrounded by agricultural cropland. The existing bridge is two lanes and spans Bear Creek. Sensitive land uses (or noise receptors) that could be affected by noise from the proposed project would be a small cluster of residences located approximately 600 to 800 feet east of the project site along Dickenson Ferry Road (near the intersection of South Quinley Avenue).

### Merced County General Plan Noise Element

Merced County has established noise compatibility standards for various land uses in the Noise Element of the Merced County Year 2000 General Plan (Merced County, 1990). The General Plan notes that hourly Leq-based criteria should be applied as performance standards for proposed industrial and commercial land uses that may affect noise-sensitive land uses. The land use compatibility standards established by the General Plan for residential land uses from roadway, rail, and air traffic and other sources of noise are shown in Table 5.

### TABLE 5
**MERCED COUNTY GENERAL PLAN LAND USE COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL LAND USES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noise Source</th>
<th>Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exterior</td>
<td>Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic on public roadways, railroad line operations, &amp; aircraft in flight</td>
<td>65 dB Ldn/CNEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daytime (7 a.m. – 10 p.m.)</strong> Hourly Leq of 55 dBA and a maximum level of 75 dBA</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nighttime (10 p.m. – 7 a.m.)</strong> Hourly Leq of 45 dBA and a maximum level of 65 dBA</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OTHER SOURCES

The *General Plan* also establishes County goals and policies pertaining to noise. The following goals, objectives, and policies are relevant to the proposed project:

**Goal 1.** All citizens of the County free from the harmful effects of excessive noise.

**Goal 2.** Noise generating land uses and facilities important to the economic health of the County are not adversely affected by incompatible land uses.

**County of Merced Noise Ordinance**

The following standard regarding construction noise is from the County of Merced Noise Ordinance, codified in Title 18 (Zoning), Chapter 18.41 (Performance Standards), 18.41.070 (Noise):

1. Elevated Noise Level During Construction. During construction, the *noise* level may be temporarily elevated. To minimize the impact, all construction in or adjacent to urban areas shall follow the following procedures for noise control: Construction hours shall be limited to the daytime hours between seven a.m. and six p.m., and all construction equipment shall be properly muffled and maintained.

**Discussion**

**a-d) Construction Noise Effects.** Construction activity noise levels at and near the proposed project construction areas would fluctuate depending on the particular type, number, and duration of uses of various pieces of construction equipment. Construction-related material haul trips would raise ambient noise levels along haul routes, depending on the number of haul trips made and types of vehicles used. *Table 6* shows typical noise levels during different construction stages. *Table 7* shows typical noise levels produced by various types of construction equipment. Most notably, pile driving is required as part of the proposed project’s construction activities.

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPICAL CONSTRUCTION NOISE LEVELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Clearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excavation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Average noise levels correspond to a distance of 50 feet from the noisiest piece of equipment associated with a given phase of construction and 200 feet from the rest of the equipment associated with that phase.*

TABLE 7
TYPICAL NOISE LEVELS FROM CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction Phase</th>
<th>Noise Level (dBA, Leq) *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dump Truck</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portable Air Compressor</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete Mixer (Truck)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scraper</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Hammer</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dozer</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paver</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generator</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile Driver</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backhoe</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During construction of the proposed project, noise from construction activities may intermittently dominate the noise environment in the immediate area of construction. Noise from construction activities generally attenuates at a rate of 6 to 7.5 dBA per doubling distance. Based on the proposed project site layout and terrain, an attenuation of 6 dBA is assumed. With the nearest residence at 600 feet from the project site, maximum noise levels at about 80 to 85 dBA may be experience depending on the specific construction phase (i.e., pile driving versus finishing) of the proposed project.

Noise generated by pile driving, demolition, grading and finishing activities associated with short-term construction of the proposed project would result in an increase in noise at the nearest residences. Construction activities for the proposed project, including hours of operation, would comply with the requirements set forth in the County Noise Ordinance (Title 18, Chapter 18.41 (Performance Standards), 18.41.070 (Noise)). With compliance with County construction standards and with implementation of Mitigation Measure N-1 “Implement Construction-Related Noise Reduction Measures”, which would require the project proponent to implement a series of noise-reducing measures, the impact from construction noise would be less-than-significant.

**Operational Noise Effects.** The proposed project would have no long-term effects on noise levels, since the proposed project would not increase capacity along the roadway. Once construction is completed noise levels would return to levels similar to the existing noise environment.

e) There are no airports within two miles of the proposed project. There would be no impact from airports upon people residing or working in the vicinity of the proposed project.

f) There are no private airstrips within two miles of the proposed project. There would be no impact from airstrips upon people residing or working in the vicinity of the proposed project.
Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure N-1: Implement Construction-Related Noise Reduction Measures. The County will ensure that the project contractor shall implement the following noise reducing measures:

- Maintenance equipment and vehicle noise would be minimized during project construction by muffling and shielding intakes and exhaust on maintenance/construction equipment (per the manufacturer’s specifications).

- All equipment, haul trucks, and worker vehicles would be turned off when not in use for more than 10 minutes.

References


Population and Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. POPULATION AND HOUSING — Would the project:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Induce substantial 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)?</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing units, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

a) The proposed project would provide temporary employment for several people for construction and demolition activities. The proposed project would not result in the permanent creation of new jobs that would induce substantial population growth. Additionally, the road will remain a two-lane road and will not encourage population growth within the surround communities are adjacent to the project site. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

b, c) The proposed project would be constructed within the footprint of an existing bridge and roadway and would not displace any housing or people; consequently, replacement housing would not be required. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.
Public Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. PUBLIC SERVICES — Would the project:

a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of, or the 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 following public services:

i) Fire protection? ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐

ii) Police protection? ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐

iii) Schools? ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒

iv) Parks? ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒

v) Other public facilities? ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒

Discussion

a.i) The Merced County Fire Department (MCFD) provides emergency services to all unincorporated areas of Merced County. The nearest fire station to the project site is Station #81 located in Merced. Each fire station is staffed 24 hours a day (Merced County, 2007).

