NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION
Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Who: County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works

What: A Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared and issued for the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works, Chimney Rock Road at Franklin Creek Bridge Project. The purpose of this project is to provide a permanent two-lane bridge for vehicle crossing to replace a temporary steel truss bridge that was installed in 2023 when the previous permanent roadway was destroyed during winter storms in January and March 2023. The proposed permanent bridge would consist of a clear span, cast-in-place concrete box girder superstructure that would measure 175 feet long and 30 feet wide, with two 10-foot-wide travel lanes, two 3-foot-wide shoulders, and 2-foot-wide concrete barriers on each side. Traffic will be accommodated during construction with a temporary detour (comprised of fill) directly adjacent to the south side of the proposed bridge. Construction activities would occur over a period of 9 months and are anticipated to begin in May 2025. Construction will be scheduled during the non-rainy season when conditions are dry, or creek flows are at their lowest, however creek diversion and dewatering may be required. Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure project impacts are less than significant. The project location is located within the Nacimiento Subarea of the North County Planning Area, Supervisorial District 4, approximately 15 miles northwest of Highway 101 and Paso Robles in a rural, unincorporated area of the county.

Where: Copies of the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration and all the associated documents referenced in the Mitigated Negative Declaration are available for review at on the County's website at https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/public-works/forms-documents/environmental-determinations, as well as at the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works, 976 Osos Street, County Government Center Room 206, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408.

Comments: The 30-day review and comment period for the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration begins on December 11, 2024, and ends on January 10, 2025. Written comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the review period and should be addressed to: William Fox, Environmental Specialist, wafox@co.slo.ca.us, County Government Center, Room 206, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408.

Public Hearing: The County of San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing to consider the adoption of the Mitigated Negative Declaration. The hearing is tentatively scheduled sometime in 2025. Interested persons can access the Board of Supervisor's agenda at http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/bos/BOSagenda.htm to locate the date of the public hearing for this project.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Chimney Rock Road at Franklin Creek Bridge Project, 300713/ED24-067

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED: The proposed project could have a "Potentially Significant Impact" for environmental factors checked below. Please refer to the attached pages for discussion on mitigation measures or project revisions to either reduce these impacts to less than significant levels or require further study.

☐ Aesthetics	☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐ Public Services
☐ Agriculture & Forestry Resources	☐ Hazards & Hazardous Materials	☐ Recreation
☐ Air Quality	☒ Hydrology & Water Quality	☐ Transportation
☒ Biological Resources	☐ Land Use & Planning	☒ Tribal Cultural Resources
☒ Cultural Resources	☐ Mineral Resources	☐ Utilities & Service Systems
☐ Energy	☐ Noise	☐ Wildfire
☒ Geology & Soils	☐ Population & Housing	☒ Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation, the Environmental Division Manager finds that:

☐ The proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ The proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ The proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

SWCA Environmental Consultants	Brandi Cummings		12/6/2024
Prepared by (Print)	Signature		Date
Kate Shea	Kate Shea	Environmental Division Manager	12/6/2024
Reviewed by (Print)	Signature		Date

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Project Environmental Analysis

The County's environmental review process incorporates all of the requirements for completing the Initial Study as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The Initial Study includes staff's on-site inspection of the project site and surroundings and a detailed review of the information in the file for the project. In addition, available background information is reviewed for each project. Relevant information regarding soil types and characteristics, geologic information, significant vegetation and/or wildlife resources, water availability, wastewater disposal services, existing land uses and surrounding land use categories and other information relevant to the environmental review process are evaluated for each project. Exhibit A includes the references used, as well as the agencies or groups that were contacted as a part of the Initial Study. The County Public Works Department uses the checklist to summarize the results of the research accomplished during the initial environmental review of the project.

Persons, agencies or organizations interested in obtaining more information regarding the environmental review process for a project should contact the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department, 976 Osos Street, Rm. 206, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93408-2040 or call (805) 781-5252.

A. Project

DESCRIPTION:

The County of San Luis Obispo (County) Public Works Department proposes to construct a new permanent bridge over Franklin Creek to replace an existing temporary steel truss bridge. The Chimney Rock Road at Franklin Creek Project (project) is located on Chimney Rock Road at the intersection of Fawn Lane, crossing Franklin Creek, in a rural, unincorporated area of the county, approximately 15 miles northwest of U.S. Highway 101 (US 101) and on the southern arm of Lake Nacimiento (Figures 1 and 2). The purpose of this project is to provide a permanent two-lane bridge for vehicle crossing to replace a temporary steel truss bridge that was installed in 2023 when the previous permanent roadway was destroyed during winter storms in January and March 2023.

