

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
CALIFORNIA ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT  
INCIDENTAL TAKE PERMIT  
NO. 2081-2019-035-02**

**California Department of Transportation, District 3  
Feather River Bridge Scour Repair Project**

**CEQA FINDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has prepared these findings to document its compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 *et seq.*). CDFW is a responsible agency under CEQA with respect to the Feather River Bridge Scour Bridge Project (Project) because of its permitting authority under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 *et seq.*). (See generally Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21002.1, subd. (d), 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381; see also Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 783.3, subd. (a).)<sup>1</sup> CDFW makes these findings under CEQA as part of its discretionary decision to authorize the California Department of Transportation (Permittee) to incidentally take Chinook salmon (spring-run of the Sacramento River drainage) (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) (hereafter, referred to as Covered Species) during implementation of the Project. (See generally Fish & G. Code, § 2081, subd. (b); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 783.4.) The Covered Species is designated as threatened species under CESA. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 670.5, subd. (b)(2)(c)).

CDFW is a responsible agency under CEQA with respect to the Project because of prior environmental review and approval of the Project by the lead agency, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). (See generally Pub. Resources Code, § 21067; CEQA Guidelines, § 15367.) Caltrans analyzed the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Project in a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Feather River Bridge Scour Repair Project (SCH No. 2018102014) and approved the Project on January 15, 2019. In so doing, Caltrans imposed various mitigation measures for impacts to the Covered Species as conditions of Project approval and concluded that Project-related impacts to the Covered Species could be substantially lessened with implementation of mitigation and avoidance measures, such that the impacts would be less than significant.

As approved by Caltrans, the Project includes the repair of five bridge pier locations, installation or replacement of existing rock slope protection (RSP) along the west riverbank, and removal of approximately 3.29 acres of 1/4-1/2 ton RSP (previously installed under emergency actions in 2011 and 2017) along the east riverbank and floodplain. Project activities include vegetation removal, pile driving for trestle, placement of RSP, vibration of cofferdam pile sheets, piled driving of CISS piles, dewatering, concrete work, and other activities. The Project site is within the range of the Covered Species and may support individuals of the species. Development of the Project site will result in the permanent loss of 0.43 acres of habitat for the Covered Species and take of the Covered Species as defined by Fish and

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<sup>1</sup> The “CEQA Guidelines” are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with Section 15000.

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Game Code is expected. (Fish & G. Code, § 86.) These impacts fall within CDFW's permitting authority under CESA. (*Id.*, §§ 2080, 2081, subd. (b).)

As a responsible agency, CDFW's CEQA obligations are more limited than those of the lead agency, in that CDFW is responsible for considering only the effects of those activities involved in the Project which it is required by law to carry out or approve. Thus, while CDFW must consider the environmental effects of the Project as set forth in the California Department of Transportation' prior analysis, CDFW has responsibility to mitigate or avoid only the direct or indirect environmental effects of those parts of the Project which it decides to carry out, finance, or approve. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21002.1, subd. (d); CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15041, subd. (b), 15096, subds. (f)-(g).) Accordingly, because CDFW's exercise of discretion is limited to issuance of an incidental take permit (ITP) for the Project, CDFW is responsible for considering only the environmental effects that fall within its permitting authority under CESA. (See generally *San Diego Navy Broadway Complex Coalition v. City of San Diego* (2010) 185 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 924, 935-941.) Indeed, with respect to all other effects associated with implementation of the Project, CDFW is bound by the legal presumption that the Mitigated Negative Declaration fully complies with CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21167.3; *City of Redding v. Shasta County Local Agency Formation Commission* (1989) 209 Cal.App.3d 1169, 1178-1181; see also CEQA Guidelines, § 15096, subd. (e); Pub. Resources Code, § 21167.2; *Laurel Heights Improvement Association v. Regents of the University of California* (1993) 6 Cal.4<sup>th</sup> 1112, 1130.)

**FINDINGS:**

CDFW has considered the Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted by Caltrans as the lead agency for the Project.

CDFW finds that the mitigation measures imposed as conditions of Project approval by Caltrans, along with the mitigation measures and Conditions of Approval set forth in CDFW's ITP for the Project, will ensure that all Project-related impacts on the Covered Species are mitigated to below a level of significance under CEQA.

CDFW finds that issuance of the ITP will not result in any previously undisclosed potentially significant effects on the environment or a substantial increase in the severity of any potentially significant environmental effects previously disclosed by the lead agency. Furthermore, to the extent the potential for such effects exists, CDFW finds adherence to and implementation of the conditions of Project approval adopted by the lead agency, as well as adherence to and implementation of the Conditions of Approval imposed by CDFW through the issuance of the ITP, will avoid or reduce such potential effects to below a level of significance.

