



State of California – Natural Resources Agency

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Bay Delta Region

2825 Cordelia Road, Suite 100

Fairfield, CA 94534

(707) 428-2002

[www.wildlife.ca.gov](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov)

**GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor**

**CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director**



Governor's Office of Planning & Research

**Aug 31 2020**

## **STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

August 31, 2020

Mr. John Leong  
Sonoma County DTPW  
2300 County Center Drive, Suite B-100  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
[John.Leong@sonoma-county.org](mailto:John.Leong@sonoma-county.org)

Subject: Freestone Flat Road Bridge Replacement Project, Mitigated Negative Declaration, SCH No. 2020089008, Sonoma County

Dear Mr. Leong:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) personnel have reviewed the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Freestone Flat Road Bridge Replacement Project (Project). CDFW is submitting comments on the draft MND to inform Sonoma County (County), as the Lead Agency, of our concerns regarding potentially significant impacts to sensitive resources associated with the proposed Project.

CDFW is submitting comments as a Trustee Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is responsible for the conservation, protection, and management of the State's biological resources (Pub. Resources Code, § 21070, Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15386). CDFW is also considered a Responsible Agency if a project would require discretionary approval, such as permits issued under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), the Native Plant Protection Act, the Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Program and other provisions of the Fish and Game Code that afford protection to the State's fish and wildlife trust resources.

### **Environmental Setting**

The Project is located at the Freestone Flat Road bridge over Salmon Creek, in Sonoma County. The Project would cross Salmon Creek to the southeast of the Freestone Flat Road crossing. The City of Sebastopol lies five miles to the west and the Community of Freestone lies approximately 0.6 miles to the southeast. The Project area is comprised of riparian forest, coyote brush alliance, eucalyptus, non-native grasslands, developed land and open channel habitat, specifically Salmon Creek.

### **Project Description**

The proposed Project includes replacement of the existing Freestone Flat Road Bridge, which is a two-span, steel-girder truss bridge over Salmon Creek. The existing bridge would be replaced with a two-lane, cast-in-place prestressed concrete box-girder bridge supported on cast-in-drilled-hole piles at the abutments. The new bridge would be located parallel to and southeast of the existing bridge. The existing bridge would

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remain in service until the new bridge is complete, then disassembled and removed from the site. Building the bridge on a new alignment requires the construction of new approaches on the east and west sides of the replacement bridge.

## **Comments and Recommendations**

### ***Western yellow-billed Cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus)***

The Project includes the removal of approximately 40 riparian trees and construction activities adjacent to habitat that may be occupied by the species, which has the potential to significantly impact Western yellow-billed cuckoo, a State listed as endangered species and federally listed as threatened species. To reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant, CDFW recommends that Mitigation Measure BIO-8 include language stating that if a Western yellow-billed cuckoo is detected during surveys, consultation with CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife shall occur which may include obtaining a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) and federal authorization prior to Project activities.

### ***California freshwater shrimp (Syncaris pacifica)***

The Project includes the disturbance of 1.303 acres during construction and the removal of approximately 40 trees along the streambank. Although work would be conducted above the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM), the ground disturbance and substantial riparian tree removal could significantly impact California freshwater shrimp, a State and federally listed as endangered species. The Project could impact California freshwater shrimp habitat and potentially cause take if the species is present during Project activities, and this would be a significant impact under CEQA. CDFW recommends that the following language be added as a mitigation measure to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant:

*No Disturbance of California Freshwater Shrimp Habitat. No vegetation shall be disturbed or removed from any portion of the bed, bank, or channel in sections of overhanging banks of Salmon Creek. A qualified biologist knowledgeable about California freshwater shrimp species shall flag the species' habitat, all Project activities shall avoid the flagged area, and the work crews shall be trained on the California freshwater shrimp protection and the habitat avoidance area. Sediment shall be prevented from entering Salmon Creek. The shape and form of streambanks suitable for California freshwater shrimp habitat shall not be disturbed or altered. If the Project may result in impacts to California freshwater shrimp, consultation with CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife shall occur which may include obtaining a CESA ITP and federal authorization prior to Project activities.*

### ***Riparian Mitigation and Monitoring Plan***

The Project would result in the permanent loss of 0.021 acres of riparian forest habitat, the temporary loss of 0.185 acres of riparian forest habitat, and the removal of

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approximately 40 riparian trees. The County proposes to enhance or restore 0.021 acres of riparian habitat as mitigation of the impacts. CDFW recommends that the Riparian Mitigation and Monitoring Plan include, at a minimum, the following:

- *Temporary impacts to riparian habitat restored on-site at a 1:1 ratio (restoration area: impacted area)*
- *Permanent impacts to riparian habitat mitigated for on-site at a 2:1 ratio (mitigation area: impacted area)*
- *Tree replacement ratios (number replaced: number removed):*
  - *Non-native trees replaced on-site with native riparian species at a 1:1 ratio*
  - *Native riparian trees greater than 4 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) replaced on-site at a ratio of 3:1*
  - *Native oak trees replaced on-site at a:*
    - *4:1 ratio for oaks that measure 5 to 10 inches DBH*
    - *6:1 ratio for oaks that measure 10 to 15 inches DBH*
    - *10:1 ratio for oaks the measure greater than 15 inches DBH*

## Filing Fees

CDFW anticipates that the Project will have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary (Fish and Game Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089). Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW.

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the MND for the proposed Project and is available to meet with you to further discuss our concerns. Additionally, CDFW is available to work with the Project applicant in order to complete their LSA Notification. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. James Hansen, Environmental Scientist, at [James.Hansen@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:James.Hansen@wildlife.ca.gov); or Ms. Karen Weiss, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory), at [Karen.Weiss@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Karen.Weiss@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
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Gregg Erickson  
Regional Manager  
Bay Delta Region

cc: State Clearinghouse (SCH No. 2020089008)