Tulare 99 Culvert Rehabilitation

On State Route 99 from 0.8 mile north of the Avenue 152 Overcrossing to
0.7 mile south of Mendocino Avenue
06-TUL-99-PM 20.3-53.2
Project ID Number 0618000044
State Clearinghouse Number 2022080639

Initial Study
with Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2

Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

October 2022

Caltrans

General Information About This Document

Document prepared by: Rebecca Ashjian, Associate Environmental Planner

[The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The Initial Study circulated to the public for 32 days between August 30, 2022, and September 30, 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.

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State Clearinghouse Number 2022080639
06-TUL-99-PM 20.3-53.2
Project ID Number 0618000044

Drainage rehabilitation on State Route 99 from post miles 20.3 to 53.2 in Tulare County

INITIAL STUDY
with Negative Declaration

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation
and
Responsible Agency: California Transportation Commission

Jennifer H Taylor

Jennifer H. Taylor
Environmental Office Chief, District 6
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

10/19/2022

Date

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Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: 2022080639

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 06-TUL-99-PM 20.3-53.2

EA/Project Number: EA 06-0X250 and Project ID Number 0619000044

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to repair or replace 80 culverts at various locations along State Route 99 from 0.8 mile north of the Avenue 152 Overcrossing to 0.7 mile south of Mendocino Avenue.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans, District 6. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The project will have no effect on agriculture and forest resources, air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, land use and planning, mineral resources, transportation, utilities and service systems, aesthetics, population and housing, recreation, paleontology, noise, public services, and wildfire.

The project will have a less than significant effect on biological resources, greenhouse gas emissions, and hydrology and water quality.

Jennifer H Taylor

Jennifer H. Taylor
Environmental Office Chief, District 6
California Department of Transportation

10/19/2022

Date

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to repair or replace 80 culverts at various locations along State Route 99 from 0.8 mile north of the Avenue 152 Overcrossing to 0.7 mile south of Mendocino Avenue. Figure 1-1 shows the project vicinity map, and Figure 1-2 shows the project location map.

This segment of State Route 99 is a four-to-six-lane freeway with interchange connections at State Route 137 and State Route 198 within the project limits. From the southern limits of the project traveling northward, the highway is a four-lane freeway and becomes a six-lane freeway just 5 miles south of Goshen. The northbound and southbound lanes are separated by a median and thrie beam guardrail. The roadway consists of 12-foot lanes, and the outside shoulder is 10-foot wide.

The project proposes to restore the existing drainage system to good condition by repairing or replacing the existing identified deteriorating culverts within the project limits. Replacing, repairing, or cleaning the clogged culverts is necessary to maintain the operational integrity of the highway system.

Culverts in disrepair can cause flooding and erode the roadway. The poorly working culverts can result in saturation of soil under the roadway pavement. Saturated soil loses capacity and results in uneven settlement of the roadbed, which causes cracks to form in the pavement.

This project is programmed in the 2020 State Highway Operation and Protection Program and funded for the 2023/2024 fiscal year from the Drainage System Restoration Program.

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project is to maximize the service life of drainage elements by rehabilitating and upgrading existing drainage facilities at various locations within the project limits.

1.2.2 Need

Culverts on this section of State Route 99 are perforated and heavily rusted. They have damaged end treatments and joint separations and need sediment/debris removal. The project is needed to avoid possible future flooding damage and resulting pavement failure caused by blocked and defective culverts.

1.3 Project Description

The project will require drainage work and alterations to drainage systems. There are 80 existing culvert locations. Six culverts are proposed for replacement, 71 culverts are proposed for culvert relining, and three are proposed for repair. Project construction will take place on State Route 99 at various locations, starting at post mile 20.3 and ending at post mile 53.2.

The project includes a Build Alternative and a No-Build (No-Action) Alternative. The current project construction cost is $7,959,000.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

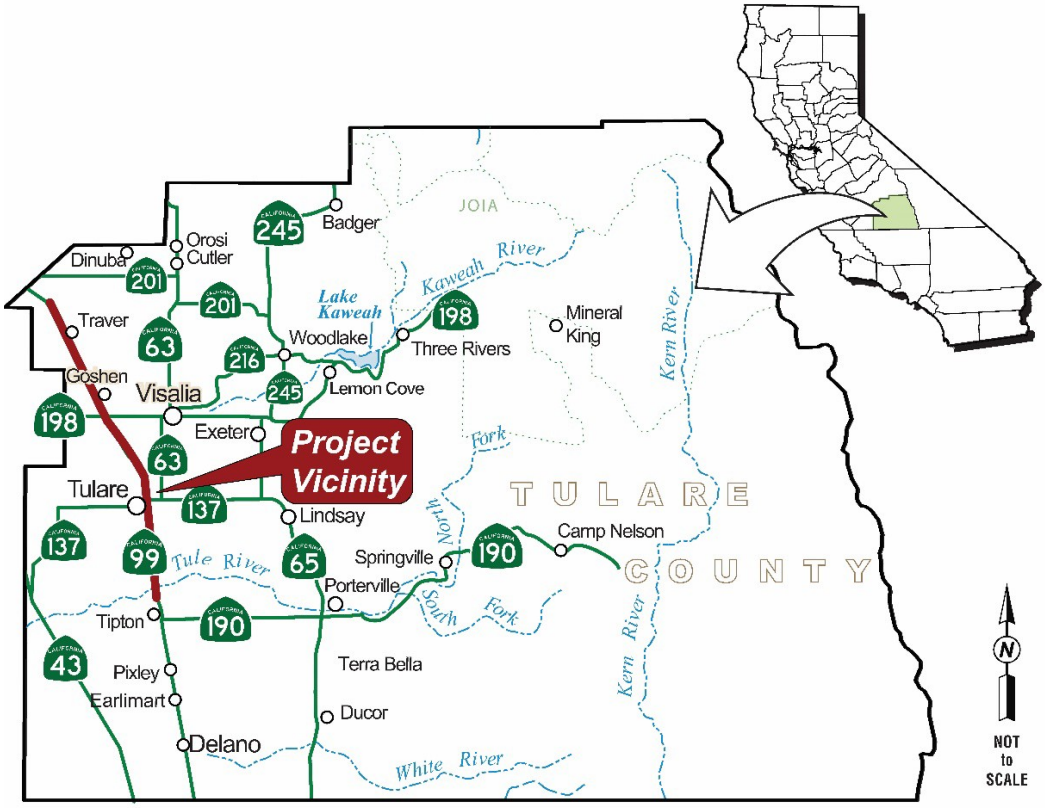
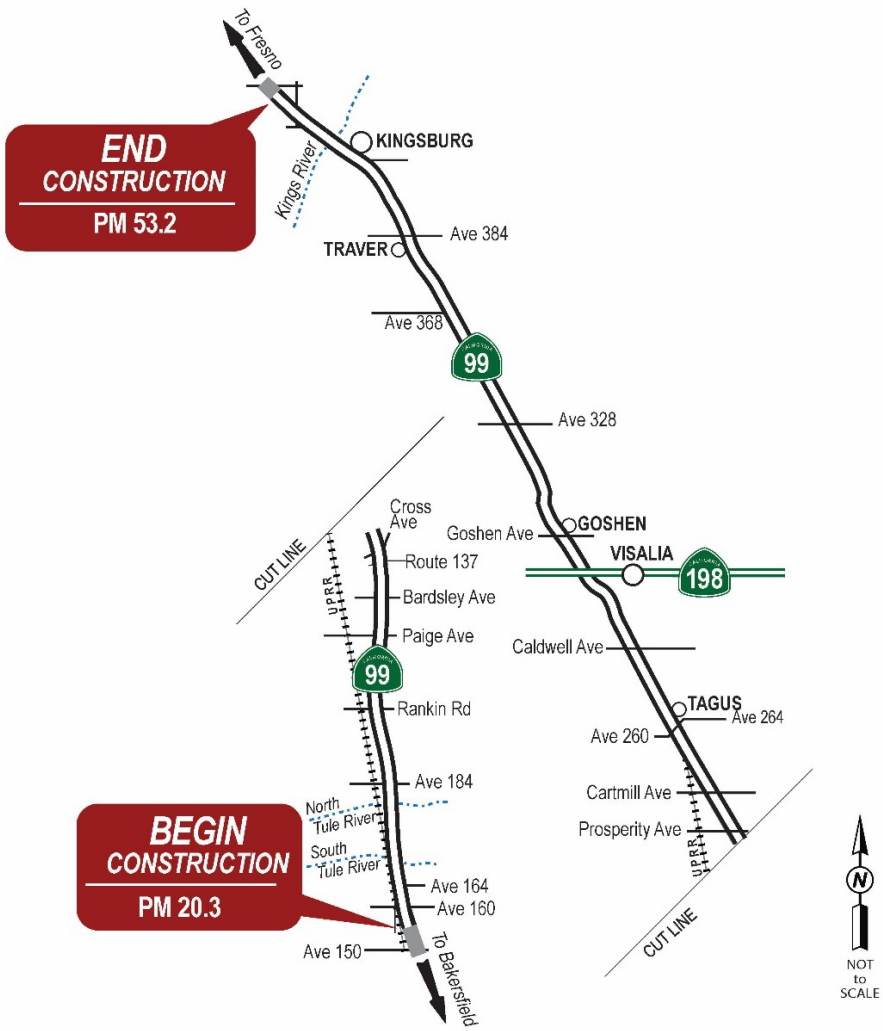


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.4 Project Alternatives

A Build Alternative and a No-Build (No-Action) Alternative are being considered for this project.

1.4.1 Build Alternatives

The Build Alternative will have drainage work and changes to drainage systems. Materials for the existing culverts include reinforced concrete pipe, plastic pipe, and corrugated steel pipe with a diameter that ranges from 12 inches to 36 inches. The project will require trenching, grading, and other ground-disturbing activities.

Table 1.1 lists all 80 culvert locations according to post mile and the work at each location.

Table 1.1 Culvert Locations and Proposed Work

Location Number	Post Mile	Proposed Work
1	20.31	Culvert relining
2	20.81	Culvert relining
3	20.90	Culvert relining
4	21.08	Culvert relining
5	21.33	Culvert relining
6	21.70	Culvert relining
7	21.70	Culvert relining
8	21.74	Replacement
9	21.83	Culvert relining
10	21.97	Culvert relining
11	21.97	Culvert relining
12	22.08	Culvert relining
13	22.08	Culvert relining
14	22.14	Replacement
15	22.40	Culvert relining
16	22.40	Culvert relining
17	22.56	Culvert relining
18	22.56	Culvert relining
19	22.72	Replacement
20	22.82	Culvert relining
21	22.82	Culvert relining
22	23.49	Culvert relining
23	23.49	Culvert relining
24	23.51	Culvert relining
25	23.51	Culvert relining
26	23.51	Culvert relining
27	23.51	Culvert relining
28	23.51	Culvert relining
29	23.51	Culvert relining
30	23.79	Replacement
31	24.68	Culvert relining
32	24.68	Culvert relining
33	24.71	Culvert relining
34	24.91	Culvert relining
35	25.08	Culvert relining
36	25.43	Culvert relining
37	25.56	Culvert relining
38	25.58	Culvert relining
39	25.84	Culvert relining
40	25.91	Culvert relining
41	26.01	Culvert relining
42	26.08	Culvert relining
43	26.08	Culvert relining
44	26.45	Culvert relining
45	26.45	Culvert relining
46	26.85	Culvert relining
47	26.85	Culvert relining
48	27.34	Culvert relining
49	27.52	Culvert relining

Location Number	Post Mile	Proposed Work
50	27.52	Culvert relining
51	27.58	Culvert relining
52	31.01	Culvert relining
53	31.01	Culvert relining
54	32.15	Culvert relining
55	32.30	Culvert relining
56	32.30	Culvert relining
57	32.80	Culvert relining
58	32.80	Culvert relining
59	33.20	Culvert relining
60	33.39	Replacement
61	33.39	Culvert relining
62	41.48	Culvert relining
63	41.68	Culvert relining
64	41.68	Culvert relining
65	43.40	Clean and remove debris
66	46.65	Culvert relining
67	47.78	Culvert relining
68	49.38	Culvert relining
69	49.38	Replacement
70	50.09	Culvert relining
71	50.54	Joint sealing
72	52.98	Culvert relining
73	53.13	Grout voids, exposed rebar on reinforced concrete box
74	37.43	Culvert relining
75	37.43	Culvert relining
76	38.68	Culvert relining
77	38.68	Culvert relining
78	38.68	Culvert relining
79	38.95	Culvert relining
80	38.95	Culvert relining

Project construction is scheduled to start in December 2024 and end in summer 2025.

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 proposed project.

These measures are listed later in this chapter under “Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives.”

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

The No-Build (No-Action) Alternative will not meet the purpose and need statement and may result in the deterioration of existing culverts and extensive roadway damage from flooding.

1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative

The Build Alternative was selected as the preferred alternative because it will preserve the operational integrity of the highway system. Repairing and replacing the culverts is necessary to maintain the highway in good operating condition. The Build Alternative is the only alternative that meets the purpose and need of the project.

1.6 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives

Air Quality—General specifications for controlling dust resulting from work will be addressed under Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 10-2 Dust Control. The project will also comply with air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes that apply to work performed under the construction contract, as specified in Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02 Air Pollution.

Paleontology—If paleontological resources are discovered at the job site, all work within a 60-foot radius of the discovery will immediately stop, the area will be secured, and an engineer will be notified. No one will move paleontological resources or take them from the job site, as addressed under Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-7.03 Discovery of Unanticipated Paleontological Resources.

Noise—General specifications for controlling and monitoring noise resulting from work activities will be specified in Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02 Noise Control. Noise levels are not to exceed 86 A-weighted decibels at 50 feet from the job site from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

1.7 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

[The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] During the circulation of the draft environmental document, it was determined that the project will no longer require federal funding. Therefore, the preparation of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion is not needed.

1.8 Permits and Approvals Needed

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

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	1600 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement	The 1600 permit will be obtained before construction starts.
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board	Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification	The 401 certification (permit) will be obtained before construction starts.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit	The 404 permit will be obtained before construction starts.

Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant Impact 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 proposed 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

This project is mainly a culvert rehabilitation project and will have no effect on scenic vistas and will not damage scenic resources. In this mostly rural, agricultural area, the visual character or quality of public views will not be affected by culvert work. Furthermore, the project will not create a new source of substantial light or glare. Considering the information provided in the Project Initiation Report dated November 13, 2018, and the Supplemental Project Initiation Report-Reduced Escalation dated June 4, 2019, 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?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	**No Impact**

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.

The project will not convert prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance to nonagricultural use or conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract. There are no forest lands or timberlands within the project area that could be impacted. Considering the information from the Tulare County General Plan dated August 2021, 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 nonagricultural use?	**No Impact**
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	**No Impact**
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))?	**No Impact**
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	**No Impact**
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	**No Impact**

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 in the Air Quality Memorandum dated November 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
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?	**No Impact**
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	**No Impact**
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	**No Impact**

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impact) dated March 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 and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
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?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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?	**No Impact**
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	**No Impact**
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**

Affected Environment

The action area was defined to assess the impacts of the project on biological resources. The action area consists of the project footprint (where actual project work will occur) and all nearby right-of-way on the northbound and southbound sides of the State Route 99 Corridor.

Throughout the project area, the habitat is mostly disturbed and composed of agricultural, residential, and commercial areas along the roadway. Vegetation within the action area consists mostly of non-native annual grasses and weedy species. Eucalyptus trees are scattered throughout the project area.

On July 1, 2021, Caltrans requested a list of federally endangered species and critical habitat(s) that may be affected by the project from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Based on in-office research (California Native Plant Society, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and field surveys, a Caltrans biologist determined that Swainson's hawks may use the project area, and suitable nesting trees are present in the project footprint.

Nesting migratory bird surveys were performed during two site visits on April 29, 2021, and May 5, 2021. Botanical surveys were performed during two site visits on May 26, 2021, and June 29, 2021. An aquatic resource survey was performed on August 27, 2021, by examining potentially jurisdictional channels, canals, and drainages on foot to determine the permits required.

Swainson's Hawk

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife lists the Swainson's hawk as a state-threatened species. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects Swainson's

hawks. The Swainson's hawk is a summer migrant to the Central Valley and typically winters in South America. Swainson's hawks breed in open stands in juniper-sage flats, riparian areas, and oak savannas in the Central Valley in proximity to suitable foraging areas. Swainson's hawks have been known to nest in landscape trees near human structures and, rarely, in orchards.

The closest occurrence of the Swainson's hawk occurred 150 feet west of post mile 23.49 in 2016. Other occurrences from the last 20 years include the following:

- In 2007—330 feet north of post mile 20.90, 0.1 mile south of post mile 24.91, and 1.8 miles south of post mile 20.31.
- In 2011—700 feet east of post mile 23.79.
- In 2012—0.26 mile south of post mile 46.65.
- In 2017—0.25 mile south of post mile 47.78, 1.7 miles south of post mile 46.65, and 0.63 mile south of post mile 20.31.

Caltrans conducted multiple site visits to the project area. Landscape trees suitable for raptor nesting, open agricultural fields for foraging habitat, and orchards are present throughout the project area. During the May 2021 nesting surveys, a Swainson's hawk nest was seen in between the work locations at post mile 21.74 and post mile 21.83, which is within 0.5 mile of the jurisdictional channel at post mile 21.33. Red-tailed hawk nests were also identified near the work locations at post mile 24.68, post mile 47.78, post mile 35.00, and post mile 32.20, and these nests may be suitable for Swainson's hawk occupation if left unoccupied by red-tailed hawks. Red-tailed hawks often compete with Swainson's hawks for nesting sites because they typically begin nesting before Swainson's hawks.

Migratory Birds

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects all migratory birds, including their eggs, nests, and feathers. The act was originally drafted to end the commercial trade in bird feathers, popular in the latter part of the 1800s. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is enforced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and potential constraints to species protected under this law may be evaluated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during the consultation process.

Other Waters

The project area is in the Tulare Lake Basin watershed. The largest bodies of water near the project footprint include the Kings River, Middle Cross Creek, and Elk Bayou, which passes under State Route 99. Three ephemeral waterways coincide with the culverts proposed to be cleaned: South Fork Tule River at post mile 21.33, Elk Bayou at post mile 24.71, and Cole Slough Canal at post mile 53.13.

Environmental Consequences

Swainson's Hawk

The temporary impacts near the Swainson's hawk nest at post mile 21.74 and post mile 21.83 will include a 50-by-50-foot temporary construction easement on the northbound and southbound sides of State Route 99. No vegetation removal is planned at the location. The lands that surround the project area contain 0.11 acre of suitable foraging fields for Swainson's hawks, which will not be impacted by the project. Because Caltrans intends to avoid work during the avian nesting season on the culverts within 0.5 mile of the jurisdictional culvert at post mile 21.33, no take is expected.

Migratory Birds

There are mature trees in the project area that provide suitable nesting habitat for a variety of bird and raptor species. Construction-related activities may disturb birds nesting near the work area.

Other Waters

Caltrans examined the proposed culvert locations, and three were within ephemeral drainages at post mile 21.33, post mile 24.71, and post mile 53.13. Culvert work at post mile 21.33 and post mile 24.71 (South Fork Tule River and Elk Bayou) will require a Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, a 401 certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Culvert work at post mile 53.13 (Cole Slough Canal) will require a routine maintenance agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Swainson's Hawk

The following avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented for Swainson's hawk:

- Preconstruction nesting surveys will be completed within 0.5 mile of the project area if construction occurs during the nesting season—February 1 to September 30. Surveys will follow general guidelines identified in the *"Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swainson's Hawk Nesting Surveys in California's Central Valley."*

- If Swainson's hawks are seen nesting within 0.5 mile of the jurisdictional culvert location, a 500-foot radius no-disturbance buffer will be designated. A buffer variance may be approved if a qualified biologist determines that there are no signs of disturbance.

- Nest trees will be monitored until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged.

- Environmentally sensitive area fencing will go around nest trees whenever the no-disturbance buffer overlaps with construction activities.

- Caltrans will require worker environmental awareness training to be conducted for all personnel associated with the project.

Migratory Birds

Avoidance and minimization measures for migratory birds may include one or more of the following actions, as appropriate:

- Preconstruction surveys no more than 10 days before construction starts.

- Implement a 500-foot buffer if any raptors are found nesting within the project limits. Implement a 100-foot buffer for all other migratory birds.

Other Waters

The following Best Management Practices that specifically protect water quality will be implemented and will include the following:

- Measures to control erosion during construction and after construction is completed.

- Measures to ensure all project debris is removed from the channel once construction is completed.

- Measures in the case of a hazardous materials spill. At a minimum, a spill kit shall be kept onsite, and an emergency response plan shall be developed and implemented if a spill occurs.

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Historic Property Survey Report dated February 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?	**No Impact**
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	**No Impact**
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	**No Impact**

2.1.6 Energy

Construction activities will cause a temporary increase in energy consumption, but not significantly. The increase may be offset over time by improvements proposed in the project area. The project is a culvert rehabilitation project that will not increase capacity. Considering the information, the reasons provided, and guidance from the Caltrans Standard Environmental Reference Chapter 13-Energy, the following significance determinations have been made:

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?	**No Impact**
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	**No Impact**

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information in the California Geological Survey webpage, Faulting in California, the California Department of Conservation Map Data Viewer webpage, and the Paleontological Identification Report dated March 11, 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
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.	**No Impact**
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	**No Impact**
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	**No Impact**
iv) Landslides?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	**No Impact**
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	**No Impact**

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Climate Change Report dated January 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

The project will repair or replace 80 culverts at various locations along State Route 99 from 0.7 mile north of the Avenue 152 Overcrossing to 0.8 mile south of Mendocino Avenue.

This segment of State Route 99 is a four-to-six-lane freeway with interchange connections at State Route 137 and State Route 198 within the project limits. The roadway consists of 12-foot lanes, and the outside shoulder is 10 feet wide.

Environmental Consequences

This project will not add capacity to the highway. There will be no increase in operational emissions because the project will repair or replace existing culverts. With the implementation of construction greenhouse gas reduction measures, impacts will be less than significant.

Construction greenhouse gas emissions for the project were calculated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool. Project construction is expected to generate about 278 tons of carbon dioxide during 175 working days.

While some construction greenhouse gas emissions will be unavoidable, implementing standard conditions or Best Management Practices designed to reduce or eliminate emissions as part of the project will reduce impacts to less than significant.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Measures to minimize greenhouse gas emissions include:

- Limit idling to 5 minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment.
- Schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours.
- Encourage improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment by maintaining equipment in proper working condition, using the right size equipment for the job, and using equipment with new technologies.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information in the Initial Site Assessment dated July 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
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?	**No Impact**
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 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?	**No Impact**
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	**No Impact**
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	**No Impact**

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information in the Water Compliance Memorandum dated October 2021 and the Location Hydraulic Study dated December 2021, 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	**No Impact**
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;	**Less Than Significant Impact**
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;	**No Impact**
(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	**No Impact**
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	**No Impact**
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	**No Impact**
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

The project is within the South Valley Floor Hydrologic Unit. The watersheds affected by the project include Cole Slough-Kings River, Middle Cross Creek, Elk Bayou, and Lower Tule River.

Environmental Consequences

The project has the potential to cause short-term water quality impacts related to temporary construction work near surface water and groundwater. Project activities include the removal of vegetation and/or work near a channel for some of the culverts near water bodies. As a result, the potential for surface erosion and an increase in sediment loads can impact nearby water bodies. No long-term water quality impacts are expected for this project. All short-term water quality impacts need to be addressed in the design and construction phases of the project.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Any potential impacts to water quality must be addressed, eliminated, or minimized to the maximum extent practicable during the design and construction phases of the project by incorporating the appropriate permanent and temporary Best Management Practices into the project. Before project initiation, the Caltrans stormwater unit should be consulted to identify the applicable Best Management Practices for stormwater concerns.

If the potential water quality impacts are correctly identified and mitigated through Best Management Practices, then the potential for adverse effects on surface water or groundwater quality will be eliminated. If the project disturbs 1 acre or more of soil, the following requirements will be required.

- A Notification of Intent is to be submitted to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board at least 30 days before construction starts.
- A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan is to be prepared and implemented during construction to the satisfaction of the resident engineer.
- A Notice of Termination shall be submitted to the Regional Board upon completion of construction and site stabilization. A project will be considered complete when the criteria for final stabilization in the Construction General Permit are met.

If the project disturbs less than 1 acre of soil, a Water Pollution Control Plan is required to be prepared by the contractor following the 2018 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 13-1 Water Pollution Control Program.

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

The project will not physically divide an established community or conflict with the Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update or any other policy or regulations meant to avoid or mitigate an environmental effect. Considering this information, 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?	**No Impact**
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**

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Considering the information in the USMIN Mineral Deposit Database from the U.S. Geological Survey dated September 2016, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources
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?	**No Impact**
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**

2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information in the Noise Compliance Study dated November 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
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?	**No Impact**
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
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 2 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**

2.1.14 Population and Housing

No person or business will be relocated or displaced because of this project. Considering this information, 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)?	**No Impact**
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	**No Impact**

2.1.15 Public Services

Considering the project will not trigger the need for new or changed public services, 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?	**No Impact**
Police protection?	**No Impact**
Schools?	**No Impact**
Parks?	**No Impact**
Other public facilities?	**No Impact**

2.1.16 Recreation

No park or recreational facility is near the project area. Furthermore, the project will not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Considering this information, 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?	**No Impact**
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**

2.1.17 Transportation

The project will not conflict with any transportation program, plan, ordinance, or policy and will have no impact on vehicle miles traveled. The project will not

increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses and will not result in inadequate emergency access.

Considering this information, 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?	**No Impact**
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	**No Impact**
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	**No Impact**
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	**No Impact**

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Historic Property Survey Report dated February 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

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:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
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	**No Impact**

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
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 Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	**No Impact**

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering the scope and location within a rural setting, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
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?	**No Impact**
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	**No Impact**

2.1.20 Wildfire

The project is not within or near areas of lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones. Therefore, 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?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**

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?	**No Impact**
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.)	**No Impact**
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	**No Impact**

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

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

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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Making Conservation a California 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 14th 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.

Toks Omishakin
Director

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

Appendix B Comment Letters and Responses

[Appendix B has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] A public notice was posted in the Tulare Advance-Register stating the public comment period from August 30, 2022, to September 30, 2022, and offering the public an opportunity to request a public hearing. There was no request for a public hearing, and no comments were received during the circulation of the draft environmental document.

List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

Air Quality Memorandum: November 2021

Noise Compliance Study: November 2021

Water Compliance Memorandum: October 2021

Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impact): March 2022

Location Hydraulic Study: December 2021

Historic Property Survey Report: February 2022

Initial Site Assessment: July 2021

Paleontological Identification Report: March 2021

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

Javier Almaguer
District 6 Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100-200, Fresno, California 93726

Or send your request via email to: javier.almaguer@dot.ca.gov
Or call: 559-287-9320

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: Tulare 99 Culvert Rehabilitation

General location information: Drainage rehabilitation on State Route 99 from post miles 20.3 to 53.2 in Tulare County

District number-county code-route-post mile: 06-TUL-99-PM 20.3-53.2

Project ID number: 0618000044