



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 04/2021)**

Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): Geotechnical and Archeological Exploration for Wilson Creek Permanent Restoration Project

DIST-CO-RTE: 01-DN-101

PM/PM: 12.6/13.2

EA: 01-0K140

Federal-Aid Project Number: 0120000033

Project Description

Caltrans proposes a drilling exploration to collect information for the proposed Wilson Creek Permanent Restoration project located between PM 12.6 and 13.2 of Highway 101 in Del Norte County, California. (See continuation sheet).

Caltrans CEQA Determination (Check one)

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

Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, the project is:

- Exempt by Statute.** (PRC 21080[b]; 14 CCR 15260 et seq.)
- Categorically Exempt. Class 6.** (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)
 - No exceptions apply that would bar the use of a categorical exemption (PRC 21084 and 14 CCR 15300.2). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.
- Covered by the Common Sense Exemption.** This project does not fall within an exempt class, but it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR 15061[b][3].)

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Felicia Zimmerman	<i>Felicia Zimmerman</i>	08/22/2023
Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager

Grant Wilcox	<i>Grant Wilcox</i>	08/22/2023
Print Name	Signature	Date



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Caltrans NEPA Determination (Check one)

Not Applicable

Caltrans has determined that this project has no significant impacts on the environment as defined by NEPA, and that there are no unusual circumstances as described in 23 CFR 771.117(b). See SER Chapter 30 for unusual circumstances. As such, the project is categorically excluded from the requirements to prepare an EA or EIS under NEPA and is included under the following:

23 USC 326: Caltrans has been assigned, and hereby certifies that it has carried out the responsibility to make this determination pursuant to 23 USC 326 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated April 18, 2019, executed between FHWA and Caltrans. Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under:

- 23 CFR 771.117(c): activity (c)(Enter activity number)
23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)(Enter activity number)
Activity 7 listed in Appendix A of the MOU between FHWA and Caltrans

23 USC 327: Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under 23 USC 327. The environmental review, consultation, and any other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 327 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated December 23, 2016 and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Felicia Zimmerman Signature 08/22/2023
Print Name Signature Date

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Grant Wilcox Signature 08/22/2023
Print Name Signature Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): 8/8/2023
Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 8/8/2023



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Continuation sheet:

The proposed exploration project would provide geotechnical criteria for the design and construction of the proposed retaining wall and evaluation of the distribution and nature of a known cultural resource that may be impacted by the wall construction. A two-phase exploration is proposed: 1) mud-rotary geotechnical borings and 2) direct-push archaeological borings. All work locations are within the existing Caltrans right of way. Each of the proposed borings would be advanced into the highway pavement surface, gravel shoulder or turnout, and existing cut-slope. It is anticipated that both phases of the operations would require traffic control. Equipment storage for the exploration operation would be at the local Caltrans Maintenance yard.

Mud-Rotary Geotechnical Borings

Eight (8) of the proposed borings would be vertical borings drilled into the highway pavement and gravel shoulder and two (2) of the proposed borings would be horizontal, drilling into the existing cut-slope adjacent to the northbound shoulder. All geotechnical borings would be drilled to support geotechnical sampling and installation of instrumentation. The average depth for the 4.75-inch diameter vertical borings would be approximately 100 feet below ground surface (bgs) and the length of the 4.75-inch diameter horizontal borings would be approximately 60-feet into the slope. Slope indicator (SI) casings would be installed in six (6) of the borings and a stand-pipe piezometer (SP) would be installed in two (2) of the borings.

These instruments would be periodically monitored for a minimum of 12 months before being destroyed in accordance with Del Norte County Environmental Health Agency requirements. The advancement, sampling and instrumentation installations for each of the borings would take approximately 4 days to complete. Total drilling time for this phase of the exploration is estimated to be approximately 40 working days (approximately 9 weeks).

We anticipate an archaeological monitor and Native American monitors would be required to log potential anthropogenic material for the first day of each geotechnical boring. After the first day, it is anticipated that these borings would be advanced into Cretaceous Franciscan Formation rock. Additional details describing the mud-rotary geotechnical borings are found in Attachment 4, Project Information Supplement, Site Exploration Plan.

Direct-Push Archaeological Borings

To characterize the distribution and nature of a known cultural resource, up to twelve borings are proposed. Direct-push drilling methods would be utilized for the archaeological borings to support continuous core recovery within the poorly consolidated zone of anthropogenic soils. The estimated average depth for these 3-inch diameter vertical borings would be up to 50 feet bgs. The advancement, sampling and destruction of each of the archaeological borings would take approximately half a day. Total drilling time for this phase of the exploration is estimated to be approximately 6 days.



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It is anticipated a geoarchaeologist and archaeological field crew would be required full time to manage and log the archaeological drilling operations, and Native American monitors would be required to log potential anthropogenic materials and consult on their recording, assessment, and treatment. Additional details describing the direct-push archaeological borings are found in Attachment 4, Project Information Supplement, Site Exploration Plan.

Environmental commitments:

- A pre-construction survey for nesting birds would be conducted by a qualified biologist prior to vegetation removal. If nesting birds are found CDFW would be contacted, and an appropriate buffer would be established.
- Pedestrian access to the trailhead (near A-1 and A-2) would be maintained throughout the duration of the drilling exploration.
- During geotechnical and archaeological boring, any soils/sediments with material culture in it would be removed from the core for analysis and would then be returned to the nearest testing bore if possible.
- Soils from archaeological borings that cannot be returned to testing bores will remain in the project area at an as-yet to be determined location.
- Archaeological monitors would be present during the drilling.
- Tribal monitors would be present during the drilling.
- Water quality Best Management Practices (BMP) would be utilized to protect water quality.

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Final Audit Report

2023-08-22

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