

Lake and Streambed Alteration Evaluation

Mono County, California
District 9 – MNO – 395 (postmiles 51.5 & 52.1)
EA/Project ID: 09-37430/0918000015

Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration



Prepared by the
State of California, Department of Transportation

October 2024



The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to improve roadway drainage and reduce erosion at two unnamed stormwater drainage locations on U.S. Route 395 within Mono County.

**INITIAL STUDY
with Proposed Negative Declaration**

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

Responsible Agencies: California Department of Fish and Wildlife



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

10/24/2024

Date

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DRAFT

Proposed Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 09-MNO-395-51.5 & 52.1

EA/Project Identification: 09-37430 / 0918000015

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to improve roadway drainage and reduce erosion at two unnamed stormwater drainage locations on U.S. Route 395 (US-395) within Mono County

Location #	Caltrans Culvert #	Post-Mile	Existing Culvert	Proposed Culvert
1	473954005150	51.5	8" CMP	N/A
2	473954005207	52.1	30" CSPA	30" CSPA

CMP = corrugated metal pipe

CSPA = corrugated steel pipe arch

N/A = Not applicable

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 9.

On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

- The proposed project would have no impacts to Aesthetics, Agriculture, 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, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.
- In addition, the proposed project would have less than significant impacts to Biological Resources.

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

Date

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Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to improve roadway drainage and reduce erosion at two unnamed stormwater drainage locations on US-395 within Mono County.

This document is being prepared solely to provide California Environmental Quality Act clearance for the purpose of obtaining a Lake and Streambed Alteration (1600) permit from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and is focused only on impacts that are within CDFW 1600 jurisdictional areas. A separate CEQA document has been prepared for the transportation project in its entirety and focuses on all areas of potential environmental impact and was submitted to CDFW and the public for review and comment. That document, the Lee Vining Rehab, and all the findings made therein is incorporated into this document by reference. For that reason, only Biological Resources are addressed here.

1.2 Project Description

The proposed project includes improving roadway drainage and reducing erosion at two unnamed stormwater drainage locations on US-395 within Mono County. The proposed project is within and adjacent to the town of Lee Vining along US-395. The project area consists of developed areas associated with buildings, roads, culverts, parking areas, as well as bitterbrush scrub and riparian habitat.

Location #	Caltrans Culvert #	Post-Mile	Existing Culvert	Proposed Culvert
1	473954005150	51.5	8" CMP	N/A
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Location 1:

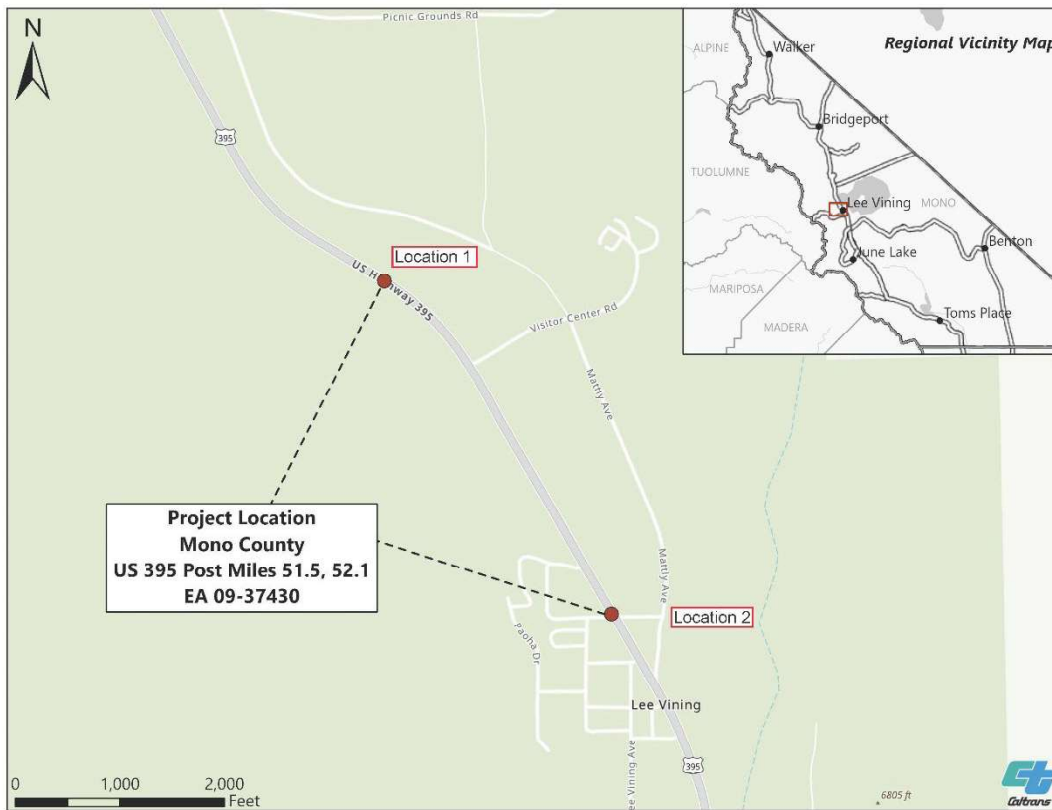
The existing culvert system at Location 1 will remain in place (no culverts being replaced or added). Existing rock slope protection at the outfall and in the approximately 135-foot-long channel, which leads to an existing dirt access road, will be excavated out and replaced with new larger rock to dissipate energy and alleviate erosion. Replacement of the existing rock slope