The following measures and others set forth in CDFW's ITP for the Project will avoid to the extent feasible and mitigate to below a level of significance all Project-related impacts on the Covered Species:

- A. Permittee shall submit to CDFW in writing the name, qualifications, business address, and contact information of a biological monitor (Designated Biologist) at least 30 days before starting Covered Activities. Permittee shall ensure that the Designated Biologist is knowledgeable and experienced in the biology, natural history, collecting and

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handling of the Covered Species. The Designated Biologist shall be responsible for monitoring Covered Activities to help minimize and fully mitigate or avoid the incidental take of individual Covered Species and to minimize disturbance of Covered Species' habitat. Permittee shall obtain CDFW approval of the Designated Biologist in writing before starting Covered Activities, and shall also obtain approval in advance in writing if the Designated Biologist must be changed. The Designated Biologist shall have authority to immediately stop any activity that does not comply with the ITP, and/or to order any reasonable measure to avoid the unauthorized take of an individual of the Covered Species.

- B. Permittee shall conduct an education program for all persons employed or otherwise working in the Project Area before performing any work. The program shall consist of a presentation from the Designated Biologist that includes a discussion of the biology and general behavior of the Covered Species, information about the distribution and habitat needs of the Covered Species, sensitivity of the Covered Species to human activities, its status pursuant to CESA including legal protection, recovery efforts, penalties for violations and Project-specific protective measures described in the ITP. Permittee shall provide interpretation for non-English speaking workers, and the same instruction shall be provided to any new workers before they are authorized to perform work in the Project Area. Permittee shall prepare and distribute wallet-sized cards or a fact sheet handout containing this information for workers to carry in the Project Area. Upon completion of the program, employees shall sign a form stating they attended the program and understand all protection measures. This training shall be repeated at least once annually for long-term and/or permanent employees that will be conducting work in the Project Area.
- C. The Permittee shall purchase 3.7 acres of Covered Species credits from Bullock Bend Mitigation Bank or at another CDFW-approved mitigation or conservation bank prior to initiating Covered Activities to cover the permanent and temporary impacts.
- D. During the work period, the Designated Biologist shall conduct daily compliance inspections when Covered Activities impact Covered Species habitat and then weekly until Project completion. The Designated Biologist shall conduct compliance inspections to (1) minimize incidental take of the Covered Species; (2) prevent unlawful take of species; (3) check for compliance with all measures of the ITP; (4) check all exclusion zones; and (5) ensure that signs, stakes, and fencing are intact, and that Covered Activities are only occurring in the Project Area. The Designated Representative or Designated Biologist shall prepare daily written observation and inspection records summarizing: oversight activities and compliance inspections, observations of Covered Species and their sign, survey results, and monitoring activities required by the ITP.
- E. Non-compliance will be reported to CDFW within 24 hours during the construction phase.
- F. If Covered Species is encountered within the Project Area, is directly threatened by Covered Activities, and it is unable to move to a safe area on its own, the Designated Biologist shall relocate Covered Species to a safe area in accordance with the

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Relocation Plan. The Permittee or Designated Representative shall notify CDFW within 24 hours of each time Covered Species is relocated. Notification to CDFW shall be via telephone or email, followed by a written incident report. Notification shall include the date, number, and specific location of all Covered Species that are relocated from the cofferdam in addition to any direct mortality observed during in-water work and relocation.

- G. No later than 45 days after completion of all mitigation measures, Permittee shall provide CDFW with a Final Mitigation Report. The Designated Biologist shall prepare the Final Mitigation Report which shall include, at a minimum: (1) a summary of all Monthly Compliance Reports and all ASRs; (2) a copy of the table in the MMRP with notes showing when each of the mitigation measures was implemented; (3) all available information about Project-related incidental take of the Covered Species; (4) information about other Project impacts on the Covered Species; (5) beginning and ending dates of Covered Activities; (6) an assessment of the effectiveness of the ITP's Conditions of Approval in minimizing and fully mitigating Project impacts of the taking on Covered Species; (7) recommendations on how mitigation measures might be changed to more effectively minimize take and mitigate the impacts of future projects on the Covered Species; and (8) any other pertinent information.

CDFW finds that the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program in Attachment 1 of CDFW's ITP for the Project will ensure compliance with mitigation measures by requiring the Permittee to monitor and report progress in implementing those measures for review by CDFW staff.

*The Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program is adopted.*

*The Project is approved.*

DATE: 10/16/2020

By: \_\_\_\_\_

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Kevin Thomas, Regional Manager  
 North Central Region  
 CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE