



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Inland Deserts Region
3602 Inland Empire Boulevard, Suite C-220
Ontario, CA 91764
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



March 21, 2025
Sent via email

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
Department of Public Works
825 E. Third Street Room 123
San Bernardino, CA 92415
Arnold.Gerber@dpw.sbcounty.gov

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
National Trails Highway at 19 Bridges Project
State Clearinghouse No. 2025030074

Dear Arnold Gerber:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) from the County of San Bernardino (County) for the National Trails Highway at 19 Bridges Project (Project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources, and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State. (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a).) CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. (*Id.*, § 1802.) Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting comments as a Responsible Agency under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381.) CDFW expects that it may

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 2

need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority. (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.) Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), the Project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Project is located between the unincorporated communities of Ludlow and Essex in the County of San Bernardino, State of California. The Project proposes to replace 19 timber trestle bridges with concrete bridges on the National Trails Highway, formerly known as US Route 66. The 19 existing, two-lane timber bridges will be replaced with bridges designed to meet American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials standards. The bridge lengths will match the existing lengths, if possible, but will be lengthened as needed in consideration of storm flows. Each replacement bridge will accommodate two 12-foot-wide lanes, two 3-foot-wide shoulders, and two 2-foot-wide railings. The vertical profile of the bridges will remain close to the existing profile except where additional vertical clearance is required to provide sufficient water conveyance beneath the bridge. It is anticipated that any changes in vertical profiles will be 3 feet or less, with the elevation gradually conforming to the existing roadway elevations. The alignment of the National Trails Highway will remain unchanged; however, up to 800 feet of pavement improvements on either side of each bridge may be needed to conform to the existing roadway vertical profile. A temporary, parallel road will be constructed at each bridge location to accommodate traffic during construction. Construction of each bridge replacement is expected to be completed in one season. Bridge construction equipment will include cranes, pile drivers, excavators, and concrete pumps.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist the County in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources.

CDFW recommends that the forthcoming DEIR address the following:

Assessment of Biological Resources

Section 15125(c) of the CEQA Guidelines states that knowledge of the regional setting of a project is critical to the assessment of environmental impacts and that special emphasis should be placed on environmental resources that are rare or unique to the region. To enable CDFW staff to adequately review and comment on the Project, the DEIR should include a complete assessment of the flora and fauna within and adjacent

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 3

to the Project footprint, with particular emphasis on identifying rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species and their associated habitats.

The CDFW recommends that the DEIR specifically include:

1. An assessment of the various habitat types located within the Project footprint, and a map that identifies the location of each habitat type. CDFW recommends that floristic, alliance- and/or association-based mapping and assessment be completed following *The Manual of California Vegetation*, second edition (Sawyer et al. 2009). Adjoining habitat areas should also be included in this assessment where site activities could lead to direct or indirect impacts offsite. Habitat mapping at the alliance level will help establish baseline vegetation conditions.
2. A general biological inventory of the fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species that are present or have the potential to be present within each habitat type onsite and within adjacent areas that could be affected by the Project. CDFW's California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) should be reviewed or contacted at (916) 322-2493 or CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov to obtain current information on any previously reported sensitive species and habitat, including Significant Natural Areas identified under Chapter 12 of the Fish and Game Code, in the vicinity of the proposed Project.

Please note that CDFW's CNDDDB is not exhaustive in terms of the data it houses, nor is it an absence database. CDFW recommends that it be used as a starting point in gathering information about the *potential presence* of species within the general area of the Project site.

3. A complete, recent inventory of rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species located within the Project footprint and within offsite areas with the potential to be affected, including California Species of Special Concern (CSSC) and California Fully Protected Species (Fish and Game Code section 3511). Species to be addressed should include all those which meet the CEQA definition (CEQA Guidelines § 15380). The inventory should address seasonal variations in use of the Project area and should not be limited to resident species. Focused species-specific surveys, completed by a qualified biologist and conducted at the appropriate time of year and time of day when the sensitive species are active or otherwise identifiable, are required. Acceptable species-specific survey procedures should be developed in consultation with CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where necessary. Special status species that the Project footprint has the potential to support, include but are not limited to: American badger (*Taxidea taxus*); burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*); desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*); desert big horn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*); desert kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis arsipus*); golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*); LeConte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*); loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*); pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*); and Mojave fringe-toed lizard (*Uma scoparia*).

