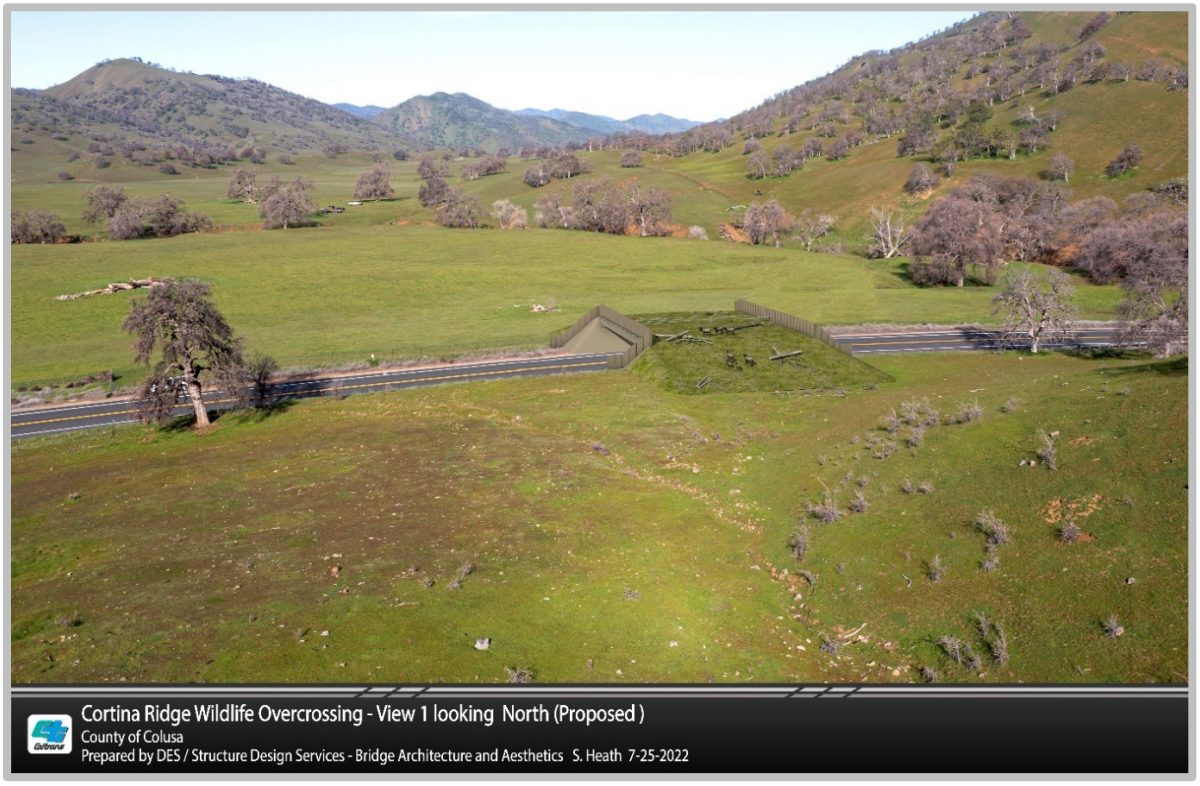
CORTINA RIDGE SAWATO KAMITLITARRO (ELK CROSSING) PROJECT

COLUSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
DISTRICT 3– STATE ROUTE 20 (POST MILE 10.07)

INITIAL STUDY
WITH (PROPOSED) NEGATIVE DECLARATION



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

August, 2022

General Information About This Document

What is in this document?

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has prepared this Initial Study with proposed Negative Declaration (IS/ND) which examines the potential environmental effects of a proposed project on State Route 20 in Colusa County, California. Caltrans *is* the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This document tells you why the project is being proposed, how the existing environment could be affected by the project, the potential impacts of the project, and proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures, and the intent of Caltrans to adopt a Negative Declaration.

What should you do?

- Please read this document.
- Additional copies of this document and related technical studies are available for review at:
    - Caltrans District 03 Office: 703 B Street, Marysville, CA 95901
    - Colusa County Administrative Office: 547 Market St STE 102, Colusa, CA 95932
    - The City of Williams: City Hall: 810 E St, Williams, CA 95987
- We'd like to hear what you think. If you have any comments about the proposed project, please send your written comments to Caltrans by the deadline.
- Please send comments via U.S. mail to:

  California Department of Transportation
  Attention: Michael Ferrini
  North Region Environmental–District 3
  703 B Street
  Marysville, CA 95901
- Send comments via e-mail to: michael.ferrini@dot.ca.gov
- Be sure to send comments by the deadline: ***September 16, 2022***

What happens after this?

After comments are received from the public and reviewing agencies, Caltrans may (1) give environmental approval to the proposed project, (2) do additional environmental studies, or (3) abandon the project. If the project is given environmental approval and funding is obtained, Caltrans could complete the design and construct all or part of the project.

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document is available in Braille, in large print, or in digital format. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please write to Caltrans, Attention: Michael Ferrini, North Region Environmental-District 3, 703 B Street, Marysville, CA 95901; via e-mail to michael.ferrini@dot.ca.gov, or use the California Relay Service TTY number, 711 or 1-800-735-2929.

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COLUSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
DISTRICT 3 –STATE ROUTE 20 (POST MILE 10.07)

INITIAL STUDY WITH (PROPOSED) NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Submitted Pursuant to: Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

08/11/2022
Date of Approval

Mike Bartlett

Mike Bartlett, Office Chief
North Region Environmental – District 3
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

The following person may be contacted for more information about this document:

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703 B Street, Marysville CA 95901
michael.ferrini@dot.ca.gov
or use the California Relay Service TTY number, 711 or 1-800-735-292.

(PROPOSED) NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Pursuant to: Division 13, California Public Resources Code

SCH Number: *TBD*

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to build a wildlife overcrossing on State Route 20 in Colusa County at Post Mile 10.07.

Determination

This proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is included to give notice to interested agencies and the public that it is Caltrans' intent to adopt an ND for this project. This does not mean that Caltrans' decision regarding the project is final. This ND is subject to change based on comments received by interested agencies and the public.

Caltrans has prepared an Initial Study for this project and, pending public review, expects to determine from this study that the proposed project would not have a significant impact on the environment for the following reasons:

This project would have *No Effect* on:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Biological Environment

Mike Bartlett

Mike Bartlett, Office Chief
North Region Environmental – District 3
California Department of Transportation

8/11/2022

Date

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LIST OF ABBREVIATED TERMS

Abbreviation	Description
BMPs	Best Management Practices
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CH_4	methane
CIA	Cumulative Impact Analysis
CWA	Clean Water Act
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESA(s)	Environmentally Sensitive Area(s)
ESL	Environmental Study Limits
ESU	Evolutionarily Significant Unit
FED	Final Environmental Document
FESA	Federal Endangered Species Act
GHG	greenhouse gas
HVF	High-Visibility Fencing
IS	Initial Study
IS/MND	Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
ND	Negative Declaration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NES	Natural Environment Study
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
O_3	ozone
OHWM	ordinary high water mark
PM(s)	post mile(s)
Porter-Cologne Act	Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act
PRC	Public Resources Code
SHS	State Highway System

Abbreviation	Description
SR	State Route
TMP	Transportation Management Plan
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
WDRs	Waste Discharge Requirements
WQAR	Water Quality Assessment Report
WQOs	Water Quality Objectives

Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Project History

Tule Elk are a native sub species of elk in California, historically ranging from the grasslands and marshlands of the Central Valley to the grassy hills on the coast and coastal inland. Much of the coastal inland and southern inland area is the ancestral home to Wintun Nation (Patwin) people known to inhabit this region since 500 AD. One of several ranges in Northern California is the Southern Patwin range, now referred to as the Cache Creek/Bear Valley/Cortina Ridge region of Yolo, Lake and Colusa Counties. It is the ancestral lands of the Yocha Dehe, Cachil Dehe and Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation people.

This region is long known by native peoples to support large herds of Tule Elk prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the late 18th century who introduced cattle and horses to the grasslands and coastal inland range of Northern California. Consequently, Tule Elk populations began to decline in population as domestic stock competed with native elk for resources and habitat. Also, during most of the 19th century, early settlers and ranchers engaged in unrestricted hunting which further reduced the herds to near extinction.

By the time elk hunting was banned by the California State Legislature in 1873, the tule elk were believed to be extinct.

Tule Elk Re-introduction 1922

The present Cache Creek Tule Elk herd is the result of a reintroduction effort of elk into their historical native range by the California Department of Fish and Game in 1922 *(Gary J. Ferrier and Edward C. Roberts 1973) "They [21 head of Tule Elk] were released on the Swanson Mountain Range in the vicinity of the present junction of State Highways 16 and 20, also commonly referred to as the Payne Ranch Meadow").* (*See Figure 5, Appendix A*) Payne Ranch Meadow falls on both sides of present-day State Route (SR) 20 at its junction of State Route (SR) 16 at the southernmost border of Colusa County. The range extends south into the Cache Creek Wilderness and north into the Bear Valley range with Cortina Ridge to the east parallel to Bear Valley.

In 1922 there were no road barriers in the rangeland based on historic road maps. Colusa County maintained a passable county road through the Bear Valley region near the southwest county border with Lake County (later to be annexed by the state in 1926) (*Figure 5, Appendix A*) at the present-day junction of SR 20 and SR 16.

Unimproved County Road Becomes a State Highway

In 1932, low-intermediate road improvements were made to the (now state annexed) county road by grading and broadcasting oil into the gravel-dirt base to control dust. This road would remain a "secondary road" as designated by the State Department of Public Works, Division of Highways, and largely unimproved.

In 1954, SR20 and SR16 became paved and standardized for express highway use. Standardized highway fencing was introduced at this time to keep range cattle and wildlife off the highway. After SR 20 was paved and standardized as a state highway, elk distribution in the range began to change drastically between 1956 and 1969 (*Figures 6 and 7, Appendix A*). This standardized state highway with fencing restricted movement through the herd's range. Historically (prior to the highway improvements), the Tule Elk forked off into subgroups and sub-herds, "*annually returning to Payne Ranch Meadow during the rut (mating) season* (*Ferrier/Roberts Jr. 1973*)." This 'annual return' would allow the sub-herds to mate with each other, thereby promoting genetic exchange between sub-herds and allowing the greater Tule elk population to maintain genetic diversity, which in turn promoted a healthy population and reduced the chances of extirpation.