Construction of the proposed project could result in accident or emergency incidents that would require emergency response, such as fire services; however, construction activities will be short-term and minimal. The proposed project is a bridge improvement project that would not create additional demands on the local fire district during operations. This is a less-than-significant impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

Emergency access to the vicinity of the project site may be temporarily inhibited during construction of the proposed project. Implementation of Mitigation Measure TRAF-1 would ensure that traffic disruption impacts are minimized to a less-than-significant level.

a.ii) The Merced County Sheriff’s Department provides law enforcement services for the unincorporated areas of Merced County. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) handles all traffic enforcement and automobile accident investigations for the unincorporated parts of Merced County (Merced County, 2007).

Construction of the proposed project may result in accident or emergency incidents that would require police services; however, construction activities will be short-term and minimal. The proposed project is a bridge improvement project that would not create...
additional demands on the local police district during operations. This is a *less-than-significant* impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

a.iii) The proposed project is a roadway improvement project and would not generate any additional demand for schools. There is *no impact*, with no further mitigation measures required.

a.iv) See the Recreation section below. There is *no impact*, with no further mitigation measures required.

a.v) The proposed project would have *no impact* on any other public services, such as Merced County administrative services.

**References**

Recreation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. RECREATION — Would the project:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a) increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facilities would occur or be accelerated?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

a, b) The proposed project is a bridge replacement project; it would not contribute to an increase in the local population, and no additional demand on existing neighborhood and regional parks would be created. The proposed project would have no impact on the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks.
### Transportation and Traffic

**Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>17. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC — Would the project:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to, level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location, that results in substantial safety risks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Result in inadequate emergency access?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Discussion

**a, b)** The purpose of the project is to provide adequate and safe vehicle access and provide a structure that will meet current design standards for the traffic utilizing this bridge. The proposed project will not increase the number of lanes and will not increase long-term traffic levels. The proposed project will not conflict with any plan or policy established for measuring the performance of the circulation system. Additionally, the proposed project would not result in impacts to level of service along Dickenson Ferry Road or at the intersections of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue. This is a less-than-significant impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

**c)** The proposed project does not include structures or uses that would affect air traffic patterns, nor is an airport located in proximity to the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in substantial safety risks related to air traffic and would have no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

**d)** One of the primary purposes of the proposed project is to improve safe access to the bridge and increase roadway sight distance for vehicles. Traffic hazards will not be
increased as a result of the proposed project and roadway operations are expected to be improved in the study area. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

e) As discussed in the description of the proposed project, construction of the proposed project will temporarily detour traffic around the bridge area. The detour will be from S. Buhach Road to Oak Avenue. Emergency access to the vicinity of the project site may be temporarily inhibited during construction of the proposed project. Implementation of Mitigation Measure TRAF-1 “Implement Traffic Control Plan” would ensure that traffic disruptions are minimized to a less-than-significant level.

f) The project site is located in a rural agricultural area. The proposed project will not conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure TRAF-1: Implement Traffic Control Plan. The construction contractor for the proposed project shall implement a standard traffic management plan to minimize traffic disruption and ensure adequate access is maintained to surrounding residences. Temporary disruptions to access for residences in the area shall be minimized by coordinating construction activities to provide alternative access points and by ensuring that all residences have at least one open driveway during the construction period.
Utilities and Service Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS — Would the project:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Conflict with wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) 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?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities, or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that would serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project’s projected demand in addition to the provider’s existing commitments?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project’s solid waste disposal needs?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

a) The proposed project would not generate any wastewater. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

b) The proposed project would not require the construction of additional wastewater or water treatment facilities. There would be no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

c) No drainage facilities currently exist; water drains into Bear Creek. The new bridge will continue to be able to convey stormwater runoff from the bridge into Bear Creek. This is a less-than-significant impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

d) The proposed project consists of demolition of an existing bridge and construction of a new bridge and would not require water supply. The proposed project would require some non-potable water for dust control. This is a less-than-significant impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

e) The proposed project does not require wastewater treatment services. There is no impact to wastewater treatment facilities.
f) Solid waste in unincorporated western Merced County is disposed of at the Billy Wright Landfill, which is owned and managed by Merced County. This landfill was planned to close in 2010, but due to the downturn in the economy the rate of solid waste disposal declined extending the life of the landfill approximately one year during which time the landfill was expanded. The landfill now has an estimated closure date of 12/31/2054.

The proposed project would generate waste from temporary construction activities and demolition of the Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge. The landfills that serve the County have the capacity to accept waste generated by the proposed project. This is a less-than-significant impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

g) The proposed project would comply with all federal, state, and local statues and regulations related to solid waste. There is no impact, with no further mitigation measures required.

References
Mandatory Findings of Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</th>
<th>Potentially Significant Impact</th>
<th>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</th>
<th>Less Than Significant Impact</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE — Would the project:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Have the potential to 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, 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?</td>
<td>☐ ☒ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) 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)?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☒ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☒ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

a) Per the impact discussions above, the potential of the proposed project to substantially degrade the environment is *less-than-significant* with incorporated mitigation measures.

b) The project site is located within a rural agricultural area in Merced County. The primary objective of the proposed project is to improve public safety and roadway circulation by replacing the existing Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge at Bear Creek. The impacts of the proposed project are mitigated to a less-than-significant level, limited to the construction phase of the proposed project, and generally site specific. No other projects are proposed that would overlap or interact with the proposed project. The cumulative impact of the proposed project is *less-than-significant*.

c) The proposed project would not cause substantial adverse effects on human beings. Effects related to cultural resources, hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, geologic hazards, air quality, transportation and noise are discussed above, and would not result in any significant and unavoidable impacts. This impact is considered *less-than-significant*. 
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APPENDIX A
Comments and Responses

Appendix A includes the comment letters received during the agency/public review period for the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (from June 2, 2014 to July 7, 2014).

