

# Swamp Rodent Culverts

Kern County, CA

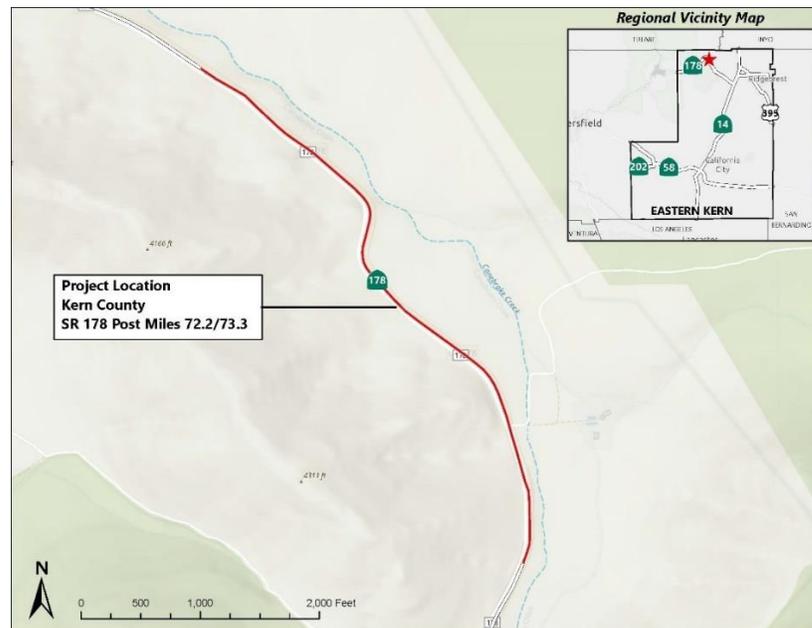
District 9 – KER – 178 – post mile 72.2/73.3

EA/Project ID: 09-39090/0921000051

State Clearinghouse Number: 2022040286

## Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2



Prepared by the  
State of California Department of Transportation

May 2022



## General Information About This Document

Document prepared by: Kristopher Bason, Environmental Scientist

The Initial Study circulated to the public for 31 days between April 15, 2022 and May 15, 2022. Comments received during this period are included in Appendix B.

Elsewhere, language has been added throughout the document to indicate where a change has been made since the circulation of the draft environmental document.

Minor editorial changes and clarifications have not been so indicated.

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document can be made available in Braille, in large print, on audiocassette, or on computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please write to or call Caltrans, Attention: Kristopher Bason, District 9 Environmental Scientist, California Department of Transportation, 500 South Main Street, Bishop, California 93514; 760-784-4056 (Voice), or use the California Relay Service 1-800-735-2929 (TTY), 1-800-735-2929 (Voice), or 711.

State Clearinghouse Number: 2022040286  
09-KER-178-72.2/73.3  
EA/Project ID: 09-39090/0921000051

Replace two culverts along a portion of State Route 178 in Kern County near  
Onyx at postmile 72.70 and postmile 72.79

**INITIAL STUDY  
with Mitigated Negative Declaration**

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Department of Transportation  
and

Responsible Agencies: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and United  
States Army Corp of Engineers



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Kirsten Helton  
Deputy District Director, Planning and Environmental  
California Department of Transportation  
District 9  
CEQA Lead Agency

5/17/2022

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Date

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## Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

**State Clearinghouse Number:** 2022040286

**District-County-Route-Post Mile:** 09-KER-178-72.2/73.3

**EA/Project Number:** 09-39090/0921000051

### Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to replace two culverts along a portion of State Route 178 near Onyx at postmile 72.70 and postmile 72.79.

### Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans, District 9. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the action with the incorporation of the identified mitigation measures will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

- The project would have no impacts to Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forest Resources, Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.
- The project would have less than significant impacts to Greenhouse Gas Emissions.
- With the following mitigation measures, the project will have less than significant impacts to Biological Resources:

BIO 7: Compensatory mitigation for impacts to wetlands is anticipated. Appropriate mitigation will be implemented in coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, and United States Army Corps of Engineers during obtainment of project permits and is anticipated to be achieved through an in-lieu fee program.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kirsten Helton'.

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Kirsten Helton  
Deputy District Director, Planning and Environmental  
District 9  
California Department of Transportation

5/17/2022

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Date

*Negative Declaration*

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# **Chapter 1**      Proposed Project

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## **1.1 Introduction**

The Swamp Rodent Culverts project is located in Kern County on State Route 178 near Onyx from postmile 72.2 to postmile 73.3. The project proposes to replace two culverts at postmile 72.70 and postmile 72.79.

## **1.2 Purpose and Need**

The project “purpose” is a set of objectives the project intends to meet. The project “need” is the transportation deficiency that the project was initiated to address.

### **1.2.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to reduce erosion and potential flooding of the roadway during storm events while also reducing maintenance efforts on the two identified culverts within the limits of the project.

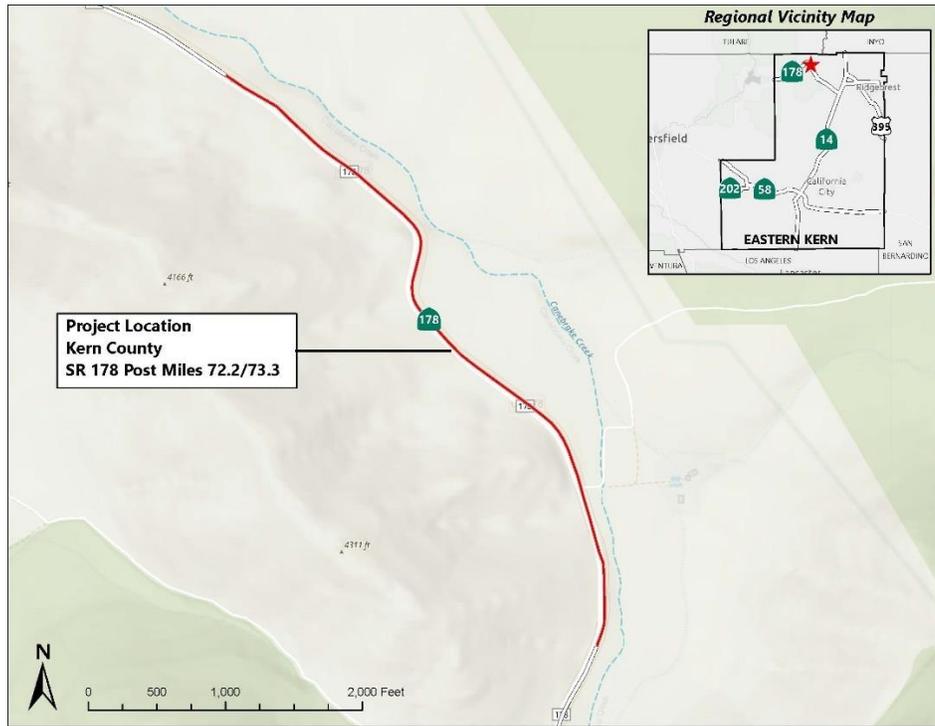
### **1.2.2 Need**

Two corrugated metal culverts in the Canebrake area of State Route 178 are badly rusted and are failing due to their age and exposure to native soils. This deterioration has made the culverts difficult to maintain for Caltrans maintenance staff and has also led to erosion along the roadside and occasional roadway flooding during storm events.