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 4

Note that CDFW generally considers biological field assessments for wildlife to be valid for a one-year period, and assessments for rare plants may be considered valid for a period of up to three years. Some aspects of the proposed Project may warrant periodic updated surveys for certain sensitive taxa, particularly if the Project is proposed to occur over a protracted time frame, or in phases, or if surveys are completed during periods of drought.

4. A thorough, recent, floristic-based assessment of special status plants and natural communities, following CDFW's Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities (see <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Plants>). Sensitive plant species that the Project footprint has the potential to support, include but are not limited to: Clokey's cryptantha (*Cryptantha clokeyi*); crucifixion thorn (*Castela emoryi*); glandular ditaxis (*Ditaxis claryana*); Latimer's woodland gilia (*Saltugilia latimeri*); small flowered androstephium (*Androstephium breviflorum*); spiny cliffbrake (*Pellaea truncata*); and white margined beardtongue (*Penstemon albomarginatus*).
5. Information on the regional setting that is critical to an assessment of environmental impacts, with special emphasis on resources that are rare or unique to the region (CEQA Guidelines § 15125[c]).
6. A full accounting of all open space and mitigation/conservation lands within and adjacent to the Project.

Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

On October 10, 2024, the Fish and Game Commission designated burrowing owl as a candidate species under CESA. The Project, as described, may result in take of burrowing owl. California Fish and Game Code section 86 defines "take" as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill". CDFW considers the take of burrowing owl and the loss of the species' habitat as a significant impact, unless mitigated to a level of less than significant, which would occur through a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP). Further, burrowing owl is protected under Fish and Game Code section 3503.5 and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

CDFW recommends that the County follow the recommendations and guidelines provided in the *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (Department of Fish and Game, March 2012); available for download from CDFW's website: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/survey-protocols>. The Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation, specifies three steps for Project impact evaluations:

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 5

- a. A habitat assessment;
- b. Surveys; and
- c. An impact assessment

Habitat assessments are conducted to evaluate the likelihood that a site supports burrowing owl. Burrowing owl surveys provide information needed to determine the potential effects of proposed projects and activities on burrowing owls, and to avoid take in accordance with Fish and Game Code sections 86, 3503, 3503.5, and 2081. Impact assessments evaluate the extent to which burrowing owls and their habitat may be impacted, directly or indirectly. The information gained from these steps should be included in the DEIR and used to identify appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures in the DEIR.

Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*)

The proposed Project occurs within the range of desert tortoise, a federally-listed threatened species and a species designated as threatened and candidate endangered pursuant to CESA. The Project has the potential to result in permanent and temporary loss, degradation and impacts to desert tortoise and desert tortoise habitat. CDFW recommends the County completes protocol level surveys over all areas (i.e., 100 percent coverage) proposed to be directly or indirectly affected by the Project, using qualified biologists and following the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2019 desert tortoise survey methodology. To reduce the likelihood of nonconcurrence with proposed surveys, methodology, and qualifications of biologists, CDFW recommends working with the USFWS and CDFW concurrently to ensure a consistent and adequate approach.

If desert tortoise are found within the Project area during surveys or construction activities, and complete avoidance is not possible CDFW strongly recommends the County acquire a CESA ITP prior to any vegetation- or ground-disturbing activities. Any take of desert tortoise without take authorization would be a violation of Fish and Game Code section 2080.

Desert kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*)

The proposed Project occurs within the range of desert kit fox, a protected species pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations section 460, which prohibits take of the species at any time. CDFW recommends the County conducts surveys over all areas proposed to be directly or indirectly affected by the Project to determine presence/absence and numbers of desert kit fox, and that this information be included in the DEIR. If desert kit fox or sign thereof is found, or if desert kit fox has the potential to occupy the Project site, CDFW recommends the County incorporate into the DEIR species-specific avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. Measures should include a pre-construction survey for desert kit fox 14 to 21 days prior to Project initiation to confirm presence/absence of desert kit fox.