A summary of the comment letters received is provided below in Table A-1, with the individual comment letters and the County’s response to the comment letters provided on the following pages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Agency/Commenter</th>
<th>Dated</th>
<th>Received by Merced County</th>
<th>Comment Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Central Valley Flood Protection Board (CVFPB)</td>
<td>June 16, 2014</td>
<td>June 18, 2014</td>
<td>Bear Creek is under CVFPB’s jurisdiction and a permit for construction activities will be required. Measures to avoid impacts to Bear Creek should be implemented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
June 16, 2014

Mr. Joe Giulian
Merced County, Dept. of Public Works
715 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Merced, California 95341

Subject: CEQA Comments: Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement Project, Mitigated Negative Declaration, SCH No. 2014061008

Location: Merced County

Dear Mr. Giulian:

Central Valley Flood Protection Board (Board) staff has reviewed the subject document and provides the following comments:

The proposed project crosses Bear Creek which is under Board jurisdiction. The Board enforces its Title 23, California Code of Regulations (23 CCR) for the construction, maintenance, and protection of adopted plans of flood control that protect public lands from floods. Adopted plans of flood control include federal-State facilities of the State Plan of Flood Control, regulated streams, and designated floodways. The geographic extent of Board jurisdiction includes the Central Valley, and all tributaries and distributaries of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, and the Tulare and Buena Vista basins (23 CCR, Section 2).

Pursuant to 23 CCR a Board permit is required prior to working in the Board’s jurisdiction for the following:

- Placement, construction, reconstruction, removal, or abandonment of any landscaping, culvert, bridge, conduit, fence, projection, fill, embankment, building, structure, obstruction, encroachment, excavation, the planting, or removal of vegetation, and any repair or maintenance that involves cutting into the levee (23 CCR Section 6);

- Existing structures that predate permitting, or where it is necessary to establish the conditions normally imposed by permitting. The circumstances include those where responsibility for the encroachment has not been clearly established or ownership and use have been revised (23 CCR Section 6);

- Vegetation plantings require submission of detailed design drawings; identification of vegetation type; plant and tree names (both common and scientific); quantities of each type of plant and tree; spacing and irrigation method; a vegetative management plan for maintenance to prevent the interference with flood control operations, levee maintenance, inspection, and flood fight procedures (23 CCR Section 131).
Other local, federal and State agency permits may be required and are the responsibility of the applicant to obtain.

Board permit application forms and our complete 23 CCR regulations can be found on our website at [http://www.cvfbp.ca.gov/](http://www.cvfbp.ca.gov/). Maps of the Board’s jurisdiction including all tributaries and distributaries of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, and Board designated floodways are also available on a Department of Water Resources website at [http://gis.bam.water.ca.gov/bam/](http://gis.bam.water.ca.gov/bam/).

**Additional Considerations Related to Potential Impacts of Vegetation and Hydraulics**

Accumulation and establishment of woody vegetation that is not managed may have negative impacts on channel capacity and may increase the potential for levee over-topping or other failure. When vegetation develops and becomes habitat for wildlife, maintenance to initial baseline conditions typically becomes more difficult as the removal of vegetative growth may be subject to federal and State resource agency requirements for on-site mitigation. The proposed project should include mitigation measures to avoid decreasing floodway channel capacity.

Adverse hydraulic impacts of proposed encroachments could impede flood flows, reroute flood flows, and/or increase sediment accumulation. The proposed project should include mitigation measures for channel and levee improvements and maintenance to prevent and/or reduce hydraulic impacts. If possible off-site mitigation outside of the Board’s jurisdiction should be used when mitigating for vegetation removed at the project location.

If you have any questions please contact James Herota at (916) 574-0651, or via email at james.herota@water.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Len Marino, P.E.
Chief Engineer

**cc:**  
Governor’s Office of Planning and Research  
State Clearinghouse  
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121  
Sacramento, California 95814
Letter 1  Central Valley Flood Protection Board

Response 1A: Comment noted. The County will comply with all applicable requirements set forth under a CVFPB permit.

Response 1B: Overall, impacts to the creek channel are expected to be minor with new bridge piles replacing existing piles within Bear Creek. Similar to the existing bridge structure, implementation of the proposed project will involve operation of a similar replacement bridge that will not include any additional activities (vegetation plantings) or associated structures (berms or barriers) that would impede or decrease floodway channel capacity.

Response 1C: As part of the design phase of the proposed project, hydraulics and floodplain studies were conducted and approved by the County and the California Department of Transportation. Implementation of the proposed project would not impede flood flows, reroute flood flows, or increase sediment accumulation. Furthermore, on-site revegetation activities within the project site will be limited to hydro-seeding with native vegetation and will not include on-site planting of trees within the creek bed or channel what would impede flood flows within Bear Creek.
June 30, 2014

Joe Giuliani, P.E.
Merced County Department of Public Works
715 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Merced, California 95341

Subject:  Mitigated Negative Declaration
Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement Project
SCH #: 2014061008

Dear Mr. Giuliani:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has reviewed the Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge Replacement Project (Project) submitted by the Merced County Department of Public Works. The Project proposes to replace the existing Dickenson Ferry Road (Bridge No. 39C0095) that crosses Bear Creek, widen the bridge approaches, realign the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue, and relocate a small section of the O’Donnell Lateral Canal. The proposed Project also improves the roadway approaches to the bridge and realigns the Dickenson Ferry Road/Quinley Avenue intersection. The primary objective is to replace the existing bridge structure to improve public safety. The Project site is located at the intersection of West Dickenson Ferry Road and South Quinley Avenue, approximately five miles west of the City of Merced.