Due to the restricted movement caused by the highway, the interaction and genetic exchange between sub-herds was reduced and is resulting in genetic isolation. In particular, the Cortina ridge sub-herd, and the primary focus of this project, was isolated to the east of Bear Valley and along the highway. Since its initial separation from the main population, this sub-herd has remained isolated and cut off for nearly 70 years.

Current Conditions

The Cortina Ridge sub-herd congregates at the northern end of Cortina Ridge near Salt Creek Canyon and has become genetically isolated and weakened from years of inbreeding. The area the sub-herd is limited to is bound by the highway on the west and north, and impassable fencing and other features on the south and east. While the habitat in its current state is suitable for the herd, future climate change and drought will degrade the suitability of the habitat through diminishing and limitation of resources needed to maintain a healthy population. Without the ability for the sub-herd to expand or shift their range, the pressure of climate change, worsening droughts, or natural disasters such as fires would further exacerbate the negative and deleterious nature of low genetic diversity.

Since the since major improvements made to the highway nearly 70 years ago, movements of the Cortina Ridge sub-herd are limited to rare individuals that manage to cross the highway (*CDFW, 2021 Collar Data, Figure 9, Appendix A*) and move into Bear Valley; however, the greater whole of the Cortina Ridge sub-herd remained largely cut off from the main herd at Cache Creek at Payne Ranch Meadow.

Consequent to the barrier "effect" of the highway, fragmentation of habitat has created a long-term negative and cumulative biological impact on animal movement across habitats and ranges. Genetic isolation has begun to occur (as measured by CDFW) over the long term as the sub herd continues to persist, and future effects of climate change, droughts, and potential fires present additional pressures on the sub-herd. As such, the likelihood of the sub-herd to persist decreases as time goes on. It is implicit that the decline and loss of this sub-herd through genetic isolation and overuse of habitat coupled with the effects of climate change would ultimately result in cumulative degradation of herd survivability.

Preserving and Reconnecting Habitat Across the Landscape

A Joint Effort

Reconnecting the habitat and the sub-herds is a long-standing joint effort by the United States Bureau of Land Management, the California State Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, and private landowners under wildlife conservation easements.

United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Beginning in 1972, the United States 93rd Congress Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife authorized the BLM to develop a habitat management plan for the Cache Creek Tule Elk (a population of 100 over 24,000 acres). By 1976, the Subcommittee passed a resolution which stated 2000 Tule Elk is an appropriate national goal and directed federal agencies to make federal lands available for the future preservation of Tule Elk. The Payne Ranch at SR 20 and SR 16 junction in Bear Valley was purchased in two separate acquisitions by the BLM in 1999 and in 2001. This 12,816-acre acquisition was critical in establishing habitat in the Bear Valley range. It is part of the Cache Creek Wilderness and the greater 71,000 acres of Cache Creek Natural Area designated by United States Congress under the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act of 2006 and protected under the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Bear Creek at Payne Ranch drains through Thompson, Craig, Eula and Brophy Canyons; in addition, there are 17 stock ponds located on the ranch. The Payne Meadow Ranch provides prime Tule Elk habitat for the Cache Creek herd and its sub-herds and is held as public lands. This land supports estimated (roughly) between 300 and 375 elk as the main Cache Creek herd with outlying sub herds bringing the total population of the coastal inland Tule Elk to roughly 523, as of January 2021. The land at Payne Ranch is considered to be critical habitat supporting the greater range of the Cache Creek herd into Bear Valley.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF)

Leveraging BLM's successful land management program, the CDFW and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) stakeholder RMEF came together to establish wildlife conservation easements in trust with local landowners. Bear Valley Ranch LLC and Keegan Ranch entered into the CDFW Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) program and placed their land under two wildlife conservation easements that extended the Tule Elk range through Bear Valley and Cortina Ridge. Following these conservation efforts, CDFW conducted studies to determine Tule Elk movement in their range and to measure genetic diversity. Additional information regarding these studies is explained in the section for CDFW below.

With the barrier being caused by highway 20, land conservation and the reestablishment of connectivity over the highway to reconnect the fragmented landscape surfaced as one of the priorities for the recovery and management of the larger Cache Creek herd. A wildlife overcrossing location (the proposed project location) was identified as a prime candidate for Tule Elk migration from the Cortina Ridge sub herd. In parallel with the efforts to reconnect the habitat across the highway right of way, CDFW and landowners are working on a third wildlife conservation easement. This wildlife conservation easement will be the third conservation easement to be held by the RMEF in trust for the landowners at Mitchell Ranch, Bear Valley Ranch LLC, and Keegan Ranch.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

In 2016, the CDFW in partnership with UC Davis and the RMEF initiated an elk research project in the southern Bear Valley region between Cortina Ridge and Bear Valley. The purpose of the research was to evaluate Tule Elk movement in the range and its relation to the native elk population, and range-wide genetic analysis of the Cache Creek herd.

Individual elk from the Cortina Ridge sub-herd were collared and tracked along with fecal DNA collection in the Tule Elk range. The collaring data showed that none of the individual collared elk crossed the highway from Salt Creek Canyon into lower Bear Valley between Post Mile 3.4 and 12.4

since the beginning of data collection. Data showed Tule Elk congregating at the SR 20 road edge preventing elk from moving from the Cortina Ridge toward Bear Valley (*Figures 8 and 9, Appendix A*). With the genetic analysis conducted, CDFW concluded that the Cortina Ridge sub herd and the Antelope Valley sub-herd were becoming genetically separated along State Route 20, and that the highway was having a barrier effect on the entire Cache Creek range herd.

Proposition 68 and the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB)

California Proposition 68 (also the Natural Resources Bond or the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018) was a legislatively referred constitutional amendment that appeared on ballots in California in the June primary election in 2018. It was a $4.1 billion bond measure to fund parks, environmental projects, water infrastructure projects and flood protection measures throughout California.

Proposition 68, passed by California voters in June 2018, amended the Public Resources Code (PRC) to add, among other articles, Sections 80100(a)(3), 80110(c), 80132(a), 80132(c), 80132(e) and 80132(f), authorizing the Legislature to appropriate up to $275,000,000, as outlined below, to be administered by the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). The funds are to be used for projects that will result in enduring benefits and help meet the objectives of each separate allocation as identified in Proposition 68. In addition, all projects must provide at least one of the following benefits, as identified in WCB's Strategic Plan:

- Protected or enhanced biodiversity
- Climate change resiliency and connectivity
- Support of the State Wildlife Action Plan priority habitats
- Conserved or enhanced working landscapes
- Conserved or enhanced water-related projects
- Enhanced public access

Caltrans Grant Application

With the highway identified as a barrier to wildlife movement and genetic exchange between wildlife populations, in August 2020, Caltrans was approached by CDFW to consider an elk overcrossing structure as part of a planned safety and realignment transportation project in Salt Creek Canyon. Caltrans did not have available funds to complete such a structure as part of the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) allocation. Caltrans used the opportunity to apply for the Proposition 68 funds through the WCB in November 2021, for consideration of future funding to construct the wildlife overcrossing in Bear Valley.

Caltrans, in collaboration with CDFW identified a suitable location for a wildlife overcrossing based on habitat assessment and suitability, geotechnical and structural engineering site visits, draft cost estimates and draft design plans. Caltrans contributed significant support dollars toward the proposed project.

Caltrans is requesting approximately $9 million for continued support and construction costs from Prop 68 funds to complete the proposed project, pending a vote of funding approval from WCB in November 2022.

Results of the Combined Effort

When all these efforts are combined, including the connectivity of fragmented habitats across the highway right of way, not only will the sub-herds be reconnected to adequate habitat that will fit their needs but there will be improved gene flow and climate resiliency. The proposed project would increase the range of inland coastal Tule Elk habitat by over 100,0000 acres. It would also be a substantial, enduring direct and measurable contribution to the landscape-level ecological vision, and may reveal additional opportunities to enhance ecological uplift in the region.

1.2 Project Description

The Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), for the subject project:

Caltrans proposes to construct a wildlife overcrossing at Post Mile 10.07 on SR 20 in Colusa County as a dedicated overcrossing for Tule Elk between Cache Creek-Bear Valley and Cortina Ridge. (See *Figures 3 and 4, Appendix A for renderings of the overcrossing)*.

The structure will be a reinforced concrete pre-cast girder, 100 ft. x 100 ft. crossing structure over the existing highway. Wildlife fencing and jump outs will also be constructed to blend into the overcrossing to further facilitate elk use of the overcrossing.

The overcrossing will span approximately 100 feet southeast to northwest over the state highway with 5:1 ratio earthen slope ramp on both sides. The structure will be flanked by visual low glare fencing with a cattle barrier centered upon the structure. The cattle barrier would be removable for the landowners on both sides to move range cattle as needed. The berms and side slope would allow elk to move quickly onto the overcrossing. Dead wood features and sparse landscaping will ensure no overgrowth occurs on the structure and keeps the structure from ongoing vegetation maintenance. This also provides a clear line of sight and positive sensory continuity to invite elk to the other side of the overcrossing. The structure will be designed for positive drainage, integrating existing ephemeral storm drainage from the natural environment.

The structure will be part of the Caltrans highway right of way and will tie into adjacent property on either side. Both properties, which are adjacent to the right of way would be protected under wildlife conservation easements obtained by CDFW to be held in trust by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for the landowners.

The bridge structure itself will be added to the Caltrans bridge and overcrossing inventory and maintained by Caltrans Maintenance Division. Caltrans Environmental and CDFW will conduct monitoring for wildlife habituation.

1.3 Project Objective

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed project is to advance the cooperative, landscape-level effort to conserve and connect historically fragmented habitat within the Cache Creek Tule elk herd and other wildlife species by providing passage across Highway 20. The proposed project will meet the needs of the elk by promoting genetic exchange between sub-herds and allowing elk to expand and shift their range in the face of climate change. The project will be funded through Proposition 68 funding and will enhance a wildlife migration corridor, provide greater wildlife and landscape connectivity, and promote ecological uplift and the preservation of natural resources. The proposed project would increase the range of inland coastal Tule Elk habitat by over 100,0000 acres (170 sq. miles) and provide Tule Elk access to the greater Bear Valley and Antelope Valley range.

Need

The historic development of the highway system through the Bear Valley range and Salt Creek watershed has bisected the Cache Creek–Cortina Ridge Tule elk herds in the Bear Valley range. Over time, and since the highway system development in the area, this sub-herd has become isolated.

Unaddressed connectivity and fragmentation issues can have cascading ecosystem effects (Noss et al. 2006) and due to the long ecological response times, the full effect can often go unnoticed for many years (Jaeger 2015; Tillman et al. 1994). Following the development of Highway 20 in 1954, historical observations in1969 showed that the main herd and sub-herds became separated and were no longer able to access the same habitat they were previously able to. Further studies in 2021, including elk GPS collaring data and genetic materials sampling confirmed that the current sub-herds remain isolated. Though the Cortina Ridge sub-herd has not reached the point of catastrophic die-off, the CDFW studies highlight the long-term effects currently in process.

Travis (2003) denotes that habitat loss and fragmentation coupled together with climate change are the two greatest threats to biodiversity worldwide. The Cortina Ridge sub-herd requires adequate means to shift its range in the face of climate change, drought, and potential wildfires.

Multiple stakeholders including the United States Bureau of Land Management, The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) stakeholder RMEF, tribal elders, and private property owners have made significant and ongoing investments in land management, land acquisition, and conservation. One of the remaining pieces to this landscape-level plan to grow and maintain a resilient and diverse Cache Creek Elk herd is a wildlife passage across the state highway system.

In addition, movement through the landscape is needed as artificial wildlife restraint leads to grazing conflicts as well as over-grazing and habitat degradation, all of which leads to depredation complaints.

Project Location

The project location is in the coastal inland range located approximately 60 miles northwest of Sacramento and 10 miles northeast of Clear Lake, in Colusa County, 11.3 miles due west of Williams, and 32.7 miles north of Brooks, California. The Postmile location is at 10.07 along State Route 20.

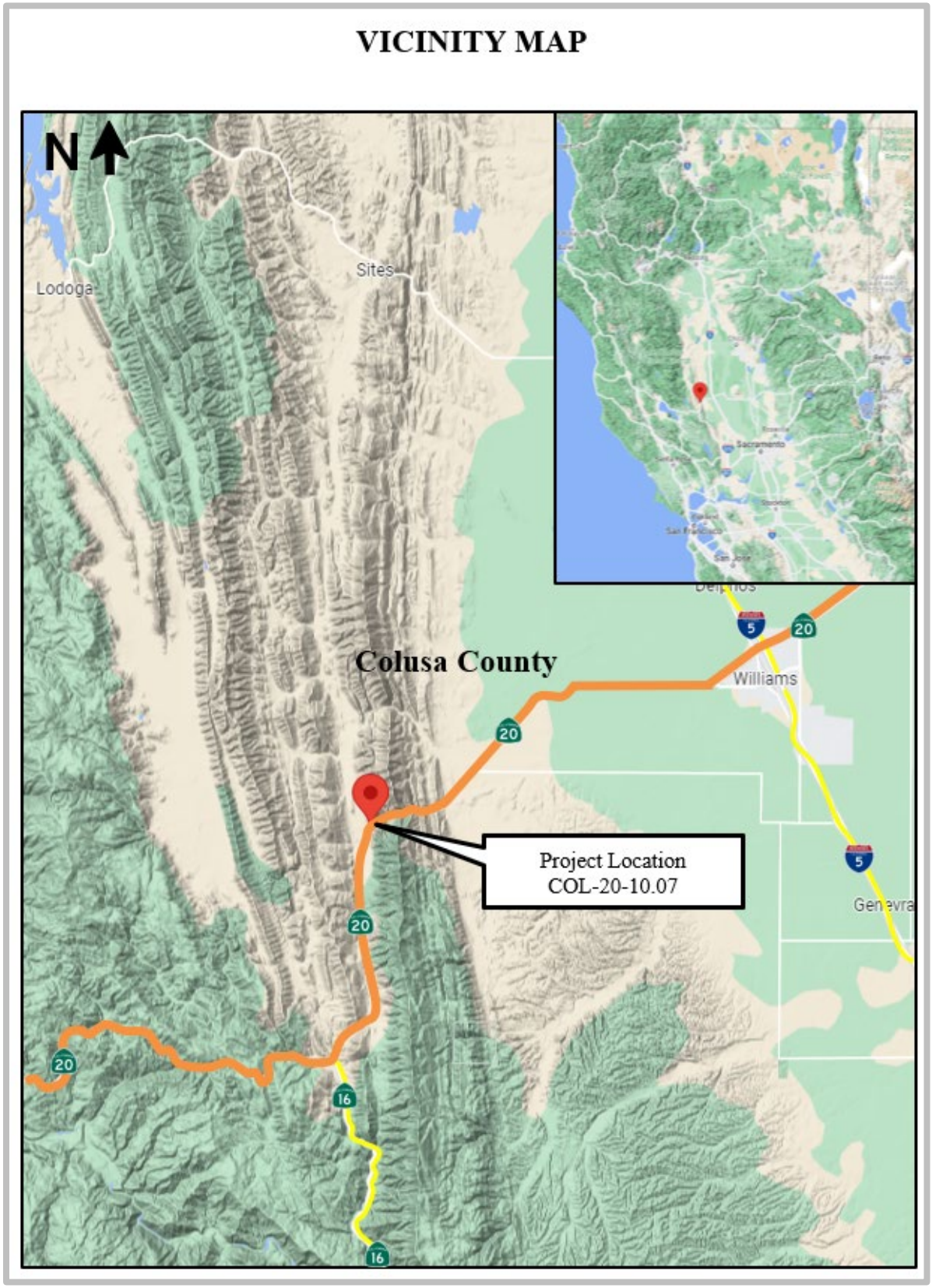

Figure 1. Project Location Vicinity Map

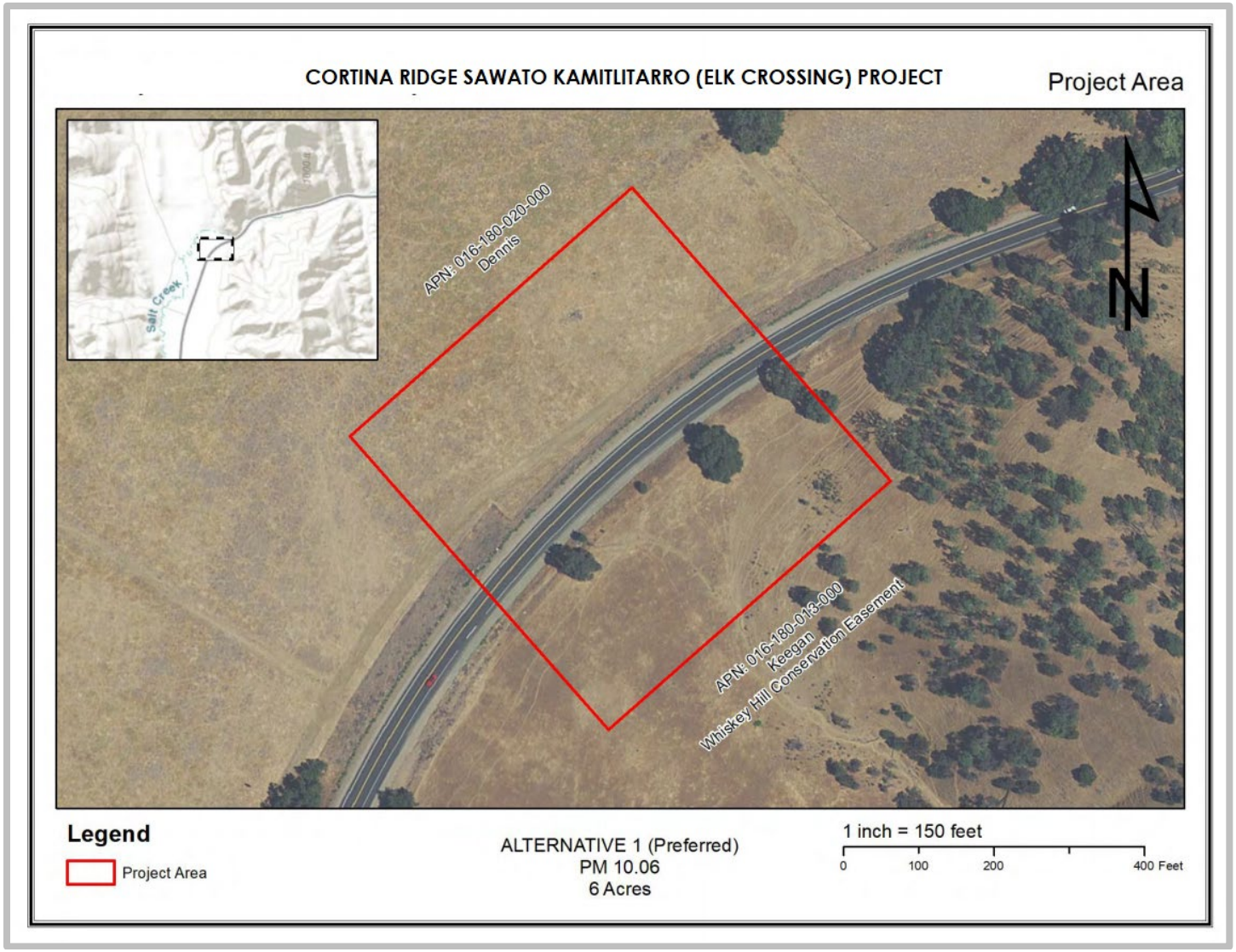

Figure 2. Project Location Map Detail with Project Area and Environmental Study Limit (in red)

No-Build Alternative

This alternative would maintain the facility in its current condition and would not meet the purpose and need of the project. For each potential impact area discussed in Chapter 2, the No-Build alternative has been determined to have no impact. Under the No-Build alternative, no alterations to the existing conditions would occur and the proposed improvements would not be implemented.

General Plan Description, Zoning, Surrounding Land Uses and Right of Way

The proposed project is consistent with the Colusa County General Plan 2030 and does not conflict with any designated land use and zoning under the Agricultural Element portion of the General Plan or any other section of the General Plan. The primary goal in the General Plan under the agricultural element is to protect and preserve agricultural land. There are no tree removal ordinances in Colusa County that apply to Valley or Blue Oak. The project location is situated within hundreds of thousands of open rangelands primarily designated and used for cattle grazing. The land in the Bear Valley range is protected either under existing wildlife conservation easements and/or the Williamson Act or both. The project itself proposes to acquire 1.25 acres for the purpose of building the overcrossing structure. However, the 1.25 acres of right of way acquisition would not be converted to any other use and thereby remain primarily agricultural and protected under a wildlife conservation easement, thereby ensuring protection from uses outside the General Plan designation for agricultural use.

1.4 Permits and Approvals Needed

No special permits are anticipated outside of the standard permits in place under the Provisions of the Caltrans Statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit (Order 2012-0011-DWQ) as amended by subsequent orders, which became effective July 1, 2013, for projects that result in a land disturbance of one acre or more, and the Construction General Permit (Order 2009-0009-DWQ).