Project Footprint. The project footprint consists of an approximate 3.9-acre area and contains all areas of ground disturbance and potential staging areas (Figures 3 and 4). Traffic will be accommodated during construction with a temporary detour (comprised of fill) directly adjacent to the south side of the proposed bridge. Staging is proposed on Chimney Rock Road and adjacent shoulders on both sides of the proposed bridge. These staging areas have been previously disturbed by grading and would not require additional improvements (i.e., grading or leveling). The project area includes County right-of-way (ROW), which is approximately 50 feet wide. Temporary construction easements on adjoining private parcels would be required for staging and the access detour. Permanent easements are anticipated to be required for construction of the abutment slopes on both sides of the proposed bridge. Construction activities would occur over a period of 9 months and are anticipated to begin in May 2025.

The nearest utility line is an overhead electrical line located south of the existing temporary bridge outside the area of work. The line may be relocated as part of the project to either be installed on new overhead utility lines or installed within the permanent bridge superstructure. The project may require the removal of several mature native trees, including blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) trees.

Site History. Prior to the 2023 storm damage, the roadway at the Franklin Creek crossing consisted of embankment fill with three corrugated metal pipe culverts. As a result of the January and March 2023 storm damage, the embankment fill and two of the three corrugated metal pipe culverts blew out. A temporary haul route was constructed in April 2023, immediately south of the bridge by placing rock slope protection (RSP) in

the creek bed area where the pipes blew out and topping it with road base. In June 2023, a temporary steel truss bridge was installed on the original crossing alignment to serve through-traffic that was utilizing the temporary haul road. The temporary haul route was notched during fall 2023 by removing some RSP in the creek channel to allow winter stream flows through Franklin Creek. The remaining haul road RSP fill is still in place and will be improved for use as the temporary construction detour for this project.

Proposed Bridge Design. The proposed permanent bridge would consist of a clear span, cast-in-place concrete box girder superstructure that would measure 175 feet long and 30 feet wide, with two 10-foot-wide travel lanes, two 3-foot-wide shoulders, and 2-foot-wide concrete barriers on each side (Figure 4). The new bridge would be supported on concrete abutments approximately 32 feet wide and 16 feet high supported by cast-in-drilled-hole (CIDH) pile foundations.

The proposed bridge profile grade would be consistent with the existing roadway to ensure that the permanent bridge would not increase the 100-year water surface elevation and would provide a minimum of 2 feet of freeboard above the 100-year water surface elevation. The proposed bridge and approach roadway vertical grades would be approximately 2.5 feet higher than Chimney Rock Road to allow for adequate drainage.

Permanent RSP is required along the base of bank beneath the bridge to withstand expected high flows and prevent scouring.

No street lighting is located along this portion of Chimney Rock Road, and none is proposed for the project.

Construction Details. The project would include conventional falsework to construct the superstructure of the permanent bridge. Falsework bents would be placed at the faces of the proposed seat-type abutments and intermediate bents would be placed along the bridge length. Falsework bents would either consist of timber and steel built up bents supported on timber crane pads or steel piles driven into the existing soil as supports for the temporary falsework bents.

The temporary haul road would be reestablished as a construction detour, and the temporary truss bridge would be removed so the permanent bridge can be built. Temporary access ramps and work pads would be constructed in jurisdictional areas for construction access.

Construction of the new bridge would require structural excavation within Franklin Creek for the proposed abutments and piles. It is anticipated that a track mounted excavator, a track mounted drill rig, construction telehandler (Gradall), baker tanks, a rough terrain crane, and concrete pump trucks would operate within the ordinary high water mark during construction of the temporary access ramps, temporary haul road, temporary stream diversion, proposed CIDH concrete piles, construction of the abutments, and construction of the superstructure. Implementation of a water diversion plan is anticipated to be necessary when constructing the bridge if water is present. The County will coordinate with the contractor regarding the diversion plan; typical solutions are likely to include the use of a temporary cofferdam/earthen berm or k-rails and piped flow through the temporary access road via the remaining culvert. All diversion materials would be removed upon completion of construction and the channel substrate would be restored to appropriate grades with native channel materials.

During construction, excavation would occur within the 100-year floodplain to restore the channel bottom while also cutting the existing fill slopes, which are steeper than 2:1, to 2:1. The improved slopes are necessary to provide an increased hydraulic cross section as well as to reduce the anticipated erosion of the abutment slopes. This excavation would result in approximately 10,000 cubic yards of earthwork cut and approximately 300 cubic yards of spoils from construction of the CIDH concrete piles, all of which would be used onsite or hauled offsite for appropriate disposal.

There is existing RSP within the channel that was placed during the construction of the temporary bridge. The RSP would be removed from its original location and stockpiled while the abutment slopes are regraded. Following the regrading of the slopes, the RSP will be reinstalled on the abutment slopes and will extend approximately 5 feet deep, overlaid with soil and planted with native species in the voids among the rocks. A total of 15,000 square feet of RSP surface area is anticipated to be placed on the abutment fill slopes.

