

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
CALIFORNIA ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT
NATIVE PLANT PROTECTION ACT
INCIDENTAL TAKE PERMIT
NO. 2081-2020-055-02**

**City of Chico
Bruce Road Widening and Reconstruction**

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 Bruce Road Widening & Reconstruction (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).)¹ CDFW makes these findings under CEQA as part of its discretionary decision to authorize the City of Chico (Permittee or City) to incidentally take Butte County meadowfoam (*Limnanthes floccosa ssp. californica*) (hereafter, Covered Species) during implementation of the Project. (See generally Fish & G. Code, § 2081, subd. (b); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 783.4.) Butte County meadowfoam is designated as an endangered species under CESA. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 670.2, subd. (a)(18)(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, the City. (See generally Pub. Resources Code, § 21067; CEQA Guidelines, § 15367.) The City analyzed the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Project in a Mitigated Negative Declaration Bruce Road Reconstruction Project (Capital Project No. 16038 (SCH No. 2020090452) and approved the Project on November 24, 2020, upheld on February 2, 2021. In so doing, the City 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 the City, the Project involves the reconstruction and widening of an approximately 2-mile segment of Bruce Road from SR 32 to Skyway Road. Project activities include grubbing and grading of the entire Project site, trench digging, road construction, stormwater facilities construction, tree removal, and other activities. Reconstruction and widening of Bruce Road will expand the existing two-lane arterial roadway to a four-lane arterial roadway. The Project site is within the range of the

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

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Covered Species and is known to support individuals of the species. Development of the Project site will result in the permanent loss of 0.0012 acres of habitat for the Covered Species and take of the Covered Species as defined by Fish and Game Code is expected. (Fish & G. Code, § 86.) These impacts fall within CDFW's permitting jurisdiction 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 City's Mitigated Negative Declaration, 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.4th 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.4th 1112, 1130.)

FINDINGS:

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

CDFW finds that the mitigation measures imposed as conditions of Project approval by the City, 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.

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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. A Designated Biologist who is knowledgeable and experienced in the biology and natural history of the Covered Species will monitor construction and/or surface-disturbing activities to minimize habitat disturbance and take of individual Covered Species. The Designated Biologist will have the authority to stop construction and/or surface-disturbing activities and/or order any reasonable measure to avoid take of the Covered Species.
- B. Orientation will be provided to construction staff to familiarize them with the conditions of the Permit and the measures to avoid and minimize impacts to the Covered Species.
- C. To fully mitigate the 0.0012 acres of Project impacts to the Covered Species, Permittee has purchased 0.016 acres of Butte County meadowfoam preservation credits at the Dove Ridge Conservation Bank.
- D. Compliance monitoring will be reported monthly and annual reports will be sent to CDFW by January 31 of each year.
- E. Permittee will prepare and implement a detailed Erosion Control Plan (Plan). The Plan shall include appropriate erosion control measures to be implemented during construction and shall limit ground disturbance activities to dry weather to avoid increased surface water runoff and erosion on-site and sedimentation in Covered Species habitat located on and offsite.
- F. Permittee will submit a hydrological study report to CDFW for review and approval. The report will assess project-related hydrologic changes to adjacent occupied Covered Species habitat by completing a detailed hydrological study.
- G. Permittee will collect Covered Species seeds within the Project Area that will be directly impacted and disperse within vernal pool habitat on the Meriam Park Preserve or submit to the California Botanical Garden seed bank for long-term Conservation.
- H. Permittee will conduct a pre-construction survey prior to initiating ground-disturbing or vegetation removing activities in accordance with CDFW's "Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Sensitive Natural Communities (March 20, 2018)." Results of the survey will be provided to CDFW before initiating ground-disturbing or vegetation removal activities.

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- I. Permittee will prepare and submit a final mitigation report within 45 days following completion of the Project to notify CDFW of the success and effectiveness of required mitigation measures.

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: 2/23/2022

DocuSigned by:

By:

Kevin Thomas

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Kevin Thomas, Regional Manager
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DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE