



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 06/2022)**

Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): Oilwell Hill Safety

DIST-CO-RTE: 01-MEN-101

PM/PM: 50.7-52.2

EA: 01-0K890

Federal-Aid Project Number: N/A

Project Description

The purpose of this project is to reduce the frequency and severity of collisions, including accidents involving cross over collisions and vehicles running off the road. In the 2017 Run Off Road Collision Report and in the 2018 Cross Over Collision Monitoring Program Report, this segment of highway was identified as needing a countermeasure to reduce the frequency and severity of run off road collisions and cross median collisions.

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 1 (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)

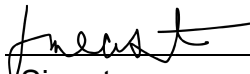
No exceptions apply that would bar the use of a categorical exemption (PRC 21084 and 14 CCR 15300.2). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.

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

Julie East

Print Name


Signature

10/30/2023

Date

Project Manager

Marie Brady

Print Name


Signature

10/30/2023

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, 2022, executed between FHWA and Caltrans. Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under:

23 CFR 771.117(c): activity (c)(27)

23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)

Activity 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 May 27, 2022, and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Julie East
Print Name
Signature
Date 10/30/2023

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Marie Brady
Print Name
Signature
Date 10/30/2023

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): 10/30/2023
Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 10/30/2023

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



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Continuation sheet:

From the time period beginning 1/1/2014 through 12/31/2018, this segment of highway from postmile 51.01 to postmile 52.06 experienced 52 total collisions (5 fatal, 17 injury, 18 Multi-vehicle, 29 wet, and 21 dark), resulting in 24 individuals injured and 7 fatalities.

This project is located between PM 50.7 and PM 52.2 on US Highway 101 in Mendocino County, approximately 3 miles north of the City of Willits beginning at Outlet Creek and continuing north into mountainous terrain. The project proposes the following work, all within the State Right of Way:

- Widen the road to add a 10 foot median with concrete median barrier
- Apply High Friction Surface Treatment (HFST)
- Replace the existing metal beam guardrail (MBGR) with the Midwest Guardrail System (MGS)
- Complete a full width overlay widening
- Asphalt dike
- Apply centerline and edge line rumble strips
- Pavement delineation
- Drainage improvements at culverts within the project limits (PM's 50.88, 51.04, 51.31, and 51.42)
- Paving a pullout area at the existing radar feedback sign at approximately PM 51.4
- Replacing worn and damaged sign panels
- Conduct revegetation for permit offset to allow of wetland and riparian impacts
- Dispose of fill within project limits to the extent possible to reduce trucking GHG emissions, with replanting and erosion control measures implemented, and the potential to amend fill dirt with landscaping components to improve moisture retention in planted areas.
- Landscaping and replanting in an existing fire scar will provide visual enhancement.

State Right of Way:

There are no needs for additional State Right of Way on this project, as all work would occur within existing State Right of Way.

Anticipated Permits:

- Caltrans anticipates applying for a CDFW 1602 permit, a NCRWQCB 401 certification, and US Army Corps 404 Nationwide Permit.
- We are currently conferring with the USFWS and would likely proceed with an informal consultation Letter of Concurrence for Northern Spotted Owl (NSO). However, if we determine probable absence we will have no effect on NSO.

Climate Change Assessment:

The Environmental Division has evaluated this non-capacity increasing project for GHG emissions and other climate change impacts. It has determined that the project would not cause a significant impact on GHG emissions because this project would not increase roadway capacity or induce new vehicle miles traveled



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(VMT). In addition, this project includes construction greenhouse gas reduction measures; the project design includes adaptation or climate resilience features; the project is not located in a floodplain or other location at risk of riverine flooding; and the project is not in the Coastal Zone or Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta or a location at risk of future sea level rise impacts. While the project location is in a high fire hazard severity zone, it would not increase wildfire conditions, and by nature of this projects road widening and other safety improvements, it would improve accessibility and decrease fire risk.

The following Standard Measures and Best Management Practices have been included as part of the project:

The following measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to the environment and community:

- Construction may require one or more of the following temporary construction site BMPs: (WQ-1)
 - Any spills or leaks from construction equipment (e.g., fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, and grease) would be cleaned up in accordance with applicable local, state, and/or federal regulations.
 - Temporary sediment control and soil stabilization measures would be utilized as needed.
 - 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.
- The project is located within the Very High CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ). The contractor would be required to submit a jobsite Fire Prevention Plan as required by Cal/OSHA before starting job site activities. In the event of an emergency or wildfire, the contractor would cooperate with fire prevention authorities (UE-3).
- Invasive non-native species control would be implemented. Measures would include: (BR-3)
 - Straw, straw bales, seed, mulch, or other material used for erosion control or landscaping would be free of noxious weed seed and propagules.
 - All equipment would be thoroughly cleaned of all dirt and vegetation prior to entering the job site to prevent importing invasive non-native species. Project personnel would adhere to the latest version of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Aquatic Invasive Species Cleaning/Decontamination Protocol (Northern Region) for all field gear and equipment in contact with water. Measures to prevent construction equipment effluents from contaminating soil or waters in the construction site, such as absorbent pads, would be used.



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- 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 (BR-4C).
- Before start of work, a Caltrans biologist or Environmental Construction Liaison (ECL) would meet with the contractor to brief them on environmental permit conditions 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-1)
- To protect migratory and nongame birds (occupied nests and eggs), if possible, vegetation removal would be limited to the period outside of the bird breeding season (removal would occur between September 16 and January 31). If vegetation removal is required during the breeding season, a nesting bird survey would be conducted by a qualified biologist within 5 days prior to vegetation removal. If an active nest is located, the biologist would coordinate with CDFW to establish appropriate species-specific buffer(s) and any monitoring requirements. The buffer would be delineated around each active nest and construction activities would be excluded from these areas until birds have fledged, or the nest is determined to be unoccupied. (BR-2A)
- To protect nesting or roosting northern spotted owl, no suitable northern spotted owl nest trees would be removed during the nesting season (February 1 through September 15). No construction activities generating sound levels 20 or more decibels (dB) above ambient sound or with maximum sound levels (ambient sound level plus activity-generated sound level) above 90 dB (with the exception of backup alarms) would occur between February 1 and July 31. Sound-related work windows would be lifted between July 31 and January 31. No human activities (including use of drones) would occur within a visual line-of-sight of 328 feet (100 meters) or less from a known nest site (USFWS 2020), or from unsurveyed suitable nesting/roosting habitat containing potential owl nest trees. These visual disturbance restrictions would be lifted after September 15; after which the USFWS considers visual disturbance as having “no effect” on nesting adults or dependent young. The 328-foot (100 meters) visual disturbance distance may be reduced or eliminated through technical assistance with the USFWS if site-specific information suggests that ambient visual disturbance within the action area is already high enough to likely preclude species from nesting within 328 feet (100 meters) of the project footprint, or vegetation near the roadway is sufficiently dense to shield the view from habitat farther from the roadway (BR-2M, Option 2).
- If cultural materials are discovered during work, work activity within a 60-foot radius of the discovery would be stopped and the area secured until a qualified archaeologist can assess the nature and significance of the find in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). (CR-3)
- If human remains and related items are discovered on private or State land, they would be treated in accordance with State Health and Safety Code § 7050.5. Further disturbances and activities would cease in any area or nearby area



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suspected to overlie remains, and the County Coroner contacted. Pursuant to California Public Resources Code (PRC) § 5097.98, if the remains are thought to be Native American, the coroner would notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) who would then notify the Most Likely Descendent (MLD). Human remains and related items discovered on federally-owned lands would be treated in accordance with the Native American Graves Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) (23 USC 3001). The procedures for dealing with the discovery of human remains, funerary objects, or sacred objects on federal land are described in the regulations that implement NAGPRA 43 CFR Part 10. All work in the vicinity of the discovery shall be halted and the administering agency's archaeologist would be notified immediately. Project activities in the vicinity of the discovery would not resume until the federal agency complies with the 43 CFR Part 10 regulations and provides notification to proceed. (CR-4)