Restoration Details. When the new bridge work is completed, the falsework materials and diversion/dewatering features would be removed from the creek channel. The temporary detour would be removed in its entirety (RSP and fill), and the area would be restored to a natural channel bottom. This would include re-grading the channel and banks to match the surrounding area contours and stabilizing the banks. Tree removals would be mitigated by replanting native trees in similar locations in the project area and/or nearby County ROW. Temporarily disturbed areas would be stabilized and hydroseeded with a native seed mix.

Emergency Repair Agency Coordination Summary. To conduct emergency repair work at the project area, the following permits were obtained:

- Department of the Army Regional General Permit (RGP) No. 5 for Repair and Protection Activities in Emergency Situations (File Number SPN-2023-00054S);
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife 14036 – Notification for Emergency Work – SLO-39009-Chimney Rock Road MP 12.425 Temporary Repair Emergency Action;
- Regional Water Quality Control Board Section 401 Water Quality Certification No. 34023WQ03.

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER(S): County right-of-way and APN 080-055-035 and 080-054-006 to the north, APN 080-055-031 to the southeast, and 080-055-028 to the southwest

Latitude: 35.6819 Longitude: -120.9491 Supervisorial District # 1&2

B. Existing Setting

Plan Area: North County **Sub:** Nacimiento **Comm:** Rural

Land Use Category: Rural Lands, Residential Rural

Combining Designation: Flood Hazard, Renewable Energy Overlay

Parcel Size: 3.9 acres

Topography: Moderately sloping to steeply sloping

Vegetation: Urban-built up, oak woodlands, riparian

Existing Uses: Transportation

Surrounding Land Use Categories and Uses:

North: Rural Lands, Residential Rural, Lake / scattered residences, Nacimiento Lake