protection will not expand fill within the channel beyond that which is currently there. No work is planned to occur along the dirt access road. Excavators will be used to remove the existing undersized rock slope protection and install the new rock slope protection. Dump trucks will haul the material offsite and be used to haul in the new, larger rock slope protection. Backhoes and loaders may also be used. All equipment will access the channel from the north side.

Location 2:

The existing culvert at Location 2 will be removed and replaced in kind with the same sized pipe. Rock slope protection will be installed at the culvert outfall as energy dissipation control to alleviate erosion. Excavators will be used to remove and replace the culvert. Dump trucks will be used to haul in the rock slope protection, and excavators will be used to install it. Backhoes and loaders may also be used. Access will be restricted to US-395 and the road shoulder.

Figure 1-1 Project Location and Vicinity Map



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 Potentially Significant Impact, Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated, Less Than Significant Impact, and No Impact. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with a project will indicate that there are no impacts to a particular resource. A No Impact answer reflects this determination. The questions in this checklist are intended to encourage the thoughtful assessment of impacts and do not represent thresholds of significance.

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

“No Impact” determinations in each section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project as well as the appropriate technical report (bound in a separate volume), and no further discussion is included in this document. Detailed information regarding survey methodologies and results are also found.

2.1.1 Biological Resources

Considering the information included in the Biological Resources Evaluation Memo prepared for this Project, 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?	No Impact.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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?	Less Than Significant 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.
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 two drainages associated with the Project are unnamed features that do not convey natural flow, but rather roadway runoff via drainage inlets on US-395. No riverine habitat exists within the proposed project, but rather is located further downstream of the drainages.

Location 1 was created by a culvert system that collects water via multiple curb and gutter storm drains that come together at the intersection of US-395 and 1st street. The main Caltrans storm drain culvert runs east under 1st street and daylights adjacent to two other non-Caltrans culverts after crossing under Mattly Avenue. Water flows from these culverts into a rock-lined channel on land owned by LADWP, eventually forming an erosional feature connecting to Lee Vining Creek. Drainage location 1 contains emergent riparian vegetation.

Location 2 conveys roadway runoff through a culvert and into an erosional feature that eventually leads to riparian habitat adjacent to Mono Lake and has no obvious surface connection to the lake. This location contains

predominantly upland vegetation consisting of bitterbrush scrub habitat; however, several individual emergent riparian plants are also present.

Environmental Consequences

At Location 1, approximately 0.01 acre of temporary impacts to riparian vegetation will result from replacing rock slope protection at the culvert outlet and in the channel. No permanent impacts are anticipated. Ten narrowleaf willows (*Salix exigua*) occur within the channel and will require removal; all are less than 2" diameter at breast height (DBH).

At Location 2, approximately 0.01 acre of temporary impacts to riparian vegetation will result from replacing the culvert, and approximately 0.02 acre of permanent impacts will result from the new rock slope protection installation. Three narrowleaf willows will be trimmed, both are less than 2" DBH.

In total, the Project will result in 0.02 acre of permanent impacts from placement of rock slope protection and 0.02 acre of temporary impacts due to construction.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

While the project does not have the potential to result in significant impacts requiring implementation of mitigation measures, the following avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented to reduce impacts that have been determined to be less than significant:

BIO-1: The Project Resident Engineer shall notify the project biologist 2 weeks prior to the anticipated construction start date so that pre-construction surveys can be conducted to identify the presence (or absence) of sensitive plant or wildlife species, or nesting birds within the project impact area. If sensitive species are found, Caltrans will coordinate with CDFW on measures that may be needed to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential impacts.

BIO-2: Prior to the start of work, workers will receive a Biological Resource Information Program (BRIP) training on CDFW 1602 resources before performing onsite work. A qualified biologist(s) will conduct the training, which will be required for all construction personnel.

BIO-3: Project work will be conducted during a dry period when there are no surface flows.

BIO-4: Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) will be established to protect CDFW 1602 resources.

BIO-5: A biological monitor will be present onsite during initial ground-clearing activities when working within the California Department of Fish and Wildlife 1602 resource area to ensure no sensitive species are present and that work does not occur within ESA boundaries.

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Govin Newsom, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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August 2020

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<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"

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Agosto de 2020

**DECLARACIÓN DE POLÍTICA
DE NO DISCRIMINACIÓN**

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

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

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

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Director

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To obtain a copy of one or more of the technical studies/reports used to document the determinations made in this Initial Study, please send your request to:

Ryan Spaulding
Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)
California Department of Transportation
500 South Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514

Or send your request via email to: Ryan.Spaulding@dot.ca.gov
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Please provide the following information in your request:

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