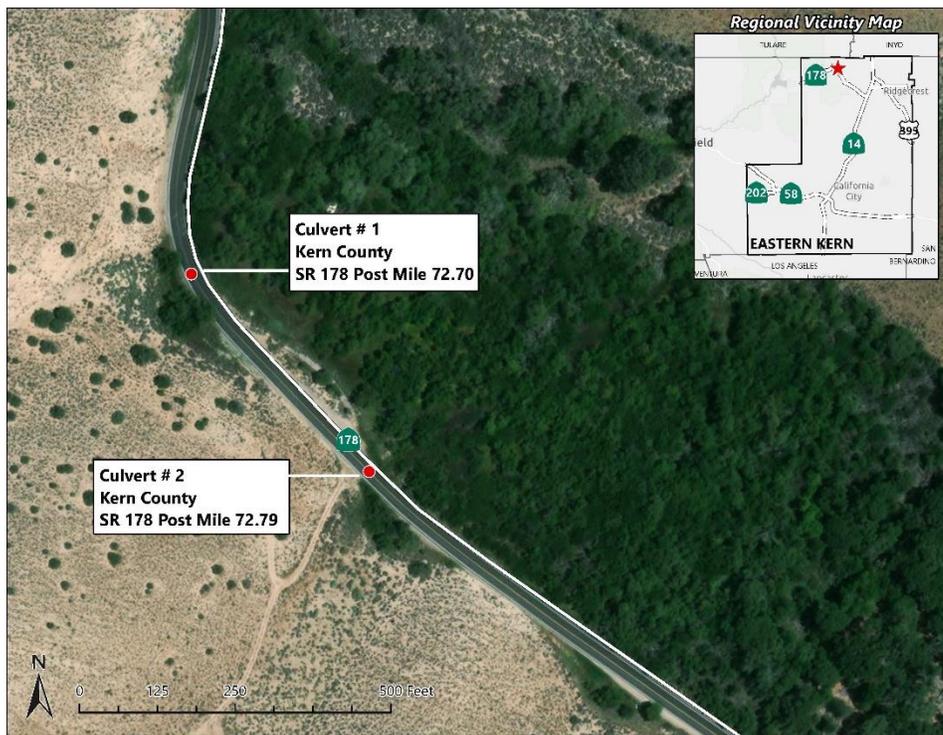
## **1.3 Project Description**

The project would replace two 18-inch failed corrugated steel pipe culverts with two new 24 -inch high-density polyethylene (plastic) culverts at postmile 72.70 and postmile 72.79. The project will require traffic control between postmile 72.2 and 73.3. The traffic control will be implemented as a single lane closure with reversible control by flaggers.

**Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map**



**Figure 1-2 Project Location Map**



## **1.4 Project Alternatives**

There is one build alternative and one no-build alternative for the project.

### **1.4.1 Build Alternatives**

The build alternative proposes to replace two culverts (Culvert #1 post mile 72.70, Culvert #2, post mile 72.79) along a portion of State Route 178 near Onyx. Existing corrugated metal culverts will be replaced with plastic culverts. New plastic culverts will reduce corrosion effects caused by the native soil. Existing culverts are 18 inches in diameter while new culverts will be 24 inches in diameter, which will make them easier to maintain. The new culvert at PM 72.7 will be extended approximately 10 feet at the inlet and 3 feet at the outlet. The new culvert at PM 72.79 will be extended approximately 1 foot at the inlet and 2 feet at the outlet. The slight extension is proposed to extend clear recovery areas and move drop off areas away from the edge of the travel way. Metal flared end sections (FES) will be installed at the inlets. The outlets will not have FES installed. New culverts will be covered by concrete slurry to within 4-6 inches of the roadway surface; the final coverage will be minor concrete.

Both culverts carry flowing water year-round. The existing culverts will be used as a water diversion while the new culverts are being placed. The existing roadway and shoulder will be excavated for installation of the new culverts and removal of existing culverts. Metal plates will be placed over the travel lanes of State Route 178 to ensure traffic can flow through the project site during construction. The new culverts will be installed approximately 6 to 12 inches from the existing culverts. Excavated material will be placed over culverts on side slopes. No excess material is anticipated, but any excess excavated material will be hauled out and disposed of by the contractor. There will be some excavation at the culvert inlets and outlets to ensure that flowlines are maintained.

Staging will occur within the Caltrans disturbed operational right-of-way, paved shoulders and pullouts. No additional R/W or easements will be required for construction or staging. Vegetation removal will be minimal and incidental to replacing the existing culverts and perpetuating the existing drainage channels.

This project contains a number of standardized project measures that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the project. These measures are listed later in this chapter under "Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Alternatives."

#### **1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative**

The no-build alternative would maintain the existing culverts within the project limits on State Route 178 as is with continued maintenance activities. Selection of the no-build alternative would result in continued deterioration of and increased maintenance costs for the two culverts in the project area. The no-build alternative would also lead to occasional roadway flooding during storm events and additional roadside erosion in the project area and therefore does not meet the project purpose and need.

#### **1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative**

The Draft Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration circulated for public comment for 31 days between April 15, 2022, and May 15, 2022. After review of all comments received during the public comment period, the Caltrans project development team recommends selection of the Build Alternative as the preferred alternative. This alternative best meets the project purpose to reduce erosion and potential flooding of the roadway during storm events within the limits of the project while also reducing maintenance efforts on the two identified culverts.

#### **1.6 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Alternatives**

Caltrans includes standard specifications for the purposes of reducing impacts to the environment on every project constructed. These specifications include dust control, provisions for the handling of nesting birds, policies on the handling of hazardous materials and construction noise levels, et cetera. These standard specifications are incorporated as project features and are included as part of the project description. The significance of impacts under CEQA resulting from the project are considered after implementation of these measures.

#### **1.7 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion**

This document contains information regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other state laws and regulations. Separate environmental documentation, supporting a Categorical Exclusion determination, will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. When needed for clarity, or as required by CEQA, this document may contain references to federal laws and/or regulations (CEQA, for example, requires consideration of adverse effects on species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species by the U.S.

National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—that is, species protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act).

## 1.8 Permits and Approvals Needed

The following permits, licenses, agreements, and certifications are required for project construction:

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Permit/Approval</b>	<b>Status</b>
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	1602 Agreement for Streambed Alteration	Application will be submitted during the project's final design phase.
California Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region	401 Certification/Waste Discharge Requirement permit	Application will be submitted during the project's final design phase.
United States Army Corps of Engineers	404 Nationwide Verification	Application will be submitted during the project's final design phase.



# Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

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## 2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated, Less Than Significant Impact, and No Impact. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with a project will indicate that there are no impacts to a particular resource. A “No Impact” answer reflects this determination. The questions in this checklist are intended to encourage the thoughtful assessment of impacts and do not represent thresholds of significance.

Project features, which can include both design elements of the project and standardized measures that are applied to all or most Caltrans projects such as Best Management Practices and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions, are considered to be an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

“No Impact” determinations in each section are based on the scope, description, and location of the project as well as the appropriate technical report (bound separately in Volume 2), and no further discussion is included in this document.

### 2.1.1 Aesthetics

Based on a review of project features conducted by Caltrans staff on March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	<b>No Impact</b>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.2 Agriculture 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 the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Based on a review of land use designation within, and adjacent to, the project limit conducted by Caltrans staff on March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
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>No Impact</b>

<b>Question—Would the project:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources</b>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Conflict with existing zoning, 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))?	<b>No Impact</b>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.3 Air Quality

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

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated March 7, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

<b>Question—Would the project:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality</b>
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) 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?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) dated March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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 Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	<b>No Impact</b>
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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<b>Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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?	<b>No Impact</b>

***Affected Environment***

Field surveys performed by Caltrans Biologists in February 2022 verified that wetlands, waters of the State, and waters of the US are present within the project vicinity. The wetland features present at the culvert inlets and outlets are seasonally flooded freshwater wetland habitats. The surrounding wetland feature, located outside of the project area, to the north and east of the culverts is a seasonally flooded freshwater forested/shrubland wetland habitat.

***Environmental Consequences***

Both permanent and temporary impacts to wetlands, waters of the US, and waters of the State will result from the two culvert replacements. The culvert extensions on the inlet and outlet sides are anticipated to result in permanent impacts. At this time, exact estimates of permanent impacts are preliminary, but it is estimated that these impacts will amount to less than 1000 square feet for all jurisdictional resources. These permanent impacts will be in the form of excavated material on side slopes and concrete backfill around the culvert extensions. Riparian habitat impacts are not anticipated. Less than 1000 square feet of temporary impacts will also occur during construction. These temporary impacts will be in the form of vegetation removal and ground disturbance arising from equipment access.

***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

This project will require work within jurisdictional resources and several permits will be required. Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) 401, United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) 404, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) 1600 permits are anticipated. These permit applications will be finalized during the project’s final design phase. All conditions outlined in these permits will be followed throughout the construction process.

Although exact amounts of permanent and temporary impacts to jurisdictional resources have not yet been finalized, compensatory mitigation for wetland impacts is anticipated. Once project design is finalized, these impacts will be

calculated and reported to regulatory agencies as part of the permitting application process. Early consultation with CDFW, RWQCB, and USACE regarding the project's impacts has already been initiated. As this project will have a very small amount of permanent impacts, Caltrans anticipates that compensatory mitigation may be achieved through an in-lieu fee program.

The following avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures will be implemented for the project:

BIO 1: Wooden stakes or pin flags will be used to delineate the boundary of the work area and to protect all wetlands, waters, and riparian vegetation that occur outside of the project impact area. The area beyond the stakes will also be marked on the plans as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). No access to the ESA will be granted during construction.

BIO 2: A pre-construction Biological Resource Information Program (BRIP) training will be required for all personnel that will be working onsite. The BRIP training will include education on jurisdictional water resources and rules regarding ESA areas.

BIO 3: Biological monitoring will be implemented to enforce general environmental resource protection and all specific requirements outlined in the 401, 404, and 1600 permits.

BIO 4: Design features will be established to minimize effects to waters and erosion.

BIO 5: Vegetation removal will be minimal and will be limited to the minimum necessary to accomplish the work.

BIO 6: The project will adhere to the Caltrans January 2008 "Construction Site Best Management Practice (BMP) Field Manual and Troubleshooting Guide". BMPs will include erosion and sediment control measures, and methods of permanent soil stabilization.

BIO 7: Compensatory mitigation for impacts to wetlands is anticipated. Appropriate mitigation will be implemented in coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, and United States Army Corps of Engineers, and is anticipated to be achieved through an in-lieu fee program.

### **2.1.5 Cultural Resources**

Considering the information included in the Section 106 Cultural Resources Screening Memo dated March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.6 Energy

The project scope does not include excessive consumption of energy resources nor would it impair any plan considering renewable energy or energy efficiency. The build alternative consists of culvert replacement on an existing roadway.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated March 7, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

<b>Question—Would the project:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils</b>
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>	<b>No Impact</b>
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	<b>No Impact</b>
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<b>No Impact</b>
iv) Landslides?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<b>No Impact</b>
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 onsite or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<b>No Impact</b>
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Climate Change Analysis dated April 4, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<b>No Impact</b>

***Affected Environment***

The project is in a rural area, with a primarily natural-resources based agricultural economy. State Route 178 is the main transportation route to and through the area for both passenger and commercial vehicles. The nearest alternate route is State Route 58, approximately 50 miles to the south. The Kern Council of Regional Governments Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategies provides countywide policy guidance to minimize the cumulative impacts of future development on the environment and to achieve state and regional greenhouse gas reduction goals.