1.5 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Alternatives

Under CEQA, "mitigation" is defined as avoiding, minimizing, rectifying, reducing/eliminating, and compensating for an impact. In contrast, Standard Measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are prescriptive and sufficiently standardized to be generally applicable, and do not require special tailoring for a project. They are measures that typically result from laws, permits, agreements, guidelines, and resource management plans. For this reason, the measures and practices are not considered "mitigation" under CEQA; rather, they are included as part of the project description in environmental documents.

Aesthetics Resources

AR-1: Aesthetic treatment to the bridges/guardrails/retaining walls would be included, such as tribal patterns, to address context sensitivity.

AR-2: Temporary access roads, construction easements, and staging areas that were previously vegetated would be restored to a natural contour and revegetated with regionally appropriate native vegetation.

AR-4: Where feasible, construction lighting would be limited to within the area of work.

AR-5: Where feasible, the removal of established trees and vegetation would be minimized. Environmentally sensitive areas would have Temporary High Visibility Fencing (THVF) installed before start of construction to demarcate areas where vegetation would be preserved, and root systems of trees protected.

Biological Resources

BR-1: General

Before start of work, as required by permit or consultation conditions, a Caltrans biologist or ECL would meet with the contractor to brief them on environmental permit conditions, if

required/necessary and requirements relative to each stage of the proposed project, including, but not limited to, work windows, drilling site management, and how to identify and report regulated species within the project areas.

BR-3: Invasive Species

Invasive non-native species control would be implemented. Measures would include:

A. Straw, straw bales, seed, mulch, or other material used for erosion control or landscaping which would be free of noxious weed seed and propagules.

B. All equipment would be thoroughly cleaned of all dirt and vegetation prior to entering the job site to prevent importing invasive non-native species.

BR-4: Plant Species, Sensitive Natural Communities, and ESHA

A. Seasonally appropriate, pre-construction surveys for sensitive plant species would be completed (or updated) by a qualified biologist prior to construction in accordance with Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities (CDFW 2018).

B. Prior to the start of work, Temporary High Visibility Fencing (THVF) and/or flagging would be installed around sensitive natural communities, environmentally sensitive habitat areas, rare plant occurrences, intermittent streams, and wetlands and other waters, where appropriate. No work would occur within fenced/flagged areas.

C. Where feasible, the structural root zone would be identified around each large-diameter tree (>2-foot DBH) directly adjacent to project activities, and work within the zone would be limited.

Cultural Resources

CR-1: Caltrans would coordinate with the **Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation** and incorporate measures to protect tribal resources, including potential work windows associated with tribal ceremonies.

Geology, Seismic/Topography, and Paleontology

GS-1: The project would be designed to minimize slope failure, settlement, and erosion using recommended construction techniques and Best Management Practices (BMPs). New earthen slopes would be vegetated to reduce erosion potential.

GS2: In the unlikely event that paleontological resources (fossils) are encountered, all work within a 60-foot radius of the discovery would stop, the area would be secured, and the work would not resume until appropriate measures are taken.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

GHG-1: Caltrans Standard Specification "Air Quality" requires compliance by the contractor with all applicable laws and regulations related to air quality.

GHG-2: Compliance with Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations, which includes restricting idling of diesel-fueled commercial motor vehicles and equipment with gross weight ratings of greater than 10,000 pounds to no more than 5 minutes.

GHG-3: Caltrans Standard Specification "Emissions Reduction" ensures that construction activities adhere to the most recent emissions reduction regulations mandated by the California Air Resource Board (CARB).

GHG-4: Use of a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) to minimize vehicle delays and idling emissions. As part of this, construction traffic would be scheduled and routed to reduce congestion and related

air quality impacts caused by idling vehicles along the highway during peak travel times.

GHG-5: All areas temporarily disturbed during construction would be revegetated with appropriate native species. Landscaping reduces surface warming and, through photosynthesis, decreases CO_2. This replanting would help offset any potential CO_2 emissions increase.

Hydrology and Floodplain

HF-1: The proposed wildlife overcrossing would maintain elevation above the ordinary high water-mark (OHWM) and no structures would be placed which would result in a substantial backflow during a flood event.

Traffic and Transportation

TT-3: A Transportation Management Plan (TMP) would be applied to the project.

Utilities and Emergency Services

UE-1: All emergency response agencies in the project area would be notified of the project construction schedule and would have access to State Route 20 throughout the construction period.

Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff

WQ-1: The project would comply with the Provisions of the Caltrans Statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit (Order 2012-0011-DWQ) as amended by subsequent orders, which became effective July 1, 2013, for projects that result in a land disturbance of one acre or more, and the Construction General Permit (Order 2009-0009-DWQ).

Before any ground-disturbing activities, the contractor would prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) (per the Construction General Permit Order 2009-0009-DWQ) or Water Pollution Control

Program (WPCP) (projects that result in a land disturbance of less than one acre), that includes erosion control measures and construction waste containment measures to protect waters of the State during project construction.

The SWPPP or WPCP would identify the sources of pollutants that may affect the quality of stormwater; include construction site Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control sedimentation, erosion, and potential chemical pollutants; provide for construction materials management; include non-stormwater BMPs; and include routine inspections and a monitoring and reporting plan. All construction site BMPs would follow the latest edition of the *Caltrans Storm Water Quality Handbooks: Construction Site BMPs Manual* to control and reduce the impacts of construction-related activities, materials, and pollutants on the watershed.

The project SWPPP or WPCP would be continuously updated to adapt to changing site conditions during the construction phase.

Construction may require one or more of the following temporary construction site BMPs: (only include those relevant to the project)

- Any spills or leaks from construction equipment (i.e., fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, and grease) would be cleaned up in accordance with applicable local, state, and/or federal regulations.
- Accumulated stormwater, groundwater, or surface water from excavations or temporary containment facilities would be removed by dewatering.
- Water generated from the dewatering operations would be discharged on-site for dust control and/or to an infiltration basin or disposed of offsite.
- Temporary sediment control and soil stabilization devices would be installed.

- Existing vegetated areas would be maintained to the maximum extent practicable.
- Clearing, grubbing, and excavation would be limited to specific locations, as delineated on the plans, to maximize the preservation of existing vegetation.
- Vegetation reestablishment or other stabilization measures would be implemented on disturbed soil areas, per the Erosion Control Plan.
- Soil disturbing work would be limited during the rainy season.

WQ-2: The project would incorporate pollution prevention and design measures consistent with the *2016 Caltrans Storm Water Management Plan*. This plan complies with the requirements of the Caltrans Statewide NPDES Permit (Order 2012-0011-DWQ) as amended by subsequent orders.

The project design may include one or more of the following:

- Vegetated surfaces would feature native plants, and revegetation would use the seed mixture, mulch, tackifier, and fertilizer recommended in the Erosion Control Plan prepared for the project.
- Where possible, stormwater would be directed in such a way as to sheet flow across vegetated slopes, thus providing filtration of any potential pollutants.

1.6 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

This project is classified as a state only funded project. No federal land will be impacted, nor any federal permits anticipated. The project does not meet the federal nexus requirements for NEPA consideration.

Chapter 2 CEQA Environmental Checklist

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The environmental factors noted below would be potentially affected by this project. Please see the CEQA Checklist on the following pages for additional information.

Potential Impact Area	Impacted: Yes/No
Aesthetics	No
Agriculture and Forestry	No
Air Quality	No
Biological Resources	No
Cultural Resources	No
Energy	No
Geology and Soils	No
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	No
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	No
Hydrology and Water Quality	No
Land Use and Planning	No
Mineral Resources	No
Noise	No
Population and Housing	No
Public Services	No
Recreation	No
Transportation and Traffic	No
Tribal Cultural Resources	No
Utilities and Service Systems	No
Wildfire	No
Mandatory Findings of Significance	No

The CEQA Environmental Checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with the project will

indicate there are no impacts to a particular resource. A "No Impact" answer in the last column of the checklist reflects this determination. The words "significant" and "significance" used throughout the checklist and this document are only related to potential impacts pursuant to CEQA. The questions in the CEQA Environmental 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 as well as standard measures applied to all or most Caltrans projects (such as Best Management Practices [BMPs] and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions [Section 1.4]), are an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented in the checklist or document.

Project Impact Analysis Under CEQA

CEQA broadly defines "project" to include "*the whole of an action, which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment*" (14 CCR § 15378). Under CEQA, normally the baseline for environmental impact analysis consists of the existing conditions at the time the environmental studies began. However, it is important to choose the baseline that most meaningfully informs decision-makers and the public of the project's possible impacts. Where existing conditions change or fluctuate over time, and where necessary to provide the most accurate picture practically possible of the project's impacts, a lead agency may define existing conditions by referencing historic conditions, or conditions expected when the project becomes operational, or both, that are supported with substantial evidence. In addition, a lead agency may also use baselines consisting of both existing conditions and projected future conditions that are supported by reliable projections based on substantial evidence in the record. The CEQA Guidelines require a "statement of the objectives sought by the proposed project" (14 CCR § 15124(b)).

CEQA requires the identification of each potentially "significant effect on the environment" resulting from the action, and ways to mitigate each significant effect. Significance is defined as "*substantial or potentially substantial adverse change to any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project*" (14 CCR § 15382). CEQA determinations are made prior to and separate from the development of mitigation measures for the project.

The legal standard for determining the significance of impacts is whether a "fair argument" can be made that a "substantial adverse change in physical conditions" would occur. The fair argument must be backed by substantial evidence including facts, reasonable assumption predicated upon fact, or expert opinion supported by facts. Generally, an environmental professional with specific training in an area of environmental review can make this determination.

Though not required, CEQA suggests Lead Agencies adopt thresholds of significance, which define the level of effect above which the Lead Agency will consider impacts to be significant, and below which it will consider impacts to be less than significant. Given the size of California and its varied, diverse, and complex ecosystems, as a Lead Agency that encompasses the entire State, developing thresholds of significance on a state-wide basis has not been pursued by Caltrans. Rather, to ensure each resource is evaluated objectively, Caltrans analyzes potential resource impacts in the project area based on their location and the effect of the potential impact on the resource as a whole. For example, if a project has the potential to impact 0.10 acre of wetland in a watershed that has minimal development and contains thousands of acres of wetland, then a "less than significant" determination would be considered appropriate. In comparison, if 0.10 acre of wetland would be impacted that is located within a park in a city that only has 1.00 acre of total wetland, then the 0.10 acre of wetland impact could be considered "significant."

If the action may have a potentially significant effect on any environmental resource (even with mitigation measures implemented), then an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared. Under CEQA, the lead agency may adopt a negative declaration (ND) if there is no substantial

evidence that the project may have a potentially significant effect on the environment (14 CCR § 15070(a)). A proposed negative declaration must be circulated for public review, along with a document known as an Initial Study. CEQA allows for a "Mitigated Negative Declaration" in which mitigation measures are proposed to reduce potentially significant effects to less than significant (14 CCR § 15369.5).

Although the formulation of mitigation measures shall not be deferred until some future time, the specific details of a mitigation measure may be developed after project approval when it is impractical or infeasible to include those details during the project's environmental review. The lead agency must (1) commit itself to the mitigation, (2) adopt specific performance standards the mitigation will achieve, and (3) identify the type(s) of potential action(s) that can feasibly achieve that performance standard and that will be considered, analyzed, and potentially incorporated in the mitigation measure. Compliance with a regulatory permit or other similar processes may be identified as mitigation if compliance would result in implementation of measures that would be reasonably expected, based on substantial evidence in the record, to reduce the significant impact to the specified performance standards (§15126.4(a)(1)(B)).

Per CEQA, measures may also be adopted, but are not required, for environmental impacts that are not found to be significant (14 CCR § 15126.4(a)(3)). Under CEQA, mitigation is defined as avoiding, minimizing, rectifying, reducing, and compensating for any potential impacts (CEQA 15370). Regulatory agencies may require additional measures beyond those required for compliance with CEQA. Though not considered "mitigation" under CEQA, these measures are often referred to in an Initial Study as "mitigation", Good Stewardship or Best Management Practices. These measures can also be identified after the Initial Study/Negative Declaration is approved.

CEQA documents must consider direct and indirect impacts of a project (CAL. PUB. RES. CODE § 21065.3). They are to focus on significant impacts (14 CCR § 15126.2(a)). Impacts that are less than significant need only be briefly described (14 CCR § 15128). All potentially significant effects must be addressed.

No-Build Alternative

For each of the following CEQA Environmental Checklist questions, the "No-Build" alternative has been determined to have "No Impact". Under the "No-Build" alternative, no alterations to the existing conditions would occur and no proposed improvements would be implemented. The "No-Build" alternative will not be discussed further in this document.

2.1 Aesthetics

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?				✓
Would the project: b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project.

2.2 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; the Forest Legacy Assessment Project; and the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				✓
Would the project: c) Conflict with existing zoning or cause rezoning of forest land (as defined by 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))?				✓

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project.

2.3 Air Quality

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

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?				✓
Would the project: d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project, as well as the Air Quality Memo dated March 10, 2021.

2.4 Biological Resources

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: 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 NOAA Fisheries?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?				✓

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: 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?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project, as well as the Natural Environment Study (*Minimal Impacts*) dated April 5, 2021.

CEQA Conclusion

No Impact Determination Discussion

A biological Natural Environmental Study (NES) was documented November 15, 2021 and is available upon request per California Government Code §6250.

Within the project study area there is an unnamed runoff drainage stream on the Keegan Ranch property. Observations made during field reviews classify this stream as ephemeral, meaning it would only carry water during rain events and not for extended time periods. This stream is extremely small and shallow. The only indication that any water flows in some portions are miniscule erosional features and lack of vegetation. The width of the stream varies, but averages between one to two feet. Total area for this stream within the project location is approximately 1,200 square feet, or about 0.0275 acres.

It is anticipated the project will have no impact due to the location of the overcrossing and the ability to avoid the stream entirely. The ephemeral nature and size of the stream is avoidable and will not require more than standard protection BMP's. Protection BMPs on site are not considered

mitigation as they are standard special provisions under contract and construction.

No other protected plant or animal species were identified in the project area. See Appendix C for the updated species list.

2.5 Cultural Resources

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?				✓
Would the project: b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?				✓
Would the project: c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, location of the proposed project, and the Archeological Survey Report and Historical Property Survey Report dated March 2, 2021. This study is available upon request per California Government Code §6250.

Consultation letters were sent to the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, Cachil Dehe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of the Enterprise Rancheria, Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, Grindstone Rancheria of Wintun-Wailaki, and Kletsel Dehe Band of Wintun Indians. Only the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation requested continued consultation on this project.

2.6 Energy

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?				✓
Would the project: b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project and location of the proposed project.

2.7 Geology and Soils

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: 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.				✓
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?				✓
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?				✓
iv) Landslides?				✓
Would the project: b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?				✓
Would the project: 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 on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project.

A paleontological assessment of the proposed location was conducted and found to have no impact on any paleontological resources (*see **Section 2.5** above, Cultural Resources*).

A geology and soils report will be part of the Geotechnical Report generated during the investigative phase for the structural plot of the overcrossing. The "Geotech" unit of Caltrans will submit a drill plan to the project delivery team that will consider impacts to the project location. It should be noted that geotechnical activity is exempt under CEQA Section 15306.

No impacts were determined.

2.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?				✓
Would the project: b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?				✓

Traffic studies were *not* conducted for this proposed project due to the nature of the project being *wildlife centric and non-traffic related*. "No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project, as well as the Air Quality Memo dated March 10, 2021.

2.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
Would the project: g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project. Caltrans Environmental Engineering has screened the proposed project location for any hazardous waste impacts or concerns.

2.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?				✓
Would the project: b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?				✓
Would the project: 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 on- or off-site;				✓
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;				✓
(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				✓
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?				✓
Would the project: d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?				✓

Would the project: e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project, as well as the Water Quality Assessment report dated October 23, 2020. This study is available upon request per California Government Code §6250.

The construction of the wildlife overcrossing shall be in accordance with the State Water Resources Control Board, which issued Caltrans a Statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit (Order No. 2012-0011-DWQ, NPDES Permit No.CAS000003).

2.11 Land Use and Planning

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Physically divide an established community?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project, as well as the Colusa County General Plan 2030. The proposed project is consistent with the Land Use Designation and Zoning Districts section of the General Plan.

2.12 Mineral Resources

Question:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project.

2.13 Noise

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in: 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?				✓
Would the project result in: b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?				✓
Would the project result in: 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?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project, as well as the Noise Analysis Project Memo dated March 10, 2021. This study is available upon request per California Government Code §6250.

This project meets the criteria for a Type III project as defined in 23CFR772 and therefore does not require noise analysis.

2.14 Population and Housing

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: 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)?				✓
Would the project: b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project.

The proposed project is located in an area that is predominately open rangelands, chiefly designated and used for cattle grazing, and is protected under several wildlife conservation easements and the Williamson Act.

2.15 Public Services

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?				✓
Police protection?				✓
Schools?				✓
Parks?				✓
Other public facilities?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project. No public facilities or services would be impacted.

2.16 Recreation

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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) 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?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project.

2.17 Transportation

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?				✓
Would the project: b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?				✓
Would the project: c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?				✓
Would the project: d) Result in inadequate emergency access?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project. The proposed project is not a transportation project, and has no impact on VMT, public transportation elements, circulation, or emergency access. A Transportation Management Plan will be filed prior to construction to manage highway traffic during construction.

2.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code § 21074 as either a site, feature, place, or 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: 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 § 5020.1(k), or				✓
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 § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project, as well as the Archeological Study Report dated March 2, 2021.

Caltrans consulted with the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. The overcrossing was allowed to be named by the Wintun Nation and reflects the cultural heritage and language of the Tribe.

2.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project: a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities—the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?				✓
Would the project: b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: 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?				✓
Would the project: e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?				✓

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project.

2.20 Wildfire

Question	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
If located in or near State Responsibility Areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project: a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
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?				✓
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 may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?				✓
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?				✓

Senate Bill 1241 required the Office of Planning and Research, the Natural Resources Agency, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop amendments to the "CEQA Checklist" for the inclusion of questions related to fire hazard impacts for projects located on lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones. The 2018 updates to the CEQA Guidelines expanded this to include projects "near" these very high fire hazard severity zones.

"No Impact" determinations in this section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project.

2.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

Does the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) 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) Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means 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.)				✓
c) Have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?				✓

Discussion of Environmental Evaluation Question 2.21—Mandatory Findings of Significance

California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) when certain specific impacts may result from construction or implementation of a project. The analysis indicated the potential impacts associated with this project would not require an EIR. Mandatory Findings of Significance are not required for projects where an EIR has not been prepared.

2.22 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are those that result from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, combined with the potential impacts of this proposed project. A cumulative impact assessment looks at the collective impacts posed by individual land use plans and projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively substantial impacts taking place over a period of time (CEQA,§ 15355).

Cumulative impacts to resources may result from residential, commercial, industrial, and highway development, as well as from agricultural development and the conversion to more intensive agricultural cultivation. These land use activities can degrade habitat and species diversity through consequences such as displacement and fragmentation of habitats and populations, alteration of hydrology, contamination, erosion, sedimentation, disruption of migration corridors, changes in water quality, and introduction or promotion of predators. They can also contribute to potential community impacts identified for the project, such as changes in community character, traffic patterns, housing availability, and employment.

Per Section 15130 of CEQA, a Cumulative Impact Analysis (CIA) discussion is only required in "…situations where the cumulative effects are found to be significant." Given this, an EIR and CIA were not required for this project.

Chapter 3 Agency and Public Coordination

The following agencies, organizations, and individuals were consulted in the preparation of this environmental document.

- Josh Bush – CDFW Wildlife Biologist
- Kay-lee Barnitz – Bureau of Land Management
- Elizabeth Harper – Colusa County RCD
- Garrett Avant – Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Sara Holm – CDFW Wildlife Biologist
- Laverne Bill – Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation
- Isaac Baojorquez – Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation
- Sarah Morgan – Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation
- Michael Jones – UCCE: Lake County
- Billie Wilson – CDFW Senior Biologist
- Victoria Brandon – Lake County RCD
- Rebecca Wong – Berryessa Snow Mtn. Nat'l Monument

Coordination with Property Owners

Jim Keegan, Keegan Ranch

Jeanette Dennis and Lorilee Dennis-Neisen, Mitchell Ranch

Chapter 4 List of Preparers

The following individuals performed the environmental work on the project:

California Department of Transportation, District 3

Project Manager	Johny Tan, Project Engineer
Design Engineer	Socorro Urena, Senior Project Design Engineer
Design Engineer	Daniel Stiles, Lead Design Engineer
Right of Way	Karen Basra, Senior Right of Way Agent
Right of Way	Stacy Sannar, Right of Way Agent
Senior Environmental Planner	Robert Wall, Senior Environmental Planner/M2 Branch
Environmental Planner	Michael Ferrini, Environmental Coordinator
Environmental Specialist	Gregory Saiyo, Lead Biologist / Coordinator
Native American Liaison	Lisa Bright, Senior Cultural Specialist
Archeology	Connor Buitenhuys, Cultural Specialist
Environmental Engineering	Youngil Cho, Environmental Engineer
Structures Engineering	Ryan Stiltz, Structure Design Engineer
Structures/Design	Stephan Heath, Bridge Architect
Geotechnical Engineer	William Little, Geotechnical Investigations

Chapter 5 Distribution List

State Agencies

Name *California Wildlife Conservation Board*
Address Wildlife Conservation Board c/o CDFW
P.O. Box 944209
City Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Name *California Department of Fish and Wildlife*
Address 1416 9th St 12th Floor
City Sacramento, CA 95814

Name *Office of Planning and Research*
Address Online CEQA Document Submission
City Sacramento, CA

Regional/County/Local Agencies

Name City of Williams
Address 810 E St
City Williams, CA 95987

Name County of Colusa
Address 547 Market St STE 102
City Colusa, CA 95932

Name Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation
Address PO Box 18
City Brooks, CA 95606

Interested Groups, Organizations and Individuals

Name Jeanette Dennis, Dennis Family Trust
Address Confidential
City

Name Jim Keegan, Keegan Ranch
Address Confidential
City

Name Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Address 5705 Grant Creek
City Missoula, MT 59808

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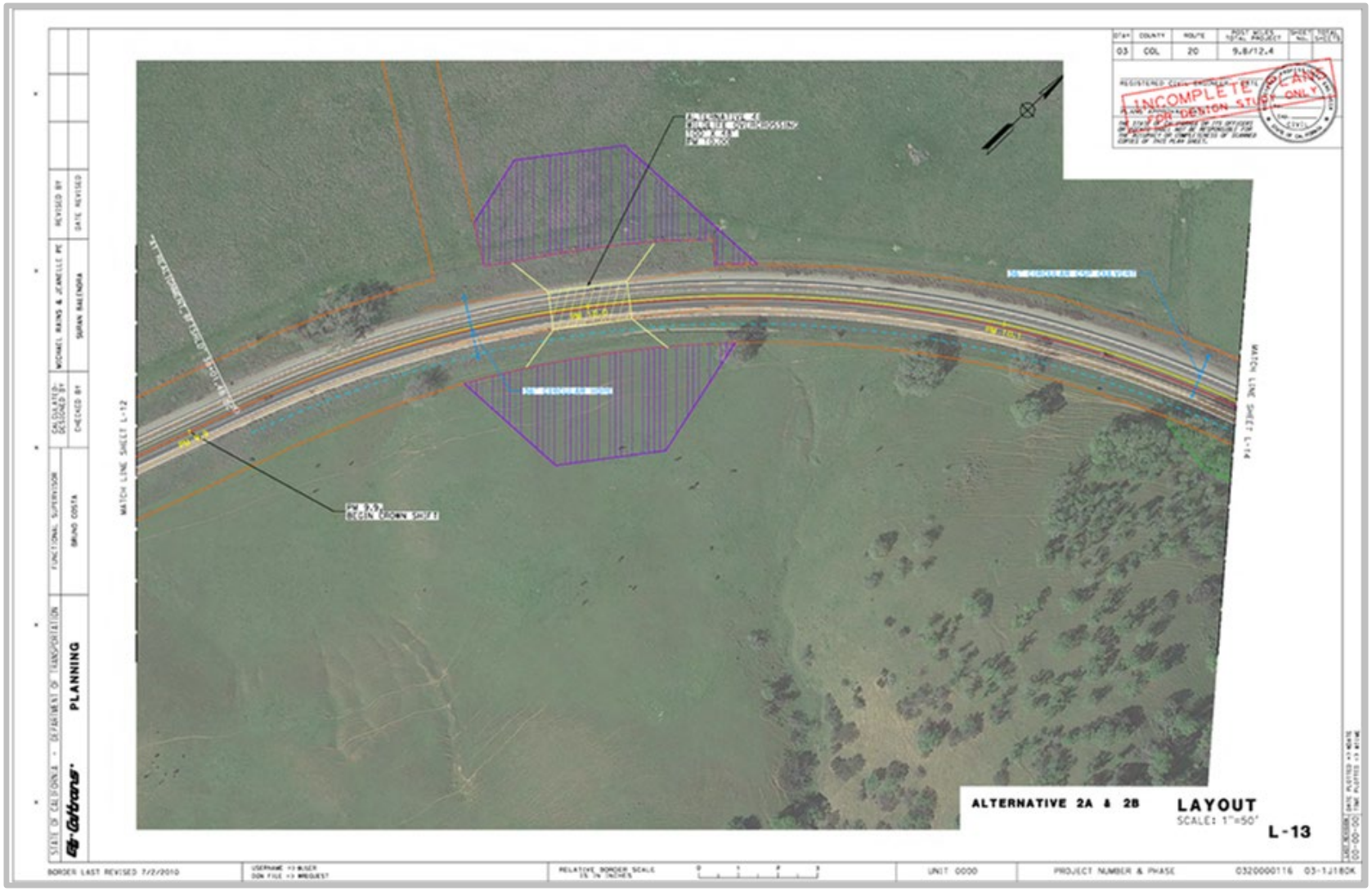
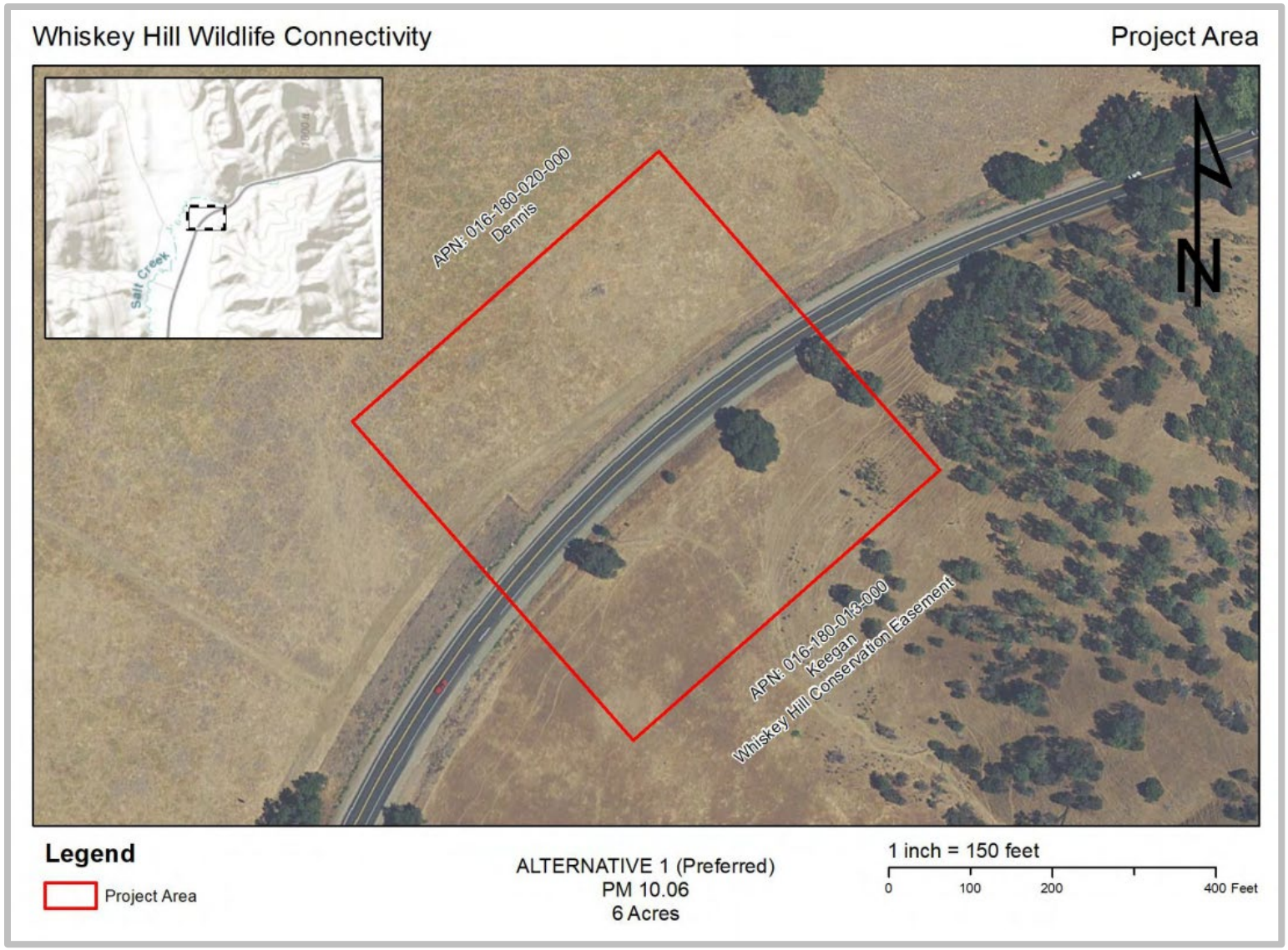
Appendix A Project Layouts and Figure Illustrations



Appendix Figure 1. Preliminary scoping map used at the beginning of the design phase. This shows the initial placement of the overcrossing to be used by Caltrans Structures & Design Team as a rough estimate location.

