



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 05/2020)**

Project Information

DIST-CO-RTE: 05-MON-01

PM/PM: 17.0/35.8

EA: 05-1M780

Project Number: 0520000072

Project Description:

On Tuesday, August 18, 2020, the Dolan Fire started in the Big Sur Area along Highway 1 in Monterey County between postmiles 17.0 and 35.8. Caltrans proposes to install emergency protective drainage measures in anticipation of winter storms as a result of the Dolan Fire. The fire has created vast amounts of unvegetated slopes on steep and rocky terrain within watersheds above Highway 1 creating a high potential for debris flows. Highway 1 was closed for fire response and remains closed due to ongoing fire suppression activities. A preliminary field review has identified approximately 20 drainage systems as susceptible to debris flows due to the loss of vegetation in the watershed above. Potential drainage improvements and slope repairs include cleaning drainage systems, clearing inlets of debris and vegetation, installing redundant inlet features, enlarging drainage basins, rockfall prevention systems, and installation of debris flow barriers to improve performance and maintainability in the event of a debris flows during winter storm events.

Caltrans CEQA Determination (Check one)

- Not Applicable** – Caltrans is not the CEQA Lead Agency
- Not Applicable** – Caltrans has prepared an IS or EIR under CEQA

Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, the project is:
X Exempt by Statute. (PRC 21080[b]; 14 CCR 15260 et seq.)

- Categorically Exempt. Class** Enter class. (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)
 - No exceptions apply that would bar the use of a categorical exemption (PRC 21084 and 14 CCR 15300.2). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.
- Covered by the Common Sense Exemption.** This project does not fall within an exempt class, but it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR 15061[b][3].)

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Randy LaVack		9/16/2020
Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager

Berkeley Lindt		9-17-2020
Print Name	Signature	Date



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Caltrans NEPA Determination N/A

Briefly list environmental commitments on continuation sheet if needed (i.e., not necessary if included on an attached ECR). Reference additional information, as appropriate (e.g., additional studies and design conditions).

Avoidance and Minimization Efforts

Standard best management practices from Caltrans Standard Specifications 2018 shall be followed.

Construction staging, material storage, and layout areas shall be limited to existing pullouts and previously paved areas only.

Nesting Bird Protection-The following avoidance and minimization measures will protect nesting bird species and special-status species that may be present in or near the project impact area:

1. **Preconstruction Survey** - A Caltrans biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey and be on-site during initial ground disturbances. Should a special-status species be discovered, all work will stop until it is out of harm's way. Should a State listed species be found, all work will stop and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will be notified. Work may resume if the species leaves the work area or with CDFW permission. In the event that a federal listed species is found during work activities, all work that could affect the species will be stopped, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be notified, and work will only resume with their permission. Please contact District 5 Biologist Paul Holmes (805-459-9634) or Barrett Holland (805-549-3573) to arrange a pre-construction survey and to be on-site during initial ground disturbance.

2. **Vegetation** at the access point shall be driven over only and no grubbing shall occur.

3. **Sediment** removed shall be disposed in an upland area (i.e., staging area) and/or hauled off site where it cannot re-enter a creek and will not affect a special-status species habitat.

4. **Aquatic Resources**: Measures shall be taken to avoid direct and indirect impacts to waterways and riparian habitat.

a. No work shall occur in a live stream. Work shall not be conducted if rain is forecast within 24 hours.

b. Standard best management practices shall be enacted to ensure that sediment and run-off do not occur.



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c. Vehicles and equipment shall be checked and maintained daily, to prevent leaks of materials that if introduced to water could be deleterious to aquatic life.

d. Vehicles and Equipment shall be refueled at least 100 feet from the drainages within the project area. All refueling and equipment maintenance should be conducted away from waterbodies to avoid accidental contamination.

6. Erosion Control / Vegetation Restoration:

a. Erosion shall be controlled by one or a combination of the following: natural fiber matting and/or rolls, incorporating straw, applying a stabilizing emulsion, and seeding • Only locally occurring native plants shall be used for erosion control and restoration.

b. Erosion control shall be placed on all disturbed slopes and material disposal sites.

c. Erosion control may contain any of the following: White Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), California mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*), California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*), sky lupine (*Lupinus nanus*), deerweed (*Acmispon glabra*), small fescue (*Festuca microstachys*), and California brome (*Bromus carinatus*).