***Environmental Consequences***

Operational Emissions

The purpose of this project is to reduce erosion and potential flooding of the roadway during storm events within the limits of the project while also reducing maintenance efforts on the two identified culverts. This project will not increase the vehicle capacity of the roadway. Because the project would not increase the number of travel lanes on 178, no increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) would occur. While some greenhouse gas emissions during the construction period would be unavoidable, no increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions is expected.

Construction Emissions

Construction greenhouse gas emissions would result from material processing and transportation, on-site construction equipment, and traffic delays due to construction. These emissions will be produced at different levels throughout the construction phase; their frequency and occurrence can be reduced through innovations in plans and specifications and by implementing better traffic management during construction phases.

***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

The project will implement Caltrans standardized measures and construction best management practices that reduce construction emissions which apply

to most or all Caltrans projects. Certain common regulations, such as equipment idling restrictions and development and implementation of a traffic control plan that reduce construction vehicle emissions also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to all applicable Caltrans Standard Specifications, the following measures will be implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions:

GREENHOUSE-1: The Contractor will be instructed to use material source and borrow sites close to the project location to the extent feasible. This will reduce the number of haul trips and distance traveled per trip.

GREENHOUSE-2: Design staff will reduce the need for transport of earthen materials by balancing cut and fill quantities to the extent feasible.

### 2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated March 7, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

<b>Question—Would the project:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials</b>
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
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 or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	<b>No Impact</b>
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<b>No Impact</b>
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated March 7, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface water or groundwater quality?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:  (i) result in substantial erosion or siltation onsite or offsite;	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;	<b>No Impact</b>
(iii) 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; or	<b>No Impact</b>
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	<b>No Impact</b>
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	<b>No Impact</b>
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

Based on a review of land use designation within, and adjacent to, the project limit conducted by Caltrans staff on March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning
a) Physically divide an established community?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated March 7, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

<b>Question—Would the project:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated March 7, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

<b>Question—Would the project result in:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise</b>
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or 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 expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.14 Population and Housing

Based on a review of land use designation within, and adjacent to, the project limit conducted by Caltrans staff on March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing
a) Induce substantial unplanned 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)?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.15 Public Services

Based on a review of land use designation within, and adjacent to, the project limit conducted by Caltrans staff on March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 public services:  Fire protection?	<b>No Impact</b>
Police protection?	<b>No Impact</b>
Schools?	<b>No Impact</b>
Parks?	<b>No Impact</b>
Other public facilities?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.16 Recreation

Based on a review of land use designation within, and adjacent to, the project limit conducted by Caltrans staff on March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Recreation
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.17 Transportation

Based on a review of the project and relevant transportation policy conducted by Caltrans staff on September 22, 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<b>No Impact</b>
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information included in the Section 106 Cultural Resources Screening Memo dated March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
<p>Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:</p> <p>a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or</p>	<b>No Impact</b>
<p>b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.</p>	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Based on a review of project features conducted by Caltrans staff on March 15, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
<p>a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?</p>	<b>No Impact</b>
<p>b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?</p>	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<b>No Impact</b>
d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	<b>No Impact</b>
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<b>No Impact</b>

### 2.1.20 Wildfire

Based on a review of wildfire risk within and adjacent to the project limit conducted by Caltrans staff on March 15, 2021 the following significance determinations have been made:

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	<b>No Impact</b>
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	

### 2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially 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, substantially 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?	<b>Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated</b>
b) Does the project 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)?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<b>No Impact</b>

Based upon the analyses contained in this document, through implementation of mitigation measure BIO 7 under Section 2.1.4, this project will have a less than significant impact on jurisdictional wetland.

# Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
P.O. BOX 942873, MS-49  
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PHONE (916) 654-6130  
FAX (916) 653-5776  
TTY 711  
[www.dot.ca.gov](http://www.dot.ca.gov)



Making Conservation  
a Californic Way of Life.

September 2021

### NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

The California Department of Transportation, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensures "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Caltrans will make every effort to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its services, programs and activities, whether they are federally funded or not, and that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, color, or national origin. In addition, Caltrans will facilitate meaningful participation in the transportation planning process in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Related federal statutes, remedies, and state law further those protections to include sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and age.