The Department has reviewed the MND and has the following comments.

Department Jurisdiction

Trustee Agency Authority: The Department is a Trustee Agency with responsibility under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for commenting on projects that could impact plant and wildlife resources. Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1802, the Department has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and the habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. As a Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources, the Department is responsible for providing, as available, biological expertise to review and comment upon environmental documents and impacts arising from project activities, as those terms are used under CEQA (Division 13 [commencing with Section 21000] of the Public Resources Code).

Responsible Agency Authority: The Department has regulatory authority over projects that could result in the “take” of any species listed by the State as threatened or endangered, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2081. If the Project could result in the take of any species listed as threatened or endangered under the California

Conserving California’s Wildlife Since 1870
Endangered Species Act (CESA), the Department may need to issue an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for the Project. CEQA requires a Mandatory Finding of Significance if a project is likely to substantially impact threatened or endangered species (sections 21001(c), 21083, Guidelines sections 15380, 15064, 15065). Impacts must be avoided or mitigated to less than significant levels unless the CEQA Lead Agency makes and supports Statement of Overriding Consideration (SOC). The CEQA Lead Agency’s SOC does not eliminate the Project proponent’s obligation to comply with Fish and Game Code Section 2080.

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

**Potential Project Impacts and Recommendations**

**Swainson’s Hawk (SWHA):** The State threatened Swainson’s hawk (Buteo swainsoni) has the potential to nest in trees adjacent to the Project site. To evaluate potential Project-related impacts, the Department agrees that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys for nesting raptors following the survey methodology developed by the Swainson’s Hawk Technical Advisory Committee (SWHA TAC, 2000) prior to Project implementation. However, the Department recommends that the methodology is completed in its entirety rather than “followed where possible” as listed in the MND to maximize the opportunity to detect SWHA nests that may occur near the Project.

The MND has indicated that if active SWHA nests are found, the size of the no-work buffer zone would be determined in consultation with the Department. The Department recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 0.5 mile be delineated around active SWHA nests until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival. If implementation of the 0.5 mile no-disturbance buffer is not feasible, consultation with the Department is advised to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take under CESA. If take cannot be avoided then an ITP pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2081(b) would be warranted prior to initiating any ground-disturbing activities to comply with CESA.

**Burrowing Owl:** The Species of Special Concern burrowing owl (Athene cunicularia) has the potential to be present on and adjacent to the Project site. Mitigation Measure (MM) Bio-6c requires that preconstruction surveys be conducted in accordance with “CDFW/California Burrowing Owl Consortium survey protocols.” For clarification, the Department recommends the survey methodology described in the new “Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation” dated March 7, 2012 (CDFG 2012) be followed before beginning ground- or vegetation-disturbing activities. In addition, the Department’s “Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation” recommends that impacts to occupied burrows be avoided in accordance with the following table rather than the buffer distances listed in the MND.
Failure to implement the recommended buffer zones could cause adult burrowing owls to abandon the nest, cause eggs or young to be directly impacted (crushed), and/or result in reproductive failure, in violation of Fish and Game Code and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The Staff Report recommends that foraging habitat be acquired and permanently protected to offset the loss of foraging and burrow habitat. The Department also recommends replacement of occupied burrows with artificial burrows at a ratio of 1 burrow collapsed to 1 artificial burrow constructed (1:1) as mitigation for the potentially significant impact of evicting a burrowing owl if passive relocation of BUOW during the non-breeding season (as approved by the Department per MM Bio-6c) is used to reduce impacts to BUOW. The Department recommends that a relocation plan is prepared and submitted to the Department for review prior to any passive relocation efforts.

More information on survey and monitoring protocols for sensitive species can be found at the Department’s website (www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/survey_monitor.html). If you have any questions on these issues, please contact Jim Vang, Environmental Scientist, at the address provided on this letterhead, by telephone at (559) 243-4014, extension 254, or by electronic mail at Jim.Vang@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey R. Single, Ph.D.
Regional Manager

cc: California Regional Water Quality Control Board
   Central Valley Region
   1685 “E” Street
   Fresno, California 93706-2020

   United States Army Corps of Engineers
   1325 “J” Street, Suite #1350
   Sacramento, California 95814-2928
Literature Cited

CDFG, 2012. Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation. California Department of Fish and Game.

Letter 2  California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Response 2A: Comment noted. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) provides background information on its role and authority as a “Trustee” and “Responsible” Agency under CEQA. The CDFW comment continues with a description of its jurisdiction over actions that could affect active bird nests or the unauthorized take of birds affected by the proposed project.

Response 2B: Consistent with the intent of Mitigation Measure BIO-6a: Conduct Pre-construction Nesting Bird Surveys and Mitigation Measure BIO-6b: Implement Avoidance Measures for Active Bird Nest Sites, the County will implement all appropriate survey methodologies and avoidance measures necessary to conform with the Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swainson's Hawk Nesting Survey in the Central Valley (Swainson’s Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, 2000) guidelines. However, if no Swainson’s hawks or active nests are found during any of the pre-construction surveys, no further mitigation will be necessary. While no Swainson hawks or active nests were identified during field surveys, several large mature valley oaks within the study area could provide suitable nesting habitat. Should buffer zones be required, the County will coordinate the appropriate buffer distances with the CDFW.