American badger (*Taxidea taxus*)

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 6

The proposed Project occurs within the range of American badger, a CSSC. CDFW recommends the County completes surveys for American badger in areas proposed to be directly or indirectly affected by the Project and that the results of the surveys be included in the DEIR. If American badger or sign thereof is found, or have the potential to occupy the Project site, CDFW recommends the County incorporate into the DEIR species-specific, avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. Measures should include a pre-construction survey for American badger 14 to 21 days prior to Project initiation to confirm presence/absence of American badger.

Roosting Bats

Bats are considered non-game mammals and are afforded protection by State law from take (Fish & G. Code, § 4150) and harassment (Cal. Code of Regs, § 251.1). The proposed Project may impact bats (e.g., pallid bat). CDFW recommends that the County conducts a habitat suitability assessment to identify bat roosts within the Project site, particularly at each bridge. If bat roosts are identified, focused bat surveys should be conducted by a qualified bat biologist during the appropriate season and time using an appropriate combination of inspection, sampling, exit counts, and acoustic surveys. The results of the habitat suitability assessment and bat surveys should be included in the DEIR. If bats are found roosting, the DEIR should include species-specific avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. A measure requiring pre-construction bat surveys 14 to 30 days prior to Project initiation should be included to confirm presence/absence of bats.

Analysis of Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts to Biological Resources

The DEIR should provide a thorough discussion of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts expected to adversely affect biological resources as a result of the Project. To ensure that Project impacts to biological resources are fully analyzed, the following information should be included in the DEIR:

1. A discussion of potential impacts from lighting, noise, human activity (e.g., recreation), defensible space, wildlife-human interactions, exotic and/or invasive species, and drainage. The latter subject should address Project-related changes on drainage patterns and water quality within, upstream, and downstream of the Project site, including: volume, velocity, and frequency of existing and post-Project surface flows; polluted runoff; soil erosion and/or sedimentation in streams and water bodies; and post-Project fate of runoff from the Project site.
2. A discussion of potential indirect Project impacts on biological resources, including resources in areas adjacent to the Project footprint, such as nearby public lands (e.g. National Forests, State Parks, etc.), open space, adjacent natural habitats, riparian ecosystems, wildlife corridors, and any designated and/or proposed reserve or mitigation lands (e.g., preserved lands associated with a Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other conserved lands).

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 7

3. A cumulative effects analysis developed as described under CEQA Guidelines section 15130. Please include all potential direct and indirect Project related impacts to riparian areas, wetlands, vernal pools, alluvial fan habitats, wildlife corridors or wildlife movement areas, aquatic habitats, sensitive species and other sensitive habitats, open lands, open space, and adjacent natural habitats in the cumulative effects analysis. General and specific plans, as well as past, present, and anticipated future projects, should be analyzed relative to their impacts on similar plant communities and wildlife habitats.

Alternatives Analysis

CDFW recommends the DEIR describe and analyze a range of reasonable alternatives to the Project that are feasible, would “feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the Project,” and would avoid or substantially lessen any of the Project’s significant effects (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6[a]). The alternatives analysis should also evaluate a “no Project” alternative (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6[e]).

Mitigation Measures for Project Impacts to Biological Resources

The DEIR should identify mitigation measures and alternatives that are appropriate and adequate to avoid or minimize potential impacts, to the extent feasible. The County should assess all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that are expected to occur as a result of the implementation of the Project and its long-term operation and maintenance. When proposing measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts, CDFW recommends consideration of the following:

1. *Fully Protected Species*: CDFW may issue permits authorizing take of fully protected species if the requirements under Fish and Game Code section 2081.15 are met, otherwise fully protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time and projects should be designed to completely avoid any fully protected species that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the project areas. CDFW recommends that the County analyzes impacts to fully protected species and their habitats, and includes in the DEIR measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to fully protected species, such as but not limited to, desert big horn sheep.
2. *Sensitive Plant Communities*: CDFW considers sensitive plant communities to be imperiled habitats having both local and regional significance. Plant communities, alliances, and associations with a statewide ranking of S-1, S-2, S-3, and S-4 should be considered sensitive and declining at the local and regional level. These ranks can be obtained by querying the CNDDDB and are included in *The Manual of California Vegetation* (Sawyer et al. 2009). The DEIR should include measures to fully avoid and otherwise protect sensitive plant communities from Project-related direct and indirect impacts.
3. *California Species of Special Concern (CSSC)*: CSSC status applies to animals

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 8

generally not listed under the federal Endangered Species Act or CESA, but which nonetheless are declining at a rate that could result in listing, or historically occurred in low numbers and known threats to their persistence currently exist. CSSCs should be considered during the environmental review process. CSSC that have the potential or have been documented to occur within or adjacent to the Project area include but are not limited to Le Conte's thrasher, loggerhead shrike, pallid bat, and Mojave fringe-toed lizard.

4. *Mitigation*: CDFW considers adverse Project-related impacts to sensitive species and habitats to be significant to both local and regional ecosystems, and the DEIR should include mitigation measures for adverse Project-related impacts to these resources. Mitigation measures should emphasize avoidance and reduction of Project impacts. For unavoidable impacts, onsite habitat restoration and/or enhancement, and preservation should be evaluated and discussed in detail. Where habitat preservation is not available onsite, offsite land acquisition, management, and preservation should be evaluated and discussed in detail.

The DEIR should include measures to perpetually protect the targeted habitat values within mitigation areas from direct and indirect adverse impacts in order to meet mitigation objectives to offset Project-induced qualitative and quantitative losses of biological values. Specific issues that should be addressed include restrictions on access, proposed land dedications, long-term monitoring and management programs, control of illegal dumping, water pollution, increased human intrusion, etc.

If sensitive species and/or their habitat may be impacted from the Project, CDFW recommends the inclusion of specific mitigation in the DEIR. CEQA Guidelines section 15126.4, subdivision (a)(1)(8) states that formulation of feasible mitigation measures should not be deferred until some future date. The Court of Appeal in *San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center v. County of Merced* (2007) 149 Cal.App.4th 645 struck down mitigation measures which required formulating management plans developed in consultation with State and Federal wildlife agencies after Project approval. Courts have also repeatedly not supported conclusions that impacts are mitigable when essential studies, and therefore impact assessments, are incomplete (*Sundstrom v. County of Mendocino* (1988) 202 Cal. App. 3d. 296; *Gentry v. City of Murrieta* (1995) 36 Cal. App. 4th 1359; *Endangered Habitat League, Inc. v. County of Orange* (2005) 131 Cal. App. 4th 777).

5. *Nesting Birds and Migratory Bird Treaty Act*: Please note that it is the Project proponent's responsibility to comply with all applicable laws related to nesting birds and birds of prey. Fish and Game Code sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 afford protective measures as follows: Fish and Game Code section 3503 makes it unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by Fish and Game Code or any regulation made pursuant thereto. Fish and Game Code section 3503.5 makes it unlawful to take,

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 9

possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey) to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by Fish and Game Code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto. Fish and Game Code section 3513 makes it unlawful to take or possess any migratory nongame bird except as provided by the rules and regulations adopted by the Secretary of the Interior under provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 703 et seq.).

CDFW recommends that the DEIR include the results of avian surveys, as well as specific avoidance and minimization measures to ensure that impacts to nesting birds do not occur. Project-specific avoidance and minimization measures may include but not be limited to: Project phasing and timing, monitoring of Project-related noise (where applicable), sound walls, and buffers, where appropriate. The DEIR should also include specific avoidance and minimization measures that will be implemented should a nest be located within the Project site. CDFW recommends that pre-construction nesting bird surveys be proposed in the DEIR and conducted no more than 3 days prior to vegetation clearing or ground disturbance activities, as instances of nesting could be missed if surveys are conducted sooner.

6. *Moving out of Harm's Way*: To avoid direct mortality, CDFW recommends that the County condition the DEIR to require that a CDFW-approved qualified biologist be retained to be onsite prior to and during all ground- and habitat-disturbing activities to move out of harm's way non-listed, non-candidate, and non-fully protected wildlife that would otherwise be injured or killed from Project-related activities. Movement of wildlife out of harm's way should be limited to only those individuals that would otherwise be injured or killed, and individuals should be moved only as far as necessary to ensure their safety (i.e., CDFW does not recommend relocation to other areas). Furthermore, it should be noted that the temporary relocation of onsite wildlife does not constitute effective mitigation for the purposes of offsetting Project impacts associated with habitat loss.
7. *Translocation of Species*: CDFW generally does not support the use of relocation, salvage, and/or transplantation as mitigation for impacts to rare, candidate, threatened, or endangered species as studies have shown that these efforts are experimental in nature and largely unsuccessful.

California Endangered Species Act

CDFW is responsible for ensuring appropriate conservation of fish and wildlife resources including threatened, endangered, and/or candidate plant and animal species, pursuant to CESA. CDFW recommends that a CESA ITP be obtained if the Project has the potential to result in "take" (California Fish and Game Code section 86 defines "take" as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill") of State-listed CESA species, either through construction or over the life of the Project. It is the policy of CESA to conserve, protect, enhance, and restore State-

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 10

listed CESA species and their habitats.

Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement Program

Based on review of material submitted with the NOP and review of aerial photography, multiple stream features underpass the bridges associated with this Project. Based on the Project plans included in the NOP, it is likely that the Project applicant will need to notify CDFW per Fish and Game Code section 1602. Fish and Game Code section 1602 requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may do one or more of the following: Substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream or lake; Substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel or bank of any river, stream, or lake; or Deposit debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream or lake. Please note that "any river, stream or lake" includes those that are episodic (i.e., those that are dry for periods of time) as well as those that are perennial (i.e., those that flow year-round). This includes ephemeral streams, desert washes, and watercourses with a subsurface flow.

Upon receipt of a complete notification, CDFW determines if the proposed Project activities may substantially adversely affect existing fish and wildlife resources and whether a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement is required. An LSA Agreement includes measures necessary to protect existing fish and wildlife resources. CDFW may suggest ways to modify your Project that would eliminate or reduce harmful impacts to fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW's issuance of an LSA Agreement is a "project" subject to CEQA (see Pub. Resources Code 21065). To facilitate issuance of an LSA Agreement, if necessary, the DEIR should fully identify the potential impacts to the lake, stream, or riparian resources, and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, and monitoring and reporting commitments. Early consultation with CDFW is recommended, since modification of the proposed Project may be required to avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources. To submit a Lake or Streambed Alteration notification package, please go to <https://epims.wildlife.ca.gov/index.do>.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e).) Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). Information can be submitted online or via completion of the CNDDDB field survey form at the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The completed form can be mailed electronically to CNDDDB at the following email address: CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov. The types of information reported to CNDDDB can be found at the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plants-and-Animals>.

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 11

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the NOP for the Project and recommends that the County address CDFW's comments and concerns in the forthcoming DEIR. If you should have any questions pertaining to the comments provided in this letter, please contact Emily Leon, Environmental Scientist, by email at Emily.Leon@wildlife.ca.gov or at (760) 644-5976.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

84FBB8273E4C480...

Alisa Ellsworth
Environmental Program Manager

ec: Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, Sacramento
state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

REFERENCES

California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). 2012. Staff report on burrowing owl mitigation. State of California, Natural Resources Agency. Available for download at:
<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=83843&inline>

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2018. Protocols for surveying and evaluating impacts to special status native plant populations and sensitive natural communities. Available for download at:
<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=18959&inline>

California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) Government [ds45]. 2022. Calif. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. Biogeographic Information and Observation System.

Arnold Gerber, Senior Planner
County of San Bernardino
March 21, 2025
Page 12

Sawyer, J. O., T. Keeler-Wolf, and J. M. Evens. 2009. A manual of California Vegetation, 2nd ed. California Native Plant Society Press, Sacramento, California.
<http://vegetation.cnps.org/>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2019. Preparing for any action that may occur within the range of the Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office. Reno, NV.