For information or guidance on how to file a complaint, or obtain more information regarding Title VI, please contact the Title VI Branch Manager at (916) 324-8379 or visit the following web page:  
<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi>.

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille or in a language other than English, please contact the California Department of Transportation, Office of Civil Rights, at 1823 14<sup>th</sup> Street, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 95811; PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; (916) 324-8379 (TTY 711); or at [Title.VI@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Title.VI@dot.ca.gov).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Toks Omishakin'.

Toks Omishakin  
Director

"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment."

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

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Septiembre de 2021

**DECLARACIÓN DE POLÍTICA  
DE NO DISCRIMINACIÓN**

El Departamento de Transporte de California, bajo el Título VI de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964, asegura que *"Ninguna persona en los Estados Unidos, debido a su raza, color u origen nacional, será excluida de participar, ni se le negarán los beneficios, o será objeto de discriminación, en ningún programa o actividad que reciba ayuda financiera federal."*

Caltrans hará todos los esfuerzos para asegurar que no exista discriminación en ninguno de sus servicios, programas y actividades, ya sea que reciban fondos del gobierno federal o no, y que los servicios y beneficios sean justamente distribuidos a todas las personas sin importar su raza, color, u origen nacional. Adicionalmente, Caltrans facilitará la participación significativa en el proceso de planeación de los programas de transporte de manera no discriminatoria.

Los estatutos federales relacionados, los remedios, y la ley estatal refuerzan estas protecciones para incluir el sexo, la discapacidad, la religión, la orientación sexual y la edad.

Para información u orientación sobre cómo presentar una queja o para obtener más información relacionada con el Título VI, por favor comuníquese con el Gerente del Título VI al teléfono (916) 324-8379 o visite la siguiente página de Internet: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi>.

Para obtener esta información en un formato alternativo como el Braille o en un lenguaje diferente al inglés, por favor póngase en contacto con la Oficina de Derechos Civiles del Departamento de Transporte de California, al 1823 14<sup>th</sup> Street, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 95811; PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; al teléfono (916) 324-8379 (Teléfono de Texto TTY: 711); o al email: [Title.VI@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Title.VI@dot.ca.gov)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Toks Omishakin".

Toks Omishakin  
Director

*"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment."*

## **Appendix B** Comment Letters and Responses

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This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from April 15, 2022 to May 15, 2022, retyped for readability. A Caltrans response follows each comment presented.

**Comment from:** Jackson Hurst

I have reviewed the Draft Environmental Document for Caltrans Swamp Rodent Culverts Project. I approve and support the build alternative because the build alternative will replace 2 failed culverts under CA 178 at PM 72.70 and 72.79 with culverts that are up to current design standards which will improve safety along CA 178.

**Response:** Thank you for your input on the Swamp Rodent Culverts Project.

## **List of Technical Studies Vol 2 (bound separately and available upon request)**

Air, Noise, Hazardous Waste, Water Quality and Paleontology Study Memo. Caltrans, March 7, 2022

Climate Change Analysis: Swamp Rodent Culverts. Caltrans, April 4, 2022

Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts). Caltrans, March 15, 2022

Section 106 Cultural Resources Screening Memo. Caltrans, March 15, 2022

To obtain a copy of one or more of these technical studies/reports or the Initial Study, please send your request to:

Kristopher Bason  
District 9 Environmental Division  
California Department of Transportation  
500 South Main Street  
Bishop, CA 93514  
Via e-mail: [Kristopher.Bason@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Kristopher.Bason@dot.ca.gov)  
Via phone: 760-784-4056

Please provide the following information in your request:

Swamp Rodent Culverts Project  
Kern County, CA  
District 9 – KER – 178 – PM 72.2/73.3  
EA/Project ID: 09-39090/0921000051