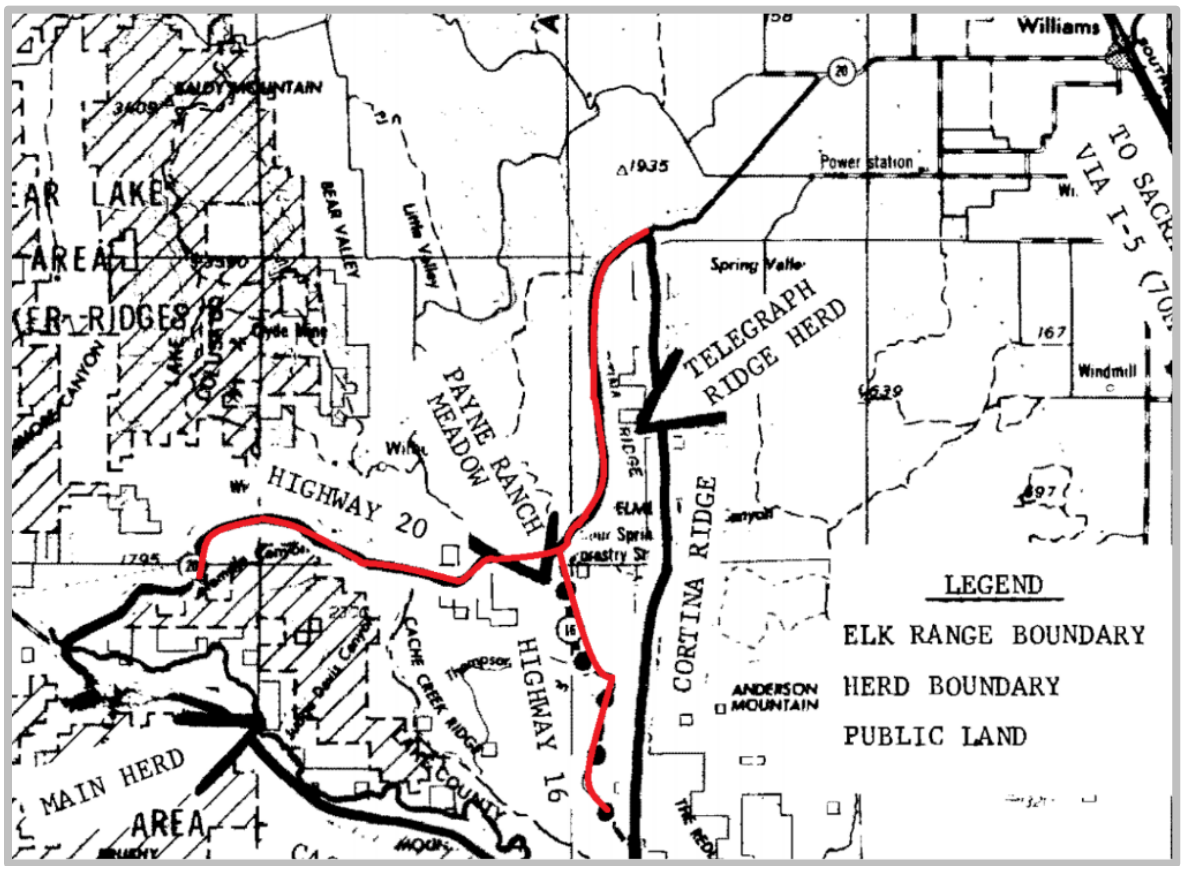


Appendix Figure 2. This overhead view shows the initial boundary (in red) of the Project Area and Environmental Study Limit

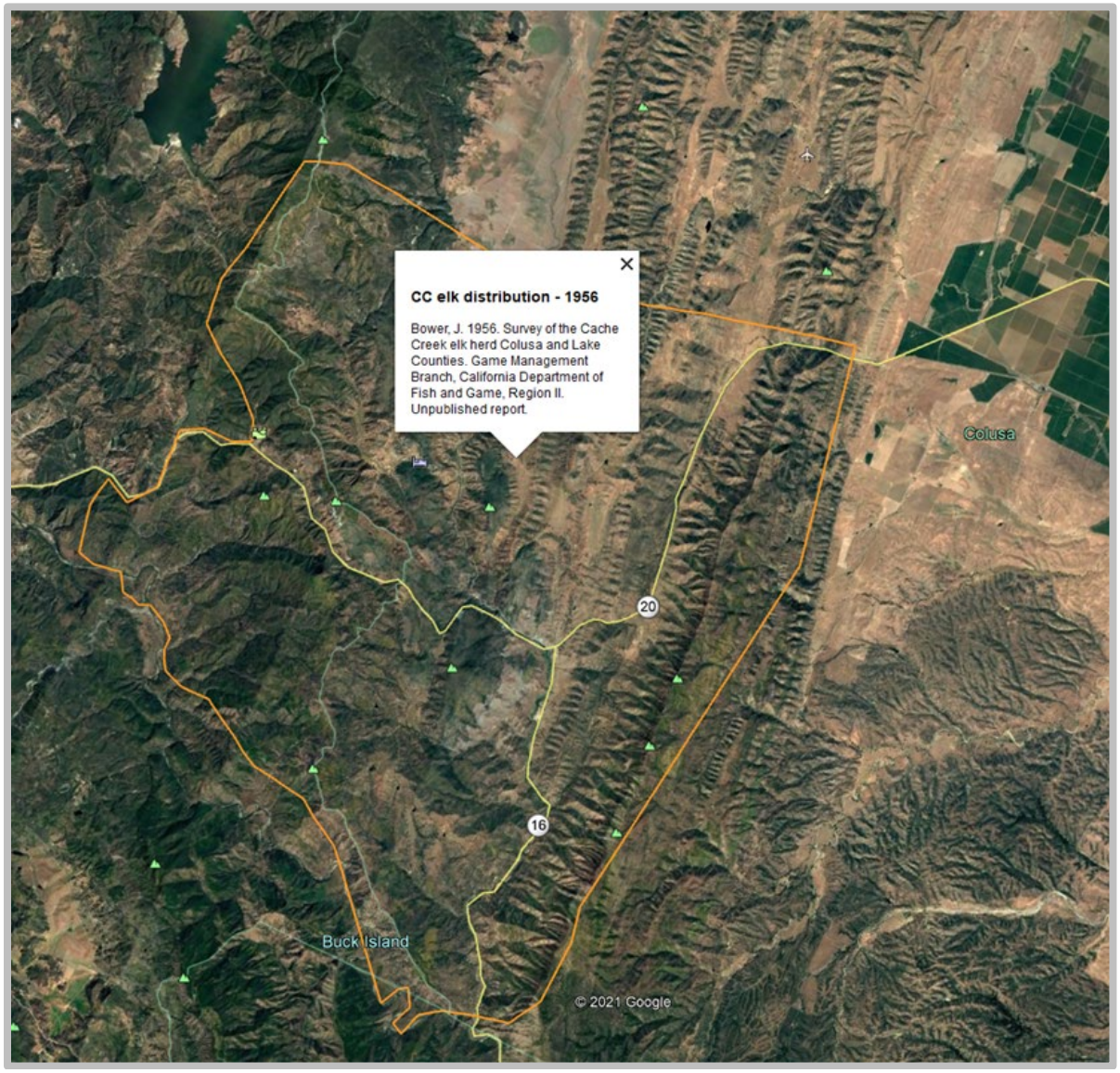
Appendix Figure 3. This illustration shows the virtual rendering of the completed overcrossing after elk habituation and use. This illustration is based on the actual location and design by the Structures and Design Team.

Appendix Figure 4. This illustration shows the motorist horizon view of the overcrossing from the highway on the approach to the structure

