



County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

INITIAL STUDY ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

1. Project title:

Initial Study No. 7336 – Watts Creek Bridge Replacement

2. Lead agency name and address:

*County of Fresno
2220 Tulare Street 6th Floor
Fresno, CA 93721*

3. Contact person and phone number:

Chrissy Monfette – (559) 600-4245

4. Project location:

The project site is located on Watts Valley Road, approximately 5.59 miles east of Pittman Hill Road, near APN 140-150-01.

5. Project Applicant's name and address:

*County of Fresno – Design Division
2220 Tulare Street 6th Floor
Fresno, CA 93721*

6. General Plan designation:

Agricultural

7. Zoning:

AE-40 (Exclusive Agricultural, 40-acre minimum parcel size)

8. Description of project: (Describe the whole action involved, including, but not limited to, later phases of the project, and any secondary, support, or off-site features necessary for its implementation. Attach additional sheets if necessary.)

Replace and realign the existing 22-foot, functionally obsolete Watts Creek Bridge on Watts Valley Road with a new, 47-foot single-span, cast-in-place, reinforced concrete slab bridge to be placed approximately 50 feet downstream of the existing bridge. Demolition of the existing bridge will occur when construction of the replacement bridge is complete.

9. Surrounding land uses and setting: Briefly describe the project's surroundings:

The Project is located in a rural setting with open fields on either side of Watts Valley Road. Other than the road and existing bridge, no other structures are located within or immediately adjacent to the Project area. There is tree growth on both sides of Watts Creek, including at the project site. Land in this area is used primarily for grazing.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Forestry Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hazards and Hazardous Materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology/Water Quality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic | <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance | <input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gas Emissions |

DETERMINATION OF REQUIRED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT:

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

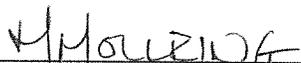
- I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment. **A NEGATIVE DECLARATION WILL BE PREPARED.**
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the Mitigation Measures described on the attached sheet have been added to the project. **A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION WILL BE PREPARED.**
- I find the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required
- I find that as a result of the proposed project, no new effects could occur, or new Mitigation Measures would be required that have not been addressed within the scope of a previous Environmental Impact Report.

PERFORMED BY:

REVIEWED BY:



 Chrissy Monfette, Planner



 Marianne Mollring, Senior Planner

Date: 7/18/2018

Date: 7-18-18

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**INITIAL STUDY
ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM
(Initial Study Application No. 6950 and
Classified Conditional Use Permit
Application No. 3489)**

The following checklist is used to determine if the proposed project could potentially have a significant effect on the environment. Explanations and information regarding each question follow the checklist.

1 = No Impact

2 = Less Than Significant Impact

3 = Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated

4 = Potentially Significant Impact

I. AESTHETICS

Would the project:

- 1 a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- 3 b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?
- 3 c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
- 1 d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

II. AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

Would the project:

- 2 a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?
- 1 b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract?
- 1 c) Conflict with existing zoning for forest land, timberland or timberland zoned Timberland Production?
- 1 d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?
- 1 e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

III. AIR QUALITY

Would the project:

- 2 a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable Air Quality Plan?
- 2 b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?
- 2 c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under applicable Federal or State ambient air quality standards (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?
- 1 d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?
- 1 e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- 3 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 or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?
- 3 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?
- 3 c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally-protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?
- 2 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?
- 2 e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?
- 2 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?

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- 3 a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Public Resources Code Section 15064.5?
- 3 b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 15064.5?
- 3 c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site, or unique geologic feature?
- 3 d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?
- 3 e) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074?

VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:

- a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
 - 2 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?
 - 2 ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?
 - 2 iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?
 - 1 iv) Landslides?
- 1 b) Result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil?
- 1 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 on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

- 1 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?
- 1 e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

VII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:

- 1 a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?
- 1 b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

VIII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the project:

- 1 a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?
- 2 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?
- 1 c) Create hazardous emissions or utilize hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?
- 1 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?
- 1 e) Result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area for a project located within an Airport Land Use Plan or, where such a Plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport?
- 1 f) Result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area for a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip?
- 1 g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted Emergency Response Plan or Emergency Evacuation Plan?
- 1 h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?

IX. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

- 1 a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?
- 1 b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?
- 2 c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site?
- 2 d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or off site?

- 2 e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?
- 2 f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?
- 1 g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a Federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?
- 1 h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?
- 1 i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?
- 2 j) Cause inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?

X. LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

- 1 a) Physically divide an established community?
- 1 b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, the General Plan, Specific Plan, local coastal program, or Zoning Ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?
- 1 c) Conflict with any applicable Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan?

XI. MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- 1 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?
- 1 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?

XII. NOISE

Would the project:

- 1 a) Expose persons to or generate noise levels in excess of standards established in the local General Plan or Noise Ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?
- 1 b) Expose persons to or generate excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels?
- 1 c) Create a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?
- 1 d) Create a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?
- 1 e) Expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels, for a project located within an Airport Land Use Plan or, where such a Plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport?
- 1 f) Expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels, for a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip?

XIII. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

- 1 a) Induce substantial 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)?
- 1 b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

- 1 c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

XIV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:

Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically-altered governmental facilities, or the 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:

- 1 a) Fire protection?
- 1 b) Police protection?
- 1 c) Schools?
- 1 d) Parks?
- 1 e) Other public facilities?

XV. RECREATION

Would the project:

- 1 a) 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?
- 1 b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

XVI. TRANSPORTATION / TRAFFIC

Would the project:

- 1 a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including, but not limited to, intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?
- 1 b) Conflict with an applicable Congestion Management Program including, but not limited to, level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the County congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?
- 1 c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location, which results in substantial safety risks?
- 1 d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

- 1 e) Result in inadequate emergency access?
- 1 f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?

XVII. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:

- 1 a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?
- 1 b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?
- 1 c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?
- 1 d) Have sufficient water supplies available to service the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?
- 1 e) 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?
- 1 f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?
- 1 g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

XVIII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Would the project:

- 3 a) Have the potential to 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, 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?
- 1 b) 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.)
- 1 c) Have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Documents Referenced:

This Initial Study is referenced by the documents listed below. These documents are available for public review at the County of Fresno, Department of Public Works and Planning, Development Services and Capital Projects Division, 2220 Tulare Street, Suite A, Fresno, California (corner of M & Tulare Streets).