7. Storage Areas: Material and equipment storage is restricted to existing unvegetated pull-outs and paved areas in the State right-of-way and not within the drip-line of native trees and outside of riparian corridors. Storage areas proposed by the contractor that are outside of the right-of-way shall be reviewed in advance by District 5 Biologist Paul Holmes (805-459-9634) or Barrett Holland (805-549-3573).

8. Invasive Species: To reduce the spread of invasive non-native plant species, Caltrans will implement the following protection measures to comply with Executive Order (EO) 13112:

a. Invasive plants are known on the project site, therefore any plant materials removed during construction will be contained and treated as trash and disposed of in a permitted landfill.

The following general avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented:

1. Prior to start of work, a botanical survey will be conducted by a qualified biologist to determine presence/absence of special-status plant species with potential to occur within in the BSA.

2. Prior to start of work, the Caltrans biologist or qualified representative will provide a brief worker training and/or informational material to be used in identifying all potential biological resources (Smith's blue butterfly, nesting birds and California condor), protocols for responding to their presence within the construction site, and notification procedures.



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3. Prior to start of work, a pre-construction survey will be conducted by a qualified biologist. The qualified biologist will also be present during the installation of ESA fencing, initial vegetation removal. The qualified biologist will monitor construction during initial site disturbances and as needed for the duration of the project. Please contact District Biologists Barrett Holland (805-549-3573) or Paul Holmes (805-459-9634) to schedule a pre-construction survey or conduct biological monitoring prior to the start of work.

Smith's Blue Butterfly -The following avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented for Smith's blue butterfly and are consistent with measures included within the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Highway 1 Maintenance Activities that Affect the Smith's Blue Butterfly, Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties, California (1-8-07-F-68) (USFWS 2008).

1. Caltrans will ensure that all construction activities follow well-defined procedures to avoid effects to the Smith's blue butterfly including ensuring that ground disturbance for scaffolding installation activities will not begin near stands of buckwheat until a qualified biologist is on site to establish the location of ESA fencing to protect seacliff buckwheat habitat. Please contact District Biologists Barrett Holland (805-549-3573) or Paul Holmes (805-459-9634) prior to construction mobilization.

2. Before any maintenance or project activity work begins near stands of seacliff buckwheat, a qualified biologist will provide training to all field personnel. At a minimum, the training will include a description of the Smith's blue butterfly and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to avoid Smith's blue butterfly habitat, and boundaries within which the project may be accomplished. Brochures, books, and briefings may be used in the training session, provided that a qualified person is on hand to answer any questions.

3. The number of access routes, size of staging areas, and the total area of the activity will be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project goal. ESAs will be established to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction and minimize potential impacts to Smith's blue butterfly and seacliff buckwheat.

4. If feasible, avoid clearing and grubbing California sagebrush scrub in the areas for staging or access. California sagebrush scrub vegetation shall be cut down to ground level, to allow for regrowth of natural vegetation and reduce the potential for invasive species.

5. Caltrans will ensure that best management practices are implemented according to the most current approved guidelines to control erosion and sedimentation during and after project implementation.



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6. Temporary effects to water quality will be avoided by implementing the best management practices (BMPs) from Caltrans' National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

11. All equipment and vehicles will be staged above the OHWM and from the road shoulder.

12. Vehicles and Equipment will be refueled at least 100 feet from the drainages within the project area. All refueling and equipment maintenance will be conducted away from waterbodies to avoid accidental contamination.

13. Trimming of vegetation will not exceed the minimum necessary to complete operations. All vegetation will be trimmed by hand where possible and practical, use of chemicals will not be allowed.

14. Debris materials and/or construction equipment will not be stockpiled or stored where they could be washed into the water or where they will cover aquatic or riparian vegetation. All debris will be properly disposed of at an appropriate location.

15. Caltrans will not dump any litter or construction debris within the riparian/stream zone. All such debris and waste will be picked up daily and properly disposed of at an appropriate site.

California condors- The following avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented for California condors:

1. If California condors are observed within the construction area all work will cease within 1000 feet of the animal until the animal leaves the area on its own. The Resident Engineer and Biologist will be notified immediately.