Response 2C: Comment noted. The County acknowledges the New Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (dated March 7, 2012). All preconstruction surveys will be conducted with the appropriate methodologies in place at the time surveys are implemented. Should buffer zones be required, the County will coordinate the appropriate buffer distances with the CDFW. Additionally, as outlined in Mitigation Measure 6c: Conduct Pre-construction Surveys for Burrowing Owls and Avoid Loss or Disturbance of Active Nests, the County will coordinate with CDFW and implement a passive relocation plan should maintenance of a no-work buffer zone not be practical. During field surveys conducted for the IS/MND, no burrowing owls or active dens were observed in the study area. Should the preconstruction surveys indicate the presence of active nests; the relocation plan will address the need for replacement burrows. If pre-construction surveys determine the burrows to be inactive (i.e. no owls or sign of owls) then no replacement of burrows would be necessary.
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APPENDIX B
Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Introduction

The purpose of this Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) is to describe the roles and responsibilities in the mitigation monitoring process for the proposed project, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15097. A reporting and monitoring program ensures that measures adopted to mitigate or avoid significant environmental impacts are implemented. It is a working guide to facilitate not only the implementation of mitigation measures, but also the monitoring, compliance, and reporting activities.

Measures identified in this MMRP were developed as part of the IS/MND prepared for the proposed project and are defined by CEQA as a measure which:

- Avoids the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- Minimizes impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.
- Rectifies the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment.
- Reduces or eliminates the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the project.
- Compensates for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

Monitoring and documenting the implementation of mitigation measures will be coordinated by the County (CEQA Lead Agency). Table B-1 identifies the mitigation measure, the monitoring action for the mitigation measure, the responsible party for the monitoring action, and timing of the monitoring action. The County will monitor and report on all mitigation activities, which shall be implemented at different stages of development throughout the project area. As such, the responsibilities for implementation shall be assigned to Merced County, a contractor, or a combination thereof.

To assist with implementation of the MMRP, the mitigation measures related to biological resources have been categorized by individual species (i.e., giant garter snake, special status plants, etc.) within Table B-1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Topic</th>
<th>Mitigation Measure</th>
<th>Implementation Responsibility</th>
<th>Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biological Resources – Special Status Plants</strong></td>
<td>Mitigation Measure BIO-1: Conduct Pre-construction Plant Surveys. Within 30 days prior to construction, the County shall ensure that a qualified botanist shall conduct a preconstruction survey for Sanford’s arrowhead. If Sanford’s arrowhead is not found, then no further measures are necessary. If Sanford’s arrowhead is found in the project site, CDFW will be notified at least 10 days prior to dewatering or construction impacts in the vicinity of Sanford’s arrowhead in accordance with the California Native Plant Protection Act of 1977 (CDFW Code Section 1900-1913) to allow sufficient time to transplant the individuals to a suitable location.</td>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works/Biologist</td>
<td>Prior to project construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Giant Garter Snake</strong></td>
<td>Mitigation Measure BIO-2a: Conduct Pre-construction GGS Surveys. A qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey for GGS, no more than 24 hours prior to the start of construction activities (site preparation, de-watering, and/or grading). If construction activities stop for a period of two or more weeks, a new GGS survey shall be completed no more than 24 hours prior to the reinitiating of construction activities. The biologist shall monitor the site during de-watering activities; if a GGS is encountered during the construction period after the completion of de-watering activities, the monitoring biologist shall be notified and shall have the authority to stop localized construction activities until corrective measures have been taken to avoid harm to GGS.</td>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works/Biologist</td>
<td>Prior to project construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Giant Garter Snake**              | Mitigation Measure BIO-2b: Implement GGS Avoidance Measures. The County shall ensure that the construction contractor implements the following GGS avoidance and minimization measures during the bridge replacement phase of the project:  
  - **Worker Environmental Awareness Training.** A USFWS approved biologist(s) will conduct environmental awareness training for all construction personnel prior to the start of ground-breaking activities. The training will cover life history of the GGS, how to identify species and their habitats, what to do if a GGS is encountered during construction activities, and penalties for not complying with biological minimization requirements.  
  - **In Water Work.** All in-water and bank-side construction activities shall be conducted during the active season for GGS (between May 1st and October 1st). Any work occurring after October 1st shall be restricted to bridge surface work with water quality controls in place.  
  - **Dewatering Activities.** Between May 1st and October 1st, Bear Creek will be dewatered and then dried out for at least 15 consecutive days before workers excavate or fill the dewatered habitat. The County shall ensure that the dewatered habitat contains no puddle water and no longer continues to support GGS prey species (e.g., fish, tadpoles, and aquatic insects), which could detain or attract snakes into the area.  
  - **Vegetation Clearing and Re-vegetation.** Any vegetation or ground clearing shall be confined to the minimum areas necessary within 200 feet of aquatic habitat. Upon completion of all construction activities, disturbed sections of Bear Creek and the O’Donnell Lateral Canal will be restored and re-vegetated (hydro-seeded) with native vegetation. | Merced County, Department of Public Works | Construction Inspector/Biologist | Bridge Replacement Phase - During project construction |
### Impact Topic | Mitigation Measure | Implementation Responsibility | Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility | Timing
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---

- **Temporary Fencing.** Temporary fencing (or similar devices which lack openings which might cause the GGS to become stranded or otherwise become entangled) shall be installed at the upstream and downstream limits of the construction area, to deter GGS from entering the project site and be harmed by construction activities. The fencing shall be installed regardless of whether or not there is aquatic habitat present during the time of construction to ensure that GGS do not enter the construction zone.

- **Erosion Control Matting.** No plastic, monofilament, jute, or similar erosion control matting that could entangle GGS will be used. Possible substitutions include coconut coir matting, tactified hydro seeding compounds, or other material approved by the USFWS.

- **Encountering GGS During Construction.** If a live GGS is encountered during construction activities, a USFWS-approved biologist will be notified immediately, and in coordination with the County/Construction Contractor will stop all construction activity in the vicinity of the GGS. The GGS will be monitored and allowed to leave on its own. Should the GGS not leave on its own accord within one working day, the USFWS and the CDFW will be contacted. If a dead or injured GGS is discovered, the County will immediately contact Caltrans, which in turn will notify the USFWS and the CDFW within one working day of the discovery. Written notification will be made to the USFWS within three calendar days and will include, at minimum, the date, time, location of the species, and known circumstances of its injury or death.

### Giant Garter Snake Mitigation Measure BIO-2c: Implement GGS Inactive Period Avoidance Measures. The County shall ensure that the construction contractor implements the following GGS avoidance and minimization measures prior and during the canal realignment phase of the proposed project:

- **Inspect and Monitor Burrows.** Between May 1 and October 1 (before construction begins on the canal relocation phase), a USFWS-approved biologist(s) will identify and monitor all burrows and other potential refugia for GGS. Following inspection, all burrows and other refugia that are expected to be disturbed or destroyed as a result of construction activities first will be excavated by hand and then carefully collapsed.

- **Exclusionary Fencing.** Between May 1 and October 1, and following the excavation and collapse of burrows and other refugia, exclusionary fencing (e.g. temporary silt fencing or other appropriate materials that will not cause the giant garter snake to become entangled) will be installed around the canal realignment work area. This will preclude any future excavation of burrows by small mammals, which will ensure that no new habitat is created in which the giant garter snake can find refuge during the inactive season when work on the canal realignment phase begins. The fencing also will ensure that equipment and personnel do not encroach past the boundaries of the construction footprint. Installation methodology and locations of the fencing will be determined in coordination with the USFWS-approved biologist(s).

- **Monitoring.** A USFWS-approved biologist(s) will be on-site daily to monitor all construction activities taking place during the inactive period.

Merced County, Department of Public Works | Constructor Inspector / Biologist | Canal Realignment Phase – During project construction
### Impact Topic

**Western Pond Turtle**  
**Mitigation Measure BIO-3a: Conduct Pre-construction Surveys for Western Pond Turtle.** No more than two weeks prior to the commencement of ground-disturbing activities, the County shall retain a qualified biologist to perform surveys for western pond turtle within suitable aquatic and upland habitat within the project site. Surveys will include western pond turtle nests as well as individuals. The biologist (with the appropriate agency permits) will temporarily move any identified western pond turtles upstream of the construction area, and temporary barriers will be placed around the construction area to prevent ingress. Construction will not proceed until the work area is determined to be free of turtles and their nests. The results of these surveys will be documented in a technical memorandum that will be submitted to CDFW (if turtles are documented). If the pre-construction surveys do identify western pond turtle nests within areas that may be affected by site construction, species avoidance measures shall occur through implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-3b.

**Implementation Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works  
**Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works / Biologist  
**Timing:** Prior to project construction

**Western Pond Turtle**  
**Mitigation Measure BIO-3b: Implement Western Pond Turtle Avoidance Measures.** Should a western pond turtle nest be located within a work area, the County shall ensure that a qualified biologist (with the appropriate permits from the CDFW) relocate the eggs to a suitable facility for incubation and release hatchlings into the creek system in late fall. The biologist will be present on the project area during initial ground clearing, grading, and during all other construction activities.

**Implementation Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works  
**Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility:** Construction Inspector / Biologist / Construction Contractor  
**Timing:** During project construction

**Bat Species**  
**Mitigation Measure BIO-4a: Conduct Pre-Construction Survey for Bat Species.** A bat survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats prior to May 1st in order to put exclusionary measures into place before the active season of this species (no exclusionary efforts should be conducted during May 1st to August 31st of the construction year) and to prevent bats from utilizing the bridge structure. If no roosting bats are found, no further mitigation would be necessary.

**Implementation Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works  
**Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works / Biologist  
**Timing:** Prior to project construction

**Bat Species**  
**Mitigation Measure BIO-4b: Implement Bat Species Exclusion Measures Prior to Active Season.** If pallid bats or other bat species are detected within the roost at the time of implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-4a, excluding any bats from roosts will be accomplished by a qualified biologist prior to the removal of the bridge. The timing and other methods of exclusionary activities will be developed by the qualified biologist in order to reduce the stress on the bats to the amount feasible while taking into account project schedule. Exclusionary devices, such as plastic sheeting, plastic or wire mesh, can be used to allow for bats to exit but not re-enter any occupied roosts. Expanding foam and plywood sheets can be used to prevent bats from entering unoccupied roosts.

**Implementation Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works  
**Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works / Biologist  
**Timing:** Prior to project construction

**San Joaquin Kit Fox**  
**Mitigation Measure BIO-5: Implement USFWS Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the SJKF Prior to or During Ground Disturbance.** The County shall ensure that the construction contractor implement the applicable construction and operational requirements included in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance shall be adhered to in order to avoid any potential impacts to SJKF that may use the project site as a movement corridor.

**Implementation Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works  
**Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility:** Merced County, Department of Public Works / Construction Inspector / Biologist  
**Timing:** Prior to and during project construction
### Impact Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nesting Songbirds, Raptors, and Western Burrowing Owls</th>
<th>Mitigation Measure BIO-6a: Conduct Pre-construction Nesting Bird Surveys. Should project-related construction or grading activities be scheduled during bird nesting season (February 1 to August 31), pre-construction surveys would be required by a qualified wildlife biologist to identify active Swainson’s hawk nests within ½-mile of proposed construction activities and nests of other species within 250 feet of proposed construction activities. The surveys would be conducted no less than 14 days and no more than 30 days prior to the beginning of construction. The results of the survey would be emailed to CDFW at least three days prior to construction. Surveys would be conducted by a qualified biologist. For Swainson’s hawk surveys, guidelines provided in the Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swanson’s Hawk Nesting Survey in the Central Valley (Swainson’s Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, 2000) would be followed where possible. If the pre-construction surveys do not identify any nesting raptors or other nesting migratory bird species within areas potentially affected by construction activities, no further mitigation would be required. If the pre-construction surveys do identify nesting raptors or other nesting bird species within areas that may be affected by site construction, nest avoidance measures shall occur through implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-6b.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nesting Songbirds, Raptors, and Western Burrowing Owls</th>
<th>Mitigation Measure BIO-6b: Implement Avoidance Measures for Active Bird Nest Sites. Should active nest sites be discovered within areas that may be affected by construction activities, the County shall ensure that the construction contractor implement the following nest avoidance measures:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nesting Songbirds, Raptors, and Western Burrowing Owls</td>
<td>Mitigation Measure BIO-6c: Conduct Pre-construction Surveys for Burrowing Owls and Avoid Loss or Disturbance of Active Nests. The County shall ensure that pre-construction surveys for burrowing owls are conducted by a qualified biologist (as approved by the CDFW) within 30-days prior to the start of work activities where land construction is planned in known or suitable habitat. If construction activities are delayed for more than 30 days after the initial preconstruction surveys, then a new preconstruction survey shall be required. All surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the CDFW/California Burrowing Owl Consortium survey protocols. If burrowing owls are discovered in the proposed project site vicinity during construction, the onsite biologist shall be notified immediately. Occupied burrows should not be disturbed during the nesting season (February 1 through August 31) unless a qualified biologist approved by the CDFW verifies through non-invasive methods that either: (1) the birds have not begun egg-laying and incubation; or (2) that juveniles from the occupied burrows are foraging independently and are capable of independent survival.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Implementation Responsibility | Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility | Timing |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Merced County, Department of Public Works</th>
<th>Merced County, Department of Public Works / Biologist</th>
<th>Prior to project construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works / Construction Inspector / Biologist</td>
<td>During project construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works / Biologist</td>
<td>Prior to project construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Impact Topic Mitigation Measure

#### Impact Topic Mitigation Measure

**If this criteria is not met, occupied burros during the nesting season will be avoided by establishment of a no-work buffer of 250-foot around the occupied/active burrow.** Where maintenance of a 250-foot no-work buffer zone is not practical, the County shall consult with the CDFW to determine appropriate avoidance measures. Burrows occupied during the breeding season (February 1 to August 31) will be closely monitored by the biologist until the young fledge/leave the nest. The onsite biologist shall have the authority to stop work if it is determined that construction related activities are disturbing the owls.

If criterion 1 or 2 above are met and as approved by CDFW, the biologist shall undertake passive relocation techniques by installing one-way doors in active and suitable burrows allowing owls to escape but not re-enter. Owls should be excluded from the immediate impact zone and within a 160-foot buffer zone by having one-way doors placed over the entrance to prevent owls from inhabiting those burrows.

After nesting season ends (August 31) and the burrow is deemed unoccupied by the biologist, passive relocation techniques shall take place. Construction activities may occur once a qualified biologist has deemed the burrows are unoccupied.

#### Cultural Resources Mitigation Measure

**Cultural Resources Mitigation Measure CR-1: Discovery of Cultural Resources During Ground-Disturbing Activities.** The construction contractor shall cease work if prehistoric, historic or paleontological subsurface cultural resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities. If cultural resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, all activity in the vicinity shall cease until the discovery is evaluated by an archaeologist or paleontologist who meets the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior’s Qualification Standards. If the archaeologist/paleontologist determines that the resources may be significant, no further work in the vicinity of the resources shall take place until appropriate treatment is determined and implemented.

The need for archaeological and Native American monitoring during the remainder of the project will be re-evaluated by the archaeologist as part of the treatment determination, if deemed appropriate. The archaeologist shall consult with appropriate Native American representatives in determining appropriate treatment for unearthed cultural resources if the resources are prehistoric or Native American in nature. In considering any suggested mitigation proposed by the archaeologist in order to mitigate impacts to cultural resources, the project proponent will determine whether avoidance is necessary and feasible in light of factors such as the nature of the find, project design, costs, and other considerations. If avoidance is infeasible, other appropriate measures (e.g., data recovery) will be instituted.