- Fresno County General Plan, Policy Document, Background Report, and Final EIR
- Fresno County Zoning Ordinance
- Important Farmland 2014 Map, State Department of Conservation
- California Geological Survey Maps, State Department of Conservation (Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone and Seismic Hazard Zone Maps, Regulatory Maps, Landslides, Mineral Lands Classification, Tsunami)
- California Environmental Protection Agency Department of Toxic Substances Control EnviroStor Data Management System
- Final Farmland Impact Memo, Caltrans, September 14, 2016
- Historic Property Survey Report prepared by Applied Earthworks, October 28, 2016
(continued on next page)

Initial Site Assessment by Area West Environmental, Inc., October 19, 2016
Natural Environment Study prepared by Area West Environmental, Inc., March 29, 2017
Scenic Resources Evaluation and Visual Impact Technical Memorandum, Caltrans March 14, 2017
Water Quality Technical Memorandum, Area West Environmental, Inc., January 18, 2017

CMM

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County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

APPLICANT: County of Fresno Design Division

APPLICATION NOS.: Initial Study Application No. 7336

DESCRIPTION: Replace and realign the existing 22-foot, functionally obsolete Watts Creek Bridge on Watts Valley Road with a new, 47-foot single-span, cast-in-place, reinforced concrete slab bridge to be placed approximately 50 feet downstream of the existing bridge.

LOCATION: On Watts Valley Road, approximately 5.59 miles east of Pittman Hill Road.

I. AESTHETICS

A. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There are approximately 9 residences within ½ mile of the project. The project is not visible from any of these residences; however, most residents travel through the project site on a regular, if not daily, basis. The viewsheds from either direction on Watts Valley Road are quite similar; the eastbound viewshed has more long distance views of the Sierra Nevada and the westbound viewshed features views of the oak-woodland dominated hillsides of Watts Valley.

B. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway; or

C. Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

Watts Valley Road has been designated by the Fresno County General Plan (Figure OS-2) as a scenic drive. As this project proposes to replace the existing bridge and provide minor realignment of its curve, there will be no long-term impacts to the visual integrity of Watts Valley Road.

The Project is located in the foothills of eastern Fresno County. The 5.5-acre Project area is located on a single parcel (APN 140-150-01), which is zoned by the County as AE-40 (Exclusive Agricultural, 40-acre minimum parcel size). The Project is located in a rural setting with open fields on either side of Watts Valley Road. Other than the road and existing bridge, no other structures are located within or immediately adjacent to the Project area. There is tree growth on both sides of Watts Creek, including at the project site.

It is anticipated that seven trees will be removed to accommodate the new bridge. The realignment of the Watts Creek bridge is consistent with the setting of the Project area and the existing visual elements of the viewsheds of residents and motorists. Removal of valley oak-sycamore riparian woodland habitat along Watts Creek would constitute a loss of scenic resources; however, some of the affected trees are of shorter stature than remaining trees or are non-native species. One of the more prominent Valley oak trees visible in the eastbound direction will be impacted. Eventually, the remaining Valley oak trees will grow into the canopy gap. Removal of the non-native invasive species (common fig) and replanting native riparian species (e.g., valley oak, California sycamore, and arroyo willow) where construction disturbance occurs, including old bridge/road areas, will restore the visual connectivity of the riparian corridor in the future. The Mitigation Measures noted below requiring the replacement of removed trees and measures in section IV.C requiring the restoration of impacted wetland areas will ensure that there the long-term impacts to scenic views will be less than significant.

***Mitigation Measures**

1. *The disturbance or removal of riparian and other vegetation shall not exceed the minimum necessary to complete operations (with the exception of non-native, invasive plant species) and shall only occur within the defined work area. Precautions shall be taken to avoid other damage to vegetation by people or equipment. The disturbed portions of the stream bed, banks or channel shall be restored to as near their original condition as possible (see Restoration below).*
2. *Native riparian shrubs and trees, and oak trees with trunks greater than or equal to four (4) inches diameter measured at breast height (DBH), if removed during Project activities shall be mitigated for by implementation of a Revegetation Plan described in Restoration below.*
3. **Restoration** *shall include the revegetation of all disturbed soils and new fill, including recontoured slopes and all other cleared areas, with riparian vegetation or other plants as appropriate. The Applicant shall have a qualified biologist prepare and implement a Revegetation Plan and submit it to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for approval prior to commencement of the proposed work. The Revegetation Plan shall address the following:*
 - a) *Compensation for removed trees by:*
 - b) *Identifying species damaged or removed during Project activities.*
 - c) *Describing how, where and when replacement shrubs and trees will be planted:*
 - i. *Riparian trees (i.e. willow, cottonwood, poplar, alder, ash, etc.) and shrubs shall be replaced in-kind, at a minimum replacement ratio of 4:1, and planted in the nearest suitable location to the area where they were removed.*
 - ii. *Oaks having a DBH of greater than four (4) inches shall be replaced in-kind, at a minimum ratio of 4:1, and planted during the winter dormancy period in the nearest suitable location to the area where they were removed. Heritage trees greater than 24 inches DBH shall be replaced at a minimum 10:1 ratio.*
 - iii. *Non-native, invasive plant species (i.e., arundo and tree-of-heaven) may be removed and replaced with native riparian species.*

iv. Proposing measures to be taken (i.e. irrigation methods if necessary and maintenance) to ensure a performance criteria of 75 percent survival of planted trees for a period of three (3) consecutive years and an additional two (2) years without assistance.

d) Seeding and mulching exposed slopes, or stream banks not revegetated with riparian shrubs or trees, with a blend of a minimum of three (3) locally native grass species:

e) One (1) or two (2) sterile non-native perennial grass species may be added to the seed mix provided that the amount does not exceed 25 percent of the total seed mix by count.

f) Locally native wildflower and/or shrub seeds may also be included in the seed mix.

g) Seeding shall be completed as soon as possible, but no later than November 15 of the year construction ends.

h) A seed mixture shall be submitted to the Department for approval prior to application. At the discretion of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, all exposed areas where seeding is considered unsuccessful after 90 days shall receive appropriate soil preparation and a second application of seeding, straw, or mulch as soon as is practical on a date mutually agreed upon.

D. Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There is no additional lighting proposed with this bridge project and the new bridge will not be a source of new glare due to the construction materials. Following construction, the road will be aligned to provide a softer curve near its intersection with Hog Mountain Fire Road, but there will be no substantial variation to the existing view from the road.

II. AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

A. Would the project convert prime or unique farmlands or farmland of state-wide importance to non-agricultural use?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

A technical memo was prepared by Area West Environmental, dated September 14, 2016, to identify potential impacts to Farmland. For purposes of determining the farmland conversion impact rating associated with implementation of the Project, the California Department of Conservation's Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model was utilized.

The Project's final LESA score is 46.8. Per the LESA Instruction Manual, scores between 40 and 59 are only considered significant if the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment sub-scores are each greater than or equal to 20 points. Here, the Project scores highly in the Land Evaluation segment, but very low in the Site Assessment segment. Therefore, based on the LESA Model the Project does not exceed the significance threshold for agricultural land

conversion. There is no active farmland within the project area, which is generally used for grazing.

- B. Would the project conflict with existing agricultural zoning or Williamson Act Contracts?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The surrounding parcels are not restricted by Williamson Act Contracts. Agricultural land in the vicinity of the project site is used for grazing and therefore the proposed realignment will not impact the use, as there is sufficient area for grazing to continue.

- C. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for or cause rezoning of forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production; or
- D. Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or
- E. Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural uses or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located near land zoned for Timberland Production. There are no other potential changes to the existing environment which could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural uses or Forest-land to non-forest use. Following construction, the realignment of Watts Valley Road and the new bridge will serve the same purpose as existing facilities.

III. AIR QUALITY

- A. Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable Air Quality Plan; or
- B. Would the project violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation; or
- C. Would the project result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under a Federal or State ambient air quality standard?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (Air District) reviewed this project and did not identify any concerns with potential air quality standards violations or nonconformity with existing Air Quality Plans. The demolition and reconstruction of this bridge may require adherence to existing rules and regulations administered by the Air District, but compliance to these existing regulations will reduce impacts related to the release of criteria pollutants to less than significant.

- D. Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations; or
- E. Would the project create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The demolition and construction of the bridge are not anticipated to release substantial pollutant concentrations or create objectionable odors. Further, the nearest sensitive receptor is the single-family residence approximately 1,000 feet east of the project site.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- A. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any candidate, sensitive, or special-status species?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

During the pre-field investigation, 22 special-status plant species were identified as having potential to occur in the vicinity of the Project (Natural Environmental Study (Minimal Impacts), January 2017). The scope of this investigation determined the Biological Study Area (BSA), which includes the project area and 250 feet from the project boundary. Of the 22 potential special-status plant species, 18 were determined to not have the potential to be affected by Project construction because: 1) the BSA lacks suitable habitat; 2) the BSA is outside the species' known range; and/or 3) field surveys determined that the species is not present. Three special-status species were assumed present within the BSA, because the suitable habitat for the species is present, and the botanical survey was conducted outside the bloom periods for the species (spiny-sepaled button celery [*Eryngium spinosepalum*], forked hare-leaf [*Lagophylla dichotoma*], and Madera leptosiphon [*Leptosiphon serrulatus*]).

The project area supports potential habitat for the following special-status wildlife and other protected wildlife species: western pond turtle, foothill yellow-legged frog, ring-tailed cat, western red bat, San Joaquin roach, and migratory birds and raptors. Of those species, only the San Joaquin roach was observed during the site visit on September 23, 2016.

***Mitigation Measures**

1. *Prior to the commencement of work in the Project area, including grading and equipment staging, all construction personnel shall participate in an environmental awareness training regarding special-status species and sensitive habitats present in the Project area. If new construction personnel are added to the Project, they must receive the mandatory training before starting work. As part of the training, an environmental awareness handout will be provided to all personnel that describes and illustrates sensitive resources to be avoided during Project construction.*
2. *Prior to any ground-disturbing activity occurring within the Project area, the County shall ensure that temporary construction barrier fencing, silt fencing, and/or flagging is installed between the work area and environmentally sensitive habitat areas (i.e., waters of the U.S. and State, riparian habitat, special-status species habitat, and buffers around active bird/raptor nests and ring-tail cat dens), as appropriate. The exact location of the fencing and/or flagging shall be determined by the Resident Engineer in coordination with a qualified biologist, with the goal of protecting sensitive biological habitat and water quality. The fencing/flagging shall be checked on a weekly basis and maintained until ground disturbance is complete. No construction activity shall be allowed until this condition is satisfied. Any required barrier or sediment fencing and a note reflecting this condition shall be shown on the final construction documents.*

- B. Would the project 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 (CDFW) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

Present along the edges of Watts Creek, the riparian woodland vegetation community contains three distinct canopy layers consisting of overstory trees, bramble, and an herbaceous understory. Due to more mesic conditions on the western/northern side of the existing bridge, riparian woodland vegetation in this area is denser than the other portions of the study area. Within this vegetation community, the overstory is dominated by valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) and California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) with scattered interior live oaks (*Quercus wislizenii*) and arroyo willows (*Salix lasiolepis*). The bramble layer consists entirely of Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*). Near Watts Creek, the herbaceous understory includes hydrophytic plants including spearmint (*Mentha spicata*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), and rough hedge-nettle (*Stachys rigida*). Areas within this vegetation community further from the creek include foxtail brome, ripgut brome, poverty brome, poison-hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), and hedge parsley (*Torilis arvensis*). The riparian woodland vegetation community is considered a natural community of special concern. The mitigation measures in Section IV.A (above) will reduce impacts to natural communities; however, the possibility remains that new invasive species may be introduced to the site during construction. Compliance to a mitigation measure requiring erosion control materials and construction vehicles to be free of weeds, mud, and other seed-bearing material will reduce the chance of contamination to less than significant.

***Mitigation Measures**

See Section IV.A (above); and

3. *To prevent the accidental introduction of new invasive species into the Project area during construction, the project contractor shall implement the following control measures:*
 - *Only certified noxious weed-free erosion control materials may be used. All straw and seed material shall be certified as weed-free prior to being used at the Project area.*
 - *Contractor will wash all construction equipment prior to bringing it onto the job site. Inspection will ensure that equipment arrives on site free of mud and seed-bearing material.*
 - *Any reseeded of disturbed soil areas and newly constructed slopes will use an appropriate native seed mix.*
- C. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on federally-protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption or other means?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

Watts Creek, an intermittent drainage, has a low-flow channel that varies in width from 8 to 15 feet and steep banks that are generally one to three feet wide. In the northwestern portion of the BSA, water was still flowing at the time of the survey within the intermittent drainage, before terminating in a series of small pools. The deepest ponded areas within Watts Creek were between 18 and 24 inches deep, and were located in the northwestern corner of the BSA, at the confluence of Watts Creek and a small tributary stream. The remainder of Watts Creek within

the BSA, including the location of the new bridge, was dry. Substrates within Watts Creek included coarse sands, gravel, and small cobbles, with more sand present in the eastern half of the BSA.

Vegetation growing within Watts Creek was generally sparse, and included arroyo willow, stinging nettle, Himalayan blackberry, common fig (*Ficus carica*), rough hedge-nettle, and spearmint. The intermittent drainage vegetation community is considered a waters of the U.S. and State, and is regulated by the USACE and RWQCB under Sections 404 and 401 of the CWA, respectively. Therefore, the intermittent drainage is considered a natural community of special concern.

Two small ephemeral drainages are present within the Project area. Formed by stormwater flows draining into Watts Creek, these two drainages are inundated/saturated for relatively brief periods, and primarily support upland vegetation species. The smaller drainage is present within the riparian woodland vegetation community north of Watts Creek and is sparsely vegetated with non-native annual grasses. The larger drainage is fed by a culvert that runs underneath Watts Valley Road and conveys stormwater flows from upslope of the road to Watts Creek. Vegetation within both drainages consists of upland herbaceous species, including ripgut brome, Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), vinegar weed, and virgate tarweed. Just before terminating into Watts Creek, the larger eastern ephemeral drainage is covered by dense Himalayan blackberry bramble.

The ephemeral drainage vegetation community is considered a waters of the U.S. and State, and is regulated by the USACE and RWQCB under Sections 404 and 401 of the CWA, respectively. Therefore, the ephemeral drainages located within the BSA are considered a natural community of special concern.

The project will have temporary and permanent impacts to the intermittent drainage vegetation community. The following mitigation measures requiring the county to restore the impacted area and/or purchase equivalent wetland mitigation will reduce impacts to less than significant.

***Mitigation Measures**

1. See Section I.C.

- D. Would the project 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?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The riparian corridor of Watts Creek, which bisects the BSA, is a potential movement corridor for wildlife. Watts Creek is considered an intermittent drainage, with little to no flows during the dry season. Downstream of the BSA, Watts Creek flows into Pine Flat Lake, an artificial reservoir formed by the Pine Flat Dam. As a result of low water flows during the dry-season and the presence of the Pine Flat Dam, Watts Creek provides only marginal fish migration habitat to non-salmonid fish species. Vegetation within and surrounding the BSA is characterized by a mosaic of oak woodlands, and annual grasslands, which supports wildlife movement locally and regionally. Due to its limited contribution to migratory wildlife corridors and the limited impacts to the streambed as a result of this project, impacts will be less than significant.

- E. Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Within the County, oak trees are regulated by the Fresno County Oak Woodland Management Guidelines, a voluntary program to conserve oaks within the County. Construction of the proposed Project may result in the removal of four valley oak trees (*Quercus lobata*). Construction of the Project also may require ground-disturbance within the drip-lines of an additional three valley oaks.

- F. Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

A total of 18 invasive plant species listed in the Invasive Plant Inventory were documented within the BSA. Of those 18 species, 6 were rated as Limited (minor ecological impacts to native species), 9 as Moderate, and 3 as High (severe ecological impacts to native species). Most of these species are widespread throughout the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada foothills, and none are Cal-IPC Red Alert species; therefore, construction of the Project would not result in new or severe infestations of invasive plant species. This project is not subject to a Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regions, or state habitat conservation plan.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

- A. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5; or
- B. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5; or
- C. Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature; or
- D. Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries; or
- E. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

Applied Earthworks (Æ) prepared a Historic Property Survey Report and an Archeological Survey Report to determine the potential for this project to impact tribal, paleontological, or historic resources.

On behalf of the County, Æ contacted the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) on August 10, 2016, to request a review of the Sacred Lands file for sacred or sensitive Native American areas that may be within or near the Project area. In a reply on August 12, 2016, the NAHC stated that there are no sacred sites identified within or adjacent to the APE.

On August 24, 2016, the staff of the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center at California State University, Bakersfield, performed a records search of the California Historical Resources Information System which encompassed the project APE and a 0.5-mile radius surrounding the APE. The records search identified no previously recorded resources within the APE and one previously recorded multicomponent resource within the 0.5-mile search radius. This resource contains the remains of a historic-era homestead with a scatter of historic-era artifacts as well as a bedrock milling outcrop with over 80 mortar holes and associated pestles and metates. The records search did not identify any previous cultural resources studies within the APE or 0.5-mile radius of the APE. AÆ's review of inventories, registers, and other cultural resources lists available online did not reveal any previously recorded cultural resources within the APE.

In an email dated October 6, 2016, Environmental Protection Director Christina McDonald of the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indian responded that the North Fork Rancheria had no comments about the Project. On October 11, 2016, AÆ attempted follow-up contact by telephone and/or e-mail with the representatives who had not responded to letters. AÆ received three additional responses to its request for information: Stan Alec of the Kings River Choinumni Farm Tribe acknowledged via telephone that the Tribe did not have any concerns at this time; Chairperson Charlotte Lange of the Mono Lake Indian Community inquired via telephone as to the results of the pedestrian survey and wanted to make sure the local tribe was aware of the Project; and through telephone conversations and e-mails, Table Mountain Rancheria representatives Kim Taylor and Robert Pennell were notified of the Project and sent a copy of the initial outreach letter that was addressed to Chairperson Leanne Walker-Grant. Cultural Resources Director Robert Pennell telephoned on October 12, 2016, and inquired about the pedestrian survey findings. Additionally, Pennell requested a copy of the inventory report once finalized; he voiced no further concerns at that time.

A summary of the project was provided to the following Tribes under the Provisions of Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52): Table Mountain Rancheria, Dumna Wo Wah Tribal Government, and the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians. Table Mountain Rancheria and the Dumna Wo Wah Tribal Government failed to respond within 30 days and therefore declined participation. The Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians requested participation within 30 days. County Staff provided the report prepared by AÆ and received no further communication from the Tribe. Consultation under the provisions of AB 52 was concluded on March 12, 2018. No TCRs were identified.

Constructed in 1937 and widened in 1973, Bridge 42C0317 is listed in the Caltrans Historic Bridge Inventory as Category 5 and was determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

An archaeological survey on September 14, 2016, encountered no cultural resources within the 5.86-acre APE. Along with the findings of the field survey, the results of the records search, archival research, and Native American consultation suggests that the likelihood of exposing buried intact archaeological remains during construction is low; however, the potential exists for previously-unknown artifacts or cultural resources to be uncovered during ground-disturbing activities. Therefore, a mitigation measure requiring that all work halt if a find is uncovered will be included:

***Mitigation Measure**

In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist should be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during

ground disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition. All normal evidence procedures should be followed by photos, reports, video, and etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours

VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

- A. Would the project expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including risk of loss, injury or death involving:
1. Rupture of a known earthquake?
 2. Strong seismic ground shaking?
 3. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?
 4. Landslides; or
- B. Would the project result in substantial erosion or loss of topsoil; or
- C. Would the project result in on-site or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The Project is located within the Sierra Nevada physiographic province. The Sierra is a tilted fault block nearly 400 miles long. Its east face is a high, rugged multiple scarp, contrasting with the gentle western slope that disappears under sediments of the Great Valley. Deep river canyons are cut into the western slope. Their upper courses, especially in massive granites of the higher Sierra, are modified by glacial sculpturing, forming such scenic features as Yosemite Valley (California Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey, 2002). However, steep slopes do not exist in the vicinity of the project site and therefore risk of landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse is less than significant.

- D. Would the project be located on expansive soils, creating substantial risks to life or property?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to Figure 9-6 (FCGPBR), the project site is not located in an area at risk of damage to property or risk to life due to expansive soils. Further, the soil at the project site is primarily classified as Honcut fine sandy loam, which exhibits low shrink-swell potential.

- E. Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative disposal systems where sewers are not available for wastewater disposal?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There are no septic tanks or other wastewater disposal systems proposed as part of this project. Facilities required during construction will be temporary, portable units.

VII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

- A. Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment; or
- B. Would the project conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There is no expansion of lanes or usage associated with this bridge replacement project. Since the capacity will not be changed, there will be no increase in use and no increase in the amount of greenhouse gases produced by vehicles using the bridge. Construction will occur in compliance with Air District regulations which will ensure that the emissions of greenhouse gases are less than significant.

VIII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

- A. Would the project create a significant public hazard through routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Following construction, the replacement bridge will provide access across Watts Creek for general traffic. There is no transport or use of hazardous materials associated with this function.

- B. Would the project create a significant public hazard involving accidental release of hazardous materials into the environment?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Elevated concentrations of lead (from use of leaded gasoline) and other metals are sometimes associated with older roadways. Watts Valley Road was present within the Project area as early as 1922. Sampling and analysis for aerially-deposited lead shall be performed in unpaved areas near the ends of the bridge structure that will be disturbed as part of the proposed improvements. This sampling shall be consistent with Caltrans' Standard Special Provision (SSP) 14-11.03. Elevated concentrations of lead may be present in earth material within the Project boundaries. Work where earth material will be disturbed may result in lead exposure to workers. Handling, removing, and disposing of earth materials containing lead shall be performed consistent with Caltrans' SSP 7-1.02K(6)(j)(iii).

The Bridge is constructed of timber stringers with a timber deck. The timber stringers are supported by timber sills on concrete abutments. It is possible that the timber stringers and deck were treated with a wood-preserving chemical. The potential also exists for asbestos-containing materials to have been used in the construction of the Bridge in 1937. Prior to demolition, the wood timber stringers and deck shall be sampled for the presence of wood-preserving chemicals, and treated wood waste should be handled consistent with Caltrans' SSP 14-11.09 and sampling and removal of asbestos-containing materials should be performed in accordance with Caltrans' non-SSP 14-11.11.

Painted surfaces were not observed on the Bridge at the time of the Project site reconnaissance. Painted surfaces that are disturbed during construction may result in debris

containing heavy metals or toxic fumes when heated, which can expose workers to health hazards. If painted surfaces are discovered during construction activities, the paint shall be sampled for the presence of heavy metals and the debris generated during the construction shall be handled consistent with Caltrans' SSP 14-11.08.

- C. Would the project create hazardous emissions or utilize hazardous materials, substances or waste within one quarter-mile of a school?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There are no schools within one mile of the project site.

- D. Would the project be located on a hazardous materials site?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Federal, state and local regulatory agencies publish databases which were reviewed to identify businesses and properties that handle hazardous materials or hazardous waste, or are the known location of a release of hazardous substances to soil and/or groundwater. In addition, local regulatory agencies were contacted for reasonably ascertainable and practically reviewable information regarding environmental conditions present at facilities in the area of the Project. Based on the database and local regulatory agency records reviewed, there are no off-site facilities that are considered to have a potential hazardous waste impact on the Project site.

- E. Would a project located within an airport land use plan or, absent such a plan, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area; or
- F. Would a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located near an airport or within an airport land use plan. Review of aerial photos (Google Earth, May 30, 2014) did not identify any private airstrips in the vicinity of the project site. Even if such uses were present, the realignment of the road and replacement of the bridge will be unmanned after construction and there would be no increase in safety hazards as a result of this application.

- G. Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted Emergency Response Plan or Emergency Evacuation Plan; or
- H. Would the project expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Following construction, the new bridge will serve the same purpose as the existing improvements. The width will be increased and the curve straightened compared to the existing structure, which will improve safety. During construction, the existing bridge will remain in place to allow traffic to cross Watts Creek at this location. Demolition will occur only after the replacement bridge is in place. Therefore, no impacts to Emergency Response Plans or

Emergency Evacuation plans are anticipated. While the site is in a location that is at high risk of damage from wildland fires, there is no risk that the replacement bridge will put people or structures at additional risk from wildfires. Due to the improved safety of the bridge and the road alignment, this project would likely have a minor beneficial benefit to persons using Watts Valley Road during an evacuation.

IX. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

- A. Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise degrade water quality; or
- B. Would the project substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge so that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The most abundant rock type in the Sierra Nevada is granitic rock, with the remainder being metamorphic rock. The primary aquifers are fractured bedrock. Groundwater occurs in open joints, fractures, and exfoliation planes in the bedrock. These fracture systems may be interconnected or isolated, resulting in variability in water levels, well yields, and water quality on local and regional scales (USGS, 2012). Depth to groundwater information was not available for the Project site vicinity. Based on local topography, groundwater is anticipated to flow in an east-southeast direction. Regional groundwater quality problems were not identified for the Project site vicinity. Following construction and demolition, the proposed bridge will not require the use of groundwater.

- C. Would the project substantially alter existing drainage patterns, including alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site; or
- D. Would the project substantially alter existing drainage patterns, including alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in flooding on or off site; or
- E. Would the project create or contribute run-off which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted run-off; or
- F. Would the project otherwise substantially degrade water quality?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Construction activities would result in ground disturbance within and adjacent to Watts Creek. Earthmoving, excavation, pile drilling, and the installation and removal of temporary water diversion structures during construction of the new bridge abutments and alignment could result in a temporary increase in sediment loads, turbidity, and siltation. Implementation of the Project would not permanently alter the configuration or flow of Watts Creek, or substantially modify sources of water pollutants. The Project design would not change the rate of peak stormwater runoff appreciably. A stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) would identify Project-specific best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality from construction activities. Compliance with the construction general permit (CGP) and SWPPP would ensure that water quality standards would not be violated. The following permits are anticipated for this project:

Army Corps of Engineers 404 Permit, Regional Water Quality Control Board 401 Certification and California Department of Fish and Wildlife Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement.

All in-creek work is anticipated to be complete prior to October, when the dry season ends. If conditions produce standing or flowing water within the Project area, while in-creek work is in progress, water would be temporarily diverted using cofferdams and temporary culverts to maintain downstream flow.

The use of construction equipment and other vehicles could result in accidental spills of oil, grease, gasoline, brake fluid, antifreeze, or other vehicle-related pollutants. Improper handling, storage, or disposal of materials and fuels could also cause water quality degradation. Large construction equipment would grade areas leading up to and potentially within Watts Creek during the installation of the abutments and rock slope protection. Concrete contacting water prior to drying completely could potentially impact water quality. During construction, construction materials and wastes could be tracked offsite by construction vehicles and then deposited onto roads where it may be picked up and transported into waterways. Also, saw cutting, grinding, drilling, concrete mixing, painting, and paving during construction can produce residues. Implementation of BMPs to protect water quality and reduce the risk of accidental releases of oil, grease, and chemical pollutants would minimize this potential impact.

Implementation of the Project would not permanently alter the configuration or flow of Watts Creek, or substantially modify sources of water pollutants. The Project is not expected to significantly alter the number of vehicles traveling on Watts Valley Road, nor would it change the rate of peak stormwater runoff appreciably, therefore there would not be an increase in the load of pollutants as a result of the Project. There are no known concurrent construction projects within the Project vicinity.

- G. Would the project place housing within a 100-year floodplain; or
- H. Would the project place structures within a 100-year flood hazard area that would impede or redirect flood flows?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There is no housing proposed with this project. Further, according to FEMA FIRM Panel 1100 of 3525, the project site is designated as "X"; Area of Minimal Flood Hazard.

- I. Would the project expose persons or structures to levee or dam failure?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located in an area at risk of inundation due to levee or dam failure, according to Figure 9-8 of the FCGPBR.

- J. Would the project cause inundation by seiche, tsunami or mudflow?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project site is located near an area that has been determined to be at moderate risk of landslide hazard; however, since this project proposes to replace the existing bridge, there will be no increase in the amount of risk of mudslide. The new alignment will improve the safety of Watts Valley Road in this area by reducing the number of sharp turns. There is no risk of

inundation by seiche or tsunami due to the project's distance from bodies of water large enough to develop large waves.

X. LAND USE AND PLANNING

- A. Will the project physically divide an established community?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is located within Watts Valley, which is characterized by expansive grazing land, light forest cover, and scattered single-family residences. There is no established community present for this project to divide.

- B. Will the project conflict with any Land Use Plan, policy or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project; or
- C. Will the project conflict with any applicable Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The proposed bridge replacement meets all applicable land use requirements without the need to apply for a variance. The bridge will meet all safety and design standards. There are no Habitat Conservation Plans or Natural Community Conservation Plans applicable to the site.

XI. MINERAL RESOURCES

- A. Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource; or
- B. Would the project result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site designated on a General Plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to Figure 7-7 (FCGPBR), the project site is not located in an area dedicated to mineral resource recovery; the bridge replacement will not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource.

XII. NOISE

- A. Would the project result in exposure of people to severe noise levels; or
- B. Would the project result in exposure of people to or generate excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels; or
- C. Would the project cause a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity; or
- D. Would the project result in a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Temporary noise impacts may occur during construction; however the nearest receptor is more than 500 feet from the APE. Construction noise must comply with the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance regarding times of operation and maximum allowable decibels. During normal operation, the new bridge will not generate noise and the traffic which will travel over the bridge is equivalent to the traffic that currently travels on the existing bridge. Therefore, there are no impacts to noise.

- E. Would the project expose people to excessive noise levels associated with a location near an airport or a private airstrip; or
- F. For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not in the vicinity of a public or private airstrip.

XIII. POPULATION AND HOUSING

- A. Would the project induce substantial population growth either directly or indirectly; or
- B. Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing housing; or
- C. Would the project displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of housing elsewhere?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

This bridge project does not have the potential to induce substantial population growth. The replacement bridge will realign the road to be safer and will provide a slightly wider surface upon which to cross Watts Creek. The nearest residence to the project site is located approximately 1,000 feet to the east.

XIV. PUBLIC SERVICES

- A. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically-altered public facilities in the following areas:
 - 1. Fire protection;
 - 2. Police protection;
 - 3. Schools;
 - 4. Parks; or
 - 5. Other public facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

This bridge project is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts associated with altered public facilities or an increase in the use or need for such facilities.

XV. RECREATION

- A. Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks; or
- B. Would the project require the construction of or expansion of recreational facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

This project relates to the replacement of a bridge which is functionally obsolete with a new bridge that will meet all current safety standards. Realignment of Watts Valley Road to provide a safer route over Watts Creek is proposed; however these improvements will not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks.

XVI. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

- A. Would the project conflict with any applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation; or
- B. Would the project conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to, level of service standards and travel demands measures; or
- C. Would the project result in a change in air traffic patterns; or
- D. Would the project substantially increase traffic hazards due to design features; or
- E. Would the project result in inadequate emergency access; or
- F. Would the project conflict with adopted plans, policies or programs regarding public transit, bicycle or pedestrian facilities or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

This project is not anticipated to modify the amount of traffic in the vicinity of the site. There is no expansion of lanes proposed; only a realignment of the road to improve safety standards. Therefore, it is anticipated that this project would have a minor beneficial impact, if any, on the performance of the circulation system, level of service standards, and traffic hazards. The existing bridge will remain in place until the replacement bridge is complete, which means there will be no detours required as part of this project, even during construction activities. Therefore, there are no impacts to emergency access. As noted previously, the site is not within the vicinity of any airports or private airstrips.

XVII. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

- A. Would the project exceed wastewater treatment requirements; or
- B. Would the project require construction of or the expansion of new water or wastewater treatment facilities; or
- C. Would the project require or result in the construction or expansion of new storm water drainage facilities; or

- D. Would the project have sufficient water supplies available from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed; or
- E. Would the project result in a determination of inadequate wastewater treatment capacity to serve project demand?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

This bridge replacement project will require water supplies and wastewater treatment services only during construction and demolition. Outside of these activities, the bridge will be an unmanned part of the circulation system. Therefore, the project will not exceed wastewater treatment requirements, require the construction of new water, storm water, or wastewater treatment facilities, or require additional water supply entitlements.

- F. Would the project be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity; or
- G. Would the project comply with federal, state and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There is sufficient landfill capacity in Fresno County to accommodate construction and demolition debris from this project. A professional construction team will be hired to perform the work necessary to construct the proposed bridge and remove the existing bridge. These companies operate within federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Therefore, there will be no impact to existing landfills and compliance to existing laws and regulations.

XVIII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

- A. Does the project have the potential to 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, 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 prehistory or history?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

This project has the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, reduce the habitat of fish and/or wildlife species, and to threaten a local plant community. Adherence to the mitigation measures which require worker education and delineation of environmentally sensitive areas will reduce the potential for impacts to these species to less than significant.

* **Mitigation Measures**

- 1. See Section IV.A.

- B. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable; or
- C. Does the project have environmental impacts which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

This bridge replacement project will not have any cumulatively considerable impacts or adverse impacts on human beings because it will be substantially similar to the existing bridge. Improvements to the alignment with the road and curve will provide minor benefits by improving safety for travelers in this area.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Based upon the Initial Study prepared for this bridge replacement project, staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Transportation/Traffic, Utilities and Service Systems, and Recreation.

Potential impacts related to Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Hydrology and Water Quality have been determined to be less than significant.

Potential impacts relating to Aesthetics, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, and Mandatory Findings of Significance have determined to be less than significant with compliance with the listed Mitigation Measures.

A Mitigated Negative Declaration/Negative Declaration is recommended and is subject to approval by the decision-making body. The Initial Study is available for review at 2220 Tulare Street, Suite A, Street Level, located on the southeast corner of Tulare and "M" Street, Fresno, California.

CMM

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File original and one copy with: Fresno County Clerk 2221 Kern Street Fresno, California 93721		Space Below For County Clerk Only. CLK-2046.00 E04-73 R00-00	
Agency File No: IS 7336	LOCAL AGENCY PROPOSED MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION	County Clerk File No: E-	
Responsible Agency (Name): Fresno County	Address (Street and P.O. Box): 2220 Tulare St. Sixth Floor	City: Fresno	Zip Code: 93721
Agency Contact Person (Name and Title): Christina Monfette, Planner	Area Code: 559	Telephone Number: 600-4245	Extension: N/A
Applicant (Name): County of Fresno Design	Project Title: Watts Creek Bridge Replacement		
Project Description: Replace and realign the existing 22-foot, functionally obsolete Watts Creek Bridge on Watts Valley Road with a new 47-foot single-span cast-in-place reinforced concrete slab bridge to be placed approximately 50 feet downstream of the existing bridge. Demolition of the existing bridge will occur when construction of the replacement bridge is complete.			
Justification for Negative Declaration: <p>Based upon the Initial Study prepared for this bridge replacement project, staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Transportation/Traffic, Utilities and Service Systems, and Recreation.</p> <p>Potential impacts related to Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Hydrology and Water Quality have been determined to be less than significant. Potential impacts relating to Aesthetics, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, and Mandatory Findings of Significance have determined to be less than significant with compliance with the listed Mitigation Measures.</p> <p>A Mitigated Negative Declaration/Negative Declaration is recommended and is subject to approval by the decision-making body. The Initial Study is available for review at 2220 Tulare Street, Suite A, Street Level, located on the southeast corner of Tulare and "M" Street, Fresno, California.</p>			
FINDING: The proposed project will not have a significant impact on the environment.			
Newspaper and Date of Publication: Fresno Business Journal –		Review Date Deadline: Board of Supervisors –	
Date:	Type or Print Signature: Marianne Mollring, Senior Planner	Submitted by (Signature): Christina Monfette, Planner	

State 15083, 15085

County Clerk File No.: _____

**LOCAL AGENCY
 MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

**Watts Creek Bridge Replacement Project
Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
and Project Notes**

Mitigation Measures					
Impact	No.	Mitigation Measure Language	Implementation Responsibility	Monitoring Responsibility	Time Span
Aesthetics	1.	Disturbance to or removal of riparian habitat and other vegetation shall not exceed the minimum necessary to complete operations (with the exception of non-native, invasive plant species) and shall only occur within the defined work area. Precautions shall be taken to avoid other damage to vegetation by people or equipment. The disturbed portions of the stream bed, banks or channel shall be restored to as near their original condition as possible (see Restoration below).	Applicant	Fresno County Design and Construction Divisions, Department of Public Works and Planning (PW&P)	Ongoing / Post Construction
Aesthetics	2.	Native riparian shrubs and trees, and oak trees with trunks greater than or equal to four (4) inches diameter measured at breast height (DBH), if removed during Project activities shall be mitigated for by implementation of a Revegetation Plan described in Aesthetics No. 3 .	Applicant	Fresno County Design and Construction Divisions, Department of Public Works and Planning (PW&P)	Prior to initiation of any site preparation / Post Construction
Aesthetics	3.	Restoration shall include the revegetation of all disturbed soils and new fill, including recontoured slopes and all other cleared areas, with riparian vegetation or other plants as appropriate. A qualified biologist shall prepare and implement a Revegetation Plan and submit it to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for approval prior to commencement of the proposed work. The Revegetation Plan shall address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Compensation for removed trees by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying species damaged or removed during Project activities. • Describing how, where and when replacement shrubs and trees will be planted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riparian trees (i.e. willow, cottonwood, poplar, alder, ash, etc.) and shrubs shall be replaced in-kind, at a minimum replacement ratio of 4:1, and planted in the nearest 	Applicant	Fresno County Design and Construction Divisions, Department of Public Works and Planning (PW&P)	Prior to initiation of any site preparation / Post Construction

		<p>suitable location to the area where they were removed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oaks having a DBH of greater than four (4) inches shall be replaced in-kind, at a minimum ratio of 4:1, and planted during the winter dormancy period in the nearest suitable location to the area where they were removed. Heritage trees greater than 24 inches DBH shall be replaced at a minimum 10:1 ratio.• Non-native, invasive plant species (i.e., arundo and tree-of-heaven) may be removed and replaced with native riparian species.• Proposing measures to be taken (i.e. irrigation methods if necessary and maintenance) to ensure a performance criteria of 75 percent survival of planted trees for a period of three (3) consecutive years and an additional two (2) years without assistance.• Seeding and mulching exposed slopes, or stream banks not revegetated with riparian shrubs or trees, with a blend of a minimum of three (3) locally native grass species:• One (1) or two (2) sterile non-native perennial grass species may be added to the seed mix provided that the amount does not exceed 25 percent of the total seed mix by count.• Locally native wildflower and/or shrub seeds may also be included in the seed mix.• Seeding shall be completed as soon as possible, but no later than November 15 of the year construction ends.• A seed mixture shall be submitted to the Department for approval prior to application. At the discretion of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, all exposed areas where seeding is considered unsuccessful after 90 days shall receive appropriate soil preparation and a second application of seeding, straw, or mulch as soon as is practical on a date mutually agreed upon.			
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Biological Resources	4.	All construction personnel shall participate in an environmental awareness training regarding special-status species and sensitive habitats present in the Project area. If new construction personnel are added to the Project, they must receive the mandatory training before starting work. As part of the training, an environmental awareness handout will be provided to all personnel that describes and illustrates sensitive resources to be avoided during Project construction.	Applicant	Fresno County Construction Division, Department of Public Works and Planning (PW&P)	Prior to initiation of any site preparation / Ongoing
Biological Resources	5.	Temporary construction barrier fencing, silt fencing, and/or flagging shall be installed between the work area and environmentally sensitive habitat areas (i.e., waters of the U.S. and State, riparian habitat, special-status species habitat, and buffers around active bird/raptor nests and ring-tail cat dens), as appropriate. The exact location of the fencing and/or flagging shall be determined by the Resident Engineer in coordination with a qualified biologist, with the goal of protecting sensitive biological habitat and water quality. The fencing/flagging shall be checked on a weekly basis and maintained until ground disturbance is complete. No construction activity shall be allowed until this condition is satisfied. Any required barrier or sediment fencing and a note reflecting this condition shall be shown on the final construction documents.	Applicant	Fresno County Construction Division, PW&P	Prior to initiation of any site preparation / Ongoing
Biological Resources	6.	To prevent the accidental introduction of new invasive species into the Project area during construction, the Project construction contractor shall implement the following control measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use only certified noxious weed-free erosion control materials. All straw and seed material shall be certified as weed-free prior to being used at the Project area. • Wash all construction equipment prior to bringing it onto the job site. Inspect equipment to ensure it arrives on site free of mud and seed-bearing material. • An appropriate native seed mix will be used for any reseeding of disturbed soil areas and newly constructed slopes. 	Applicant	Fresno County Construction Division, PW&P	Prior to initiation of any site preparation / Ongoing

Cultural Resources	7.	In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist should be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition. All normal evidence procedures should be followed by photos, reports, video, and etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours.	Applicant	Fresno County Construction Division, PW&P	Ongoing
Notes					
		Prior to construction, the County shall comply with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, in coordination with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Section 401 of the Clean Water Act in coordination with the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and Fish and Game Code, Section 1602 in coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife for Project-related impacts that will occur in areas under the jurisdiction of these regulatory agencies.			