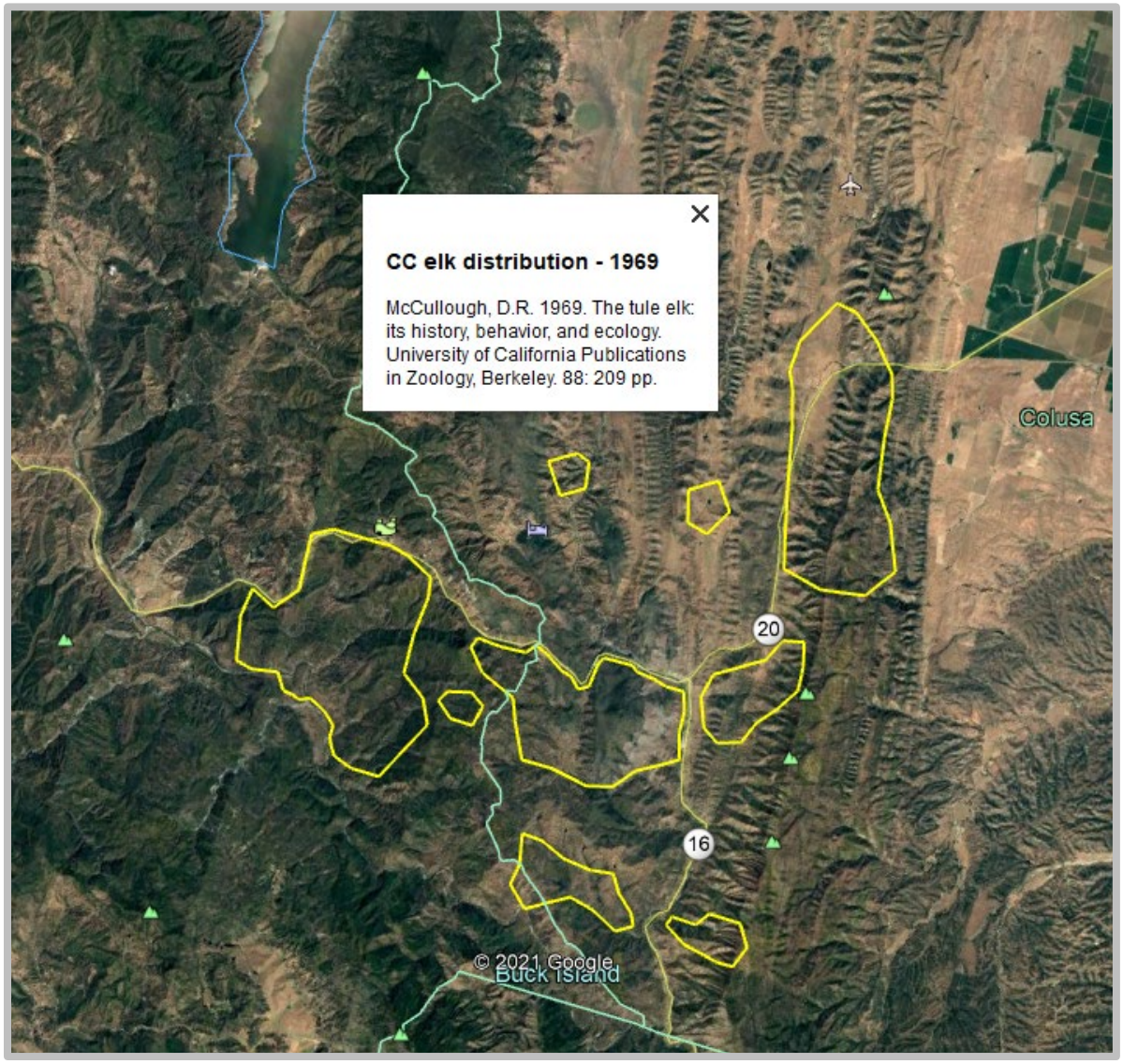
FIGURE ILLUSTRATIONS



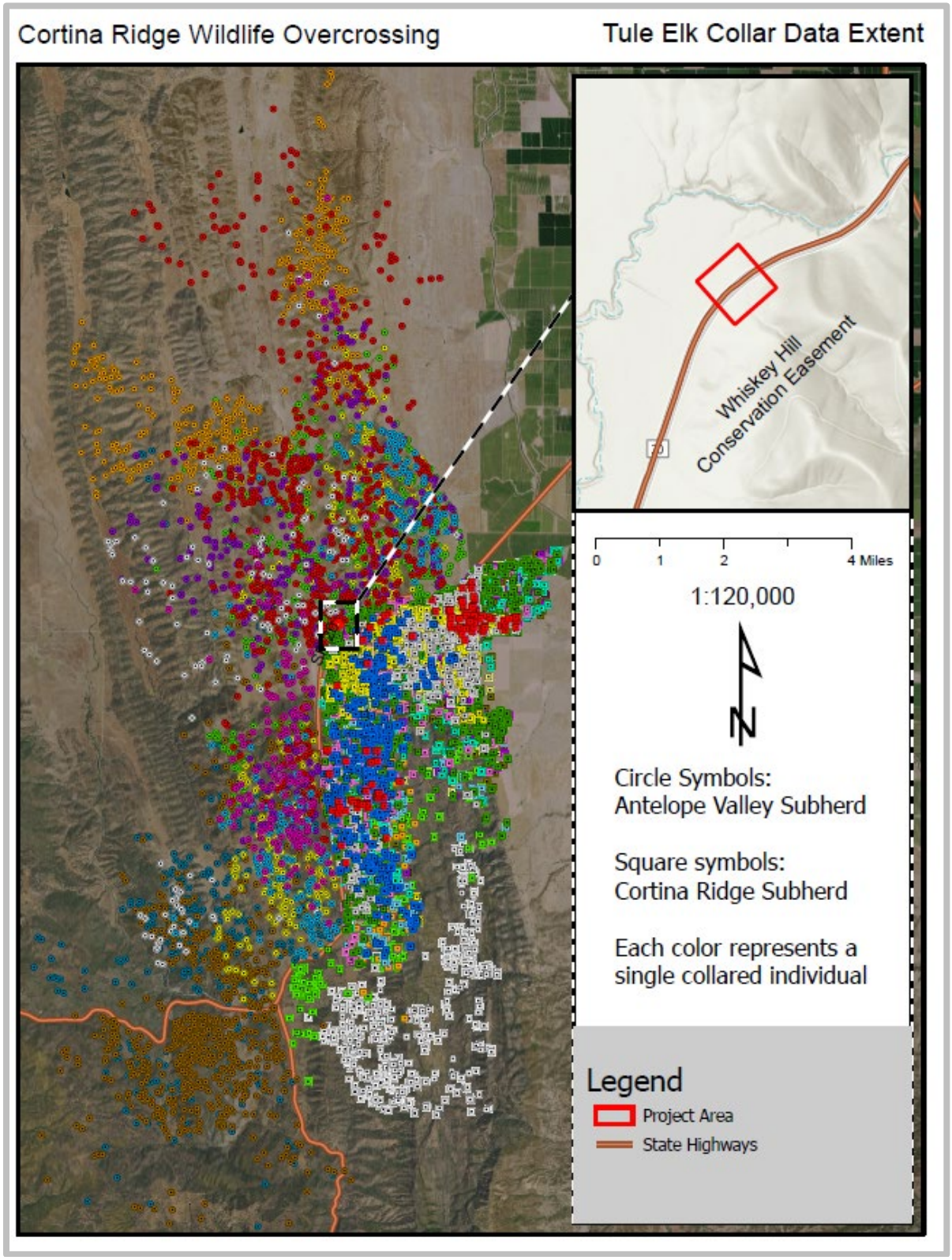
Appendix Figure 5. The Cache Creek Tule Elk Range at Payne Ranch Meadow, 1973 BLM, Ukiah. Red line (added) emphasizes the present junction of SR 20 and SR 16 and the trisected range. Note: Cortina Ridge to the west where the Telegraph Ridge Herd (Cortina Ridge sub herd)



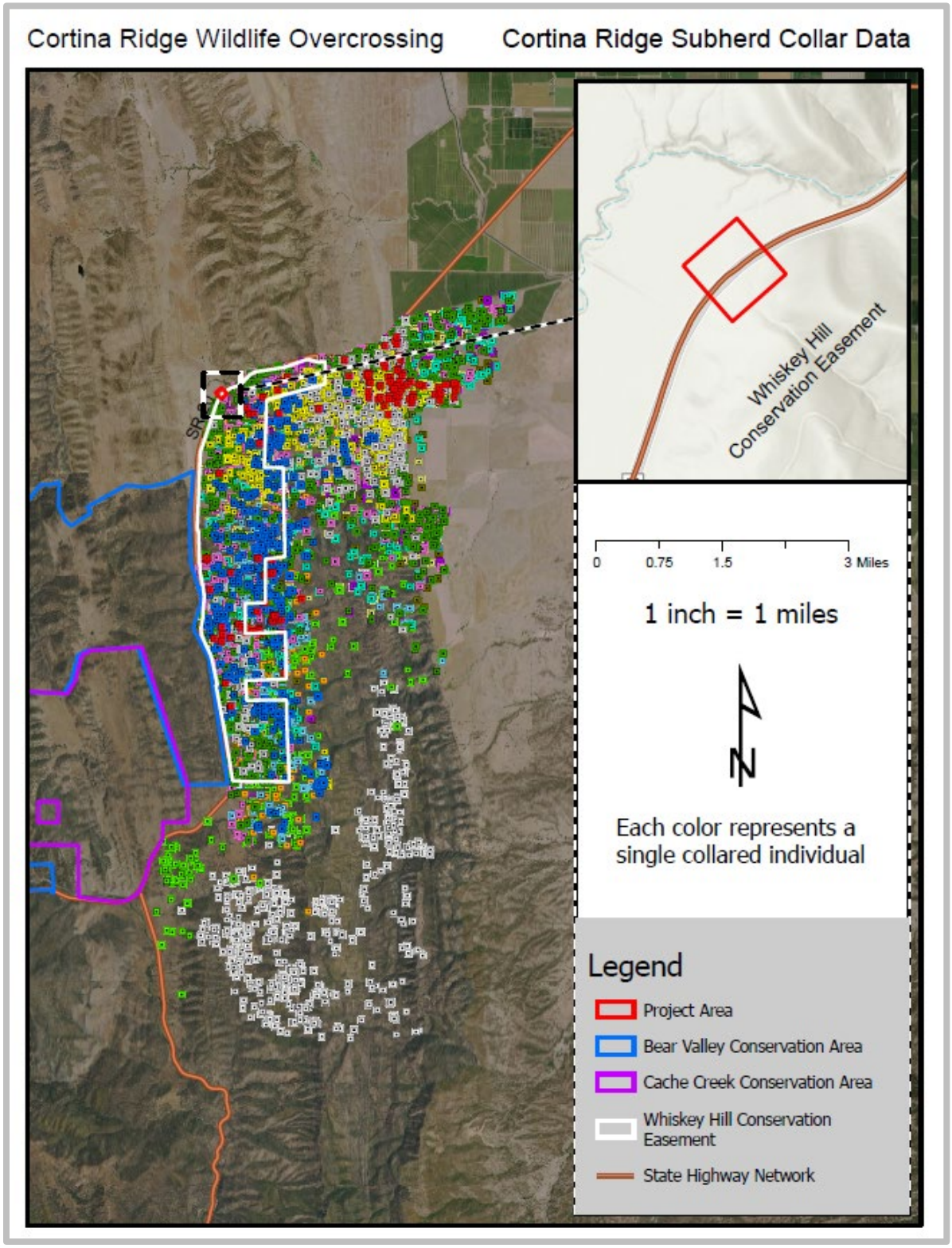
Appendix Figure 6. 1956 – Elk Distribution was primarily observed on the north, south sides of SR 20 and east and west sides of SR 16. Map provided by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW, 2021).



Appendix Figure 7. 1969 – Elk Distribution. Map provided by CDFW, 2021. This map illustrates herd collection on the east and south side of the highway following standardized paving and fencing in 1952.



Appendix Figure 8. CDFW genetic data for the Bear Valley range (CDFW, 2021). This map illustrates how genetic isolation follows the state highway.



Appendix Figure 9. Elk sub-herd movement (separation and collection) along west roadway along state route 20 shown by CDFW collar data (CDFW, 2021).

Appendix B Title VI Policy Statement

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY Gavin Newsom, Governor

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Making Conservation a California Way of Life.

August 2020

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 14th Street, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 95811; (916) 324-8379 (TTY 711); or at <Title.VI@dot.ca.gov>.

Original signed by
Toks Omishakin
Director

"Provide a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system to enhance California's economy and livability"

Appendix C CDFW Species List

Selected Elements by Scientific Name

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

California Natural Diversity Database

Query Criteria: Quad IS (Salt Canyon (3912213))

Species	Element Code	Federal Status	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank	Rare Plant Rank/CDFW SSC or FP
Amsinckia lunaris bent-flowered fiddleneck	PDBOR01070	None	None	G3	S3	1B.2
Astragalus rattanii var. jepsonianus Jepson's milk-vetch	PDFAB0F7E1	None	None	G4T3	S3	1B.2
Castilleja rubicundula var. rubicundula pink creamsacs	PDSCR0D482	None	None	G5T2	S2	1B.2
Centromadia parryi ssp. parryi pappose tarplant	PDAST4R0P2	None	None	G3T2	S2	1B.2
Extriplex joaquinana San Joaquin spearscale	PDCHE041F3	None	None	G2	S2	1B.2
Fritillaria pluriflora adobe-lily	PMLIL0V0F0	None	None	G2G3	S2S3	1B.2
Horkelia bolanderi Bolander's horkelia	PDROS0W011	None	None	G1	S1	1B.2
Navarretia nigelliformis ssp. radians shining navarretia	PDPLM0C0J2	None	None	G4T2	S2	1B.2
Rana boylii foothill yellow-legged frog	AAABH01050	None	Endangered	G3	S3	SSC
Sidalcea keckii Keck's checkerbloom	PDMAL110D0	Endangered	None	G2	S2	1B.1
Taxidea taxus American badger	AMAJF04010	None	None	G5	S3	SSC
Valley Needlegrass Grassland Valley Needlegrass Grassland	CTT42110CA	None	None	G3	S3.1	

Record Count: 12

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Report Printed on Wednesday, July 13, 2022 — **Information Expires 1/1/2023**

Appendix D Response to Comments

Reserved

Appendix E Caltrans – Wildlife Overcrossing Draft Grant Agreement

Reserved