**Cultural Resources Mitigation Measure CR-2: Halt Work if Human Skeletal Remains are Identified During Construction.** If human skeletal remains are uncovered during project construction, work must immediately halt and the Merced County Coroner must be contacted to evaluate the remains; the procedures and protocols set forth in Section 15064.5 (e)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines must be followed. If the County Coroner determines that the remains are Native American, the project proponent will contact the NAHC, in accordance with Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, subdivision (c), and Public Resources Code 5097.98 (as amended by AB 2641). Per Public Resources Code 5097.98, the landowner shall ensure that the immediate vicinity, according to generally accepted cultural or archaeological standards or practices, where the Native American human remains are located, is not damaged or disturbed by further development activity until the landowner has discussed and conferred, as prescribed in this section (PRC 5097.98), with the most likely descendants regarding their recommendations, if applicable, taking into account the possibility of multiple human remains.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Topic</th>
<th>Mitigation Measure</th>
<th>Implementation Responsibility</th>
<th>Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility</th>
<th>Timing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</td>
<td>Mitigation Measure HAZ-1: Safe Removal and Proper Disposal of Materials Contaminated by Lead. The County shall ensure, through the enforcement of contractual obligations, that work plans address procedures for the safe removal and proper disposal of materials contaminated with asbestos. Any identified LBP must be removed and disposed of in the proper waste facility. The demolition of the structures shall comply with the U.S. EPA National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) and the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District rules and regulations regarding lead.</td>
<td>Merced County, Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Construction Inspector</td>
<td>During project construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Hydrology and Water Quality | Mitigation Measure HWQ-1: Implement Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs). The County will ensure that the project contractor comply with the requirements of a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), Central Valley Region. As part of the permit, the contractor would be required to prepare and implement a SWPPP into their construction plans, prior to initiating construction activities, identifying BMPs to be used to avoid or minimize any adverse effects before, during, and after construction to surface waters. The following BMPs will be incorporated into the project as part of the construction specifications:  
  - Implement appropriate measures to prevent debris, soil, rock, or other material from entering the water. Use a water truck or other appropriate measures to control dust on applicable access roads, construction areas, and stockpiles.  
  - Properly dispose of oil or other liquids.  
  - Fuel and maintain vehicles in a specified area that is designed to capture spills. All fueling and maintenance of vehicles and other equipment (including staging areas), will be located at least 20 meters from Bear Creek and any other drainages on site.  
  - Fuels and hazardous materials would not be stored on site.  
  - Inspect and maintain vehicles and equipment to prevent the dripping of oil or other fluids.  
  - Schedule construction to avoid the rainy season as much as possible. Ground disturbance activities are expected to begin in the spring/summer of 2016. If rains are forecasted during construction, additional erosion and sedimentation control measures would be implemented.  
  - Maintain sediment and erosion control measures during construction. Inspect the control measures before, during, and after a rain event.  
  - Train construction workers in storm water pollution prevention practices.  
  - Revegetate disturbed areas in a timely manner to control erosion. | Merced County, Department of Public Works | Construction Inspector | During project construction |
### Impact Topic  | Mitigation Measure  | Implementation Responsibility  | Monitoring/Reporting Responsibility  | Timing  
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
Noise | **Mitigation Measure N-1: Implement Construction-Related Noise Reduction Measures.** The County will ensure that the project contractor shall implement the following noise reducing measures:  
- Maintenance equipment and vehicle noise would be minimized during project construction by muffling and shielding intakes and exhaust on maintenance/construction equipment (per the manufacturer's specifications).  
- All equipment, haul trucks, and worker vehicles would be turned off when not in use for more than 10 minutes. | Merced County, Department of Public Works  | Construction Inspector  | During project construction  
Transportation and Traffic | **Mitigation Measure TRAF-1: Implement Traffic Control Plan.** The construction contractor for the proposed project shall implement a standard traffic management plan to minimize traffic disruption and ensure adequate access is maintained to surrounding residences. Temporary disruptions to access for residences in the area shall be minimized by coordinating construction activities to provide alternative access points and by ensuring that all residences have at least one open driveway during the construction period. | Merced County, Department of Public Works  | Construction Inspector  | During project construction  

STATE OF CALIFORNIA - THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
ENVIRONMENTAL FILING FEE CASH RECEIPT

Receipt # 2014000074

Lead Agency: COUNTY OF MERCED DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
County Agency of Filing: 715 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY, MERCED, CA 95341
Project Title: DICKENSON FERRY ROAD BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT
Project Applicant Name: JOE GIULIAN, P.E., PROJECT ENGINEER
Project Applicant: LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY

Date: 08/19/2014
Document No: 2014000074

Phone Number: (209) 385-7601

Negative Declaration (State) $ 2181.25

Total Received $ 2181.25

Signature and title of person receiving payment: [Signature] Deputy Clerk
FROM:
Public Agency: County of Merced Department of Public Works
Address: 715 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Merced, CA 95341
Contact: Joe Giulian, P.E., Project Engineer
Phone: (209) 385-7601
Lead Agency (if different form above): Same as above.
Address: 
Contact: 
Phone: 

Section in compliance with Section 21108 or 21152 of the Public Resources Code.
Project ID to State Clearinghouse: 2014061008

Bridge Replacement Project
Dickenson Ferry Road & Quinley Avenue, Unincorporated Merced County, California

Project Description:
The County of Merced (County) proposes to replace the existing Dickenson Ferry Road Bridge (Bridge No. 39C0095) that crosses Bear Creek, widen the bridge approaches, realign the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue, and relocate the O’Donnell Lateral Canal (proposed project). The primary objective is to replace the existing structure to improve public safety. The existing bridge has reached the end of its lifespan and a bridge repair or rehabilitation is no longer feasible. The project also serves to improve safety and increased sight distance by improving the roadway approaches to the bridge and realigning of the Dickenson Ferry Road/Quinley Avenue intersection. The current sufficiency rating of the bridge is 18.7 which was a significant drop from the previous rating of 36.0 in June of 2008 and is expected to continue to deteriorate at an increased rate.

The proposed project is located approximately 5 miles west of the City of Merced, with the project site incorporating areas that will potentially be affected by demolition of the existing bridge, construction of the new bridge, realignment of the intersection of Dickenson Ferry Road and Quinley Avenue and the staging areas. Regionally, the proposed project is located in California’s Central Valley, within a rural agricultural area of central Merced County.

This is to advise that the County of Merced (Lead Agency or Responsible Agency) has approved the above described project on August 12, 2014 and has made the following determinations regarding the above described projects.

(Date)

1. The project [☒ will ☐ will not] have a significant effect on the environment.
2. ☒ An Environmental Impact Report was prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.
3. ☒ Mitigation measures [☒ were ☐ were not] made a condition of the approval of the project.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan [☒ was ☐ was not] adopted for this project.
5. A statement of Overriding Considerations [☐ was ☒ was not] adopted for this project.
6. Findings [☐ were ☒ were not] made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code
Reference: Section 21000-21174, Public Resources Code.