East: Rural Lands /undeveloped

South: Rural Lands /scattered residences

West: Residential Rural /scattered residences

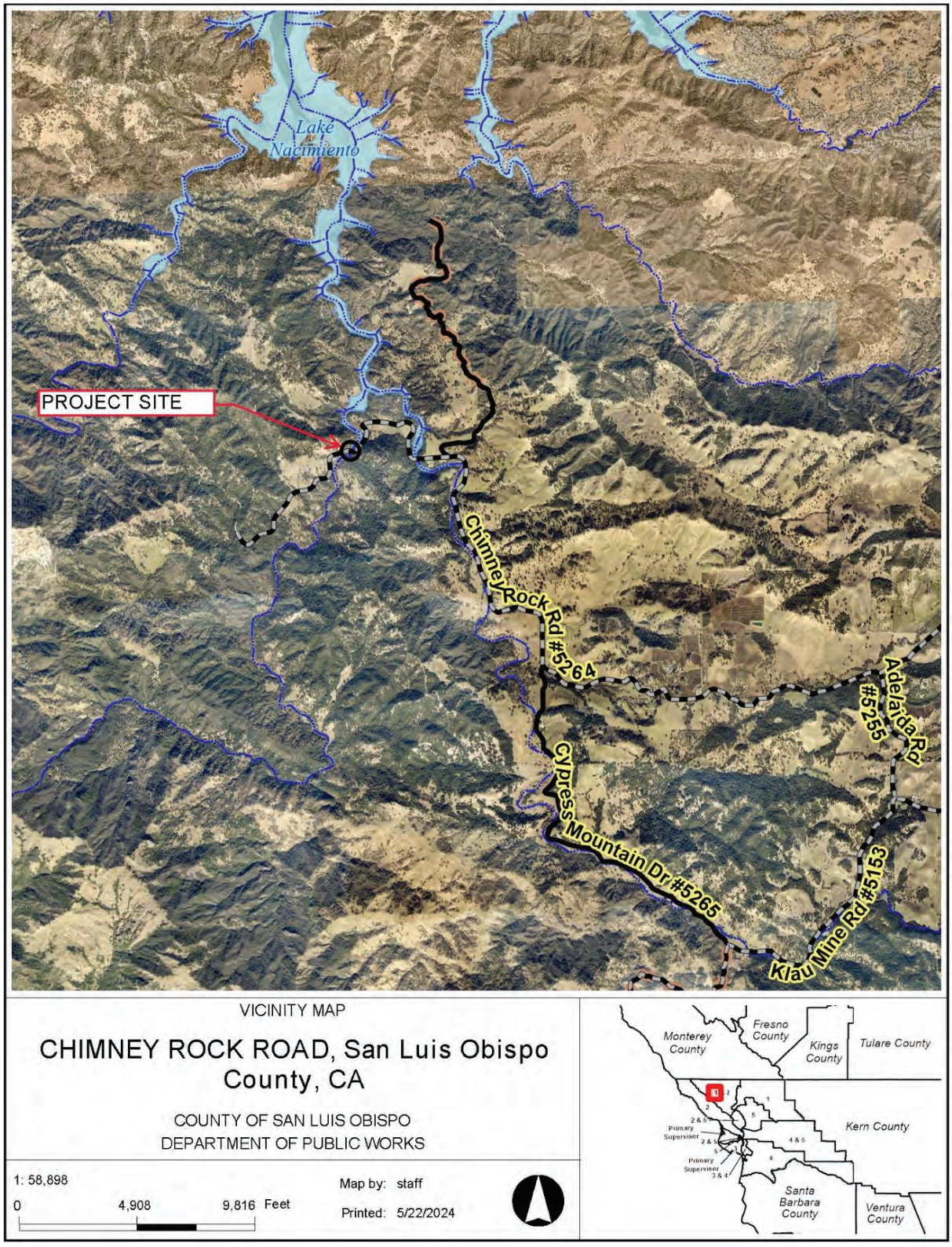

Figure 1. Vicinity map

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

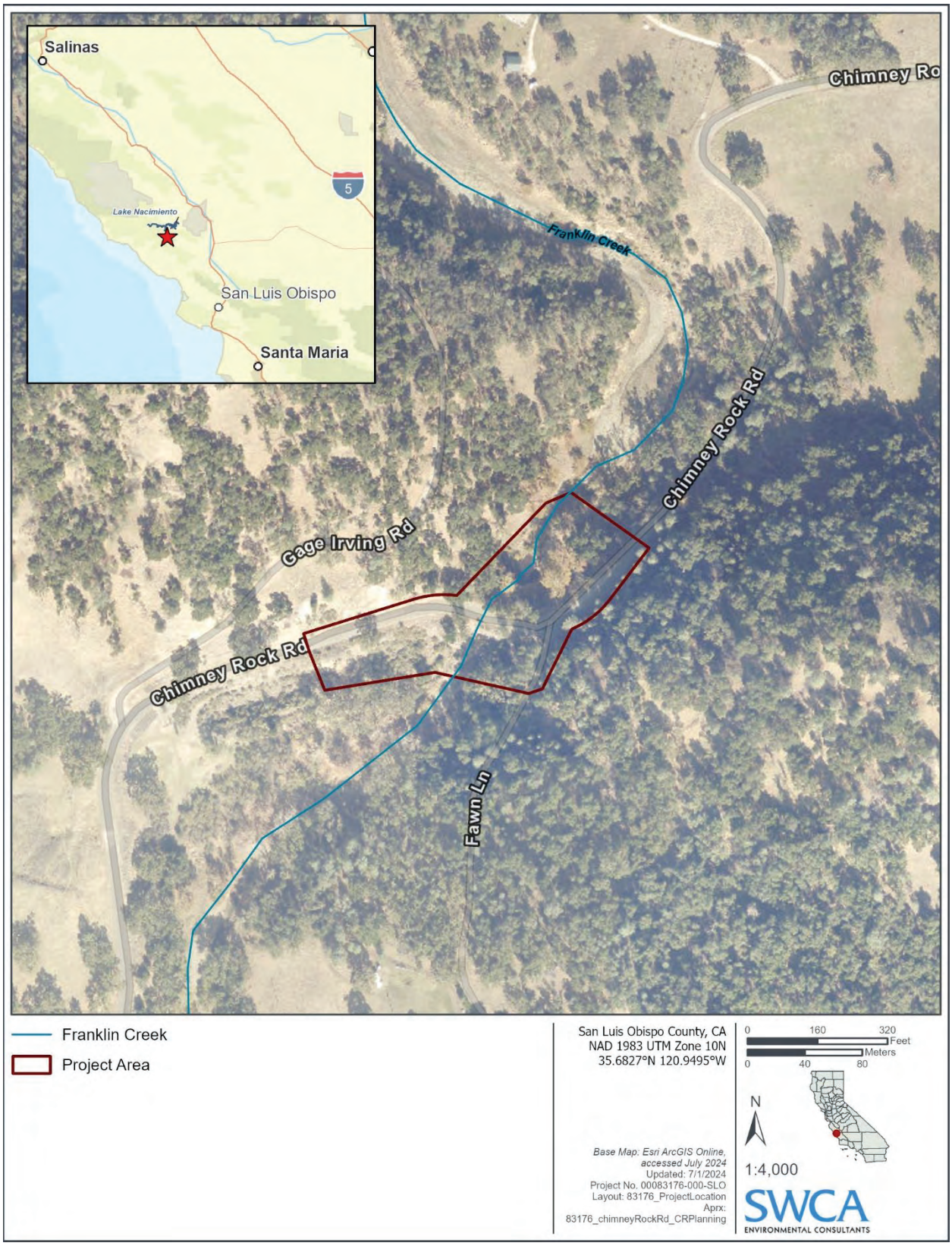

Figure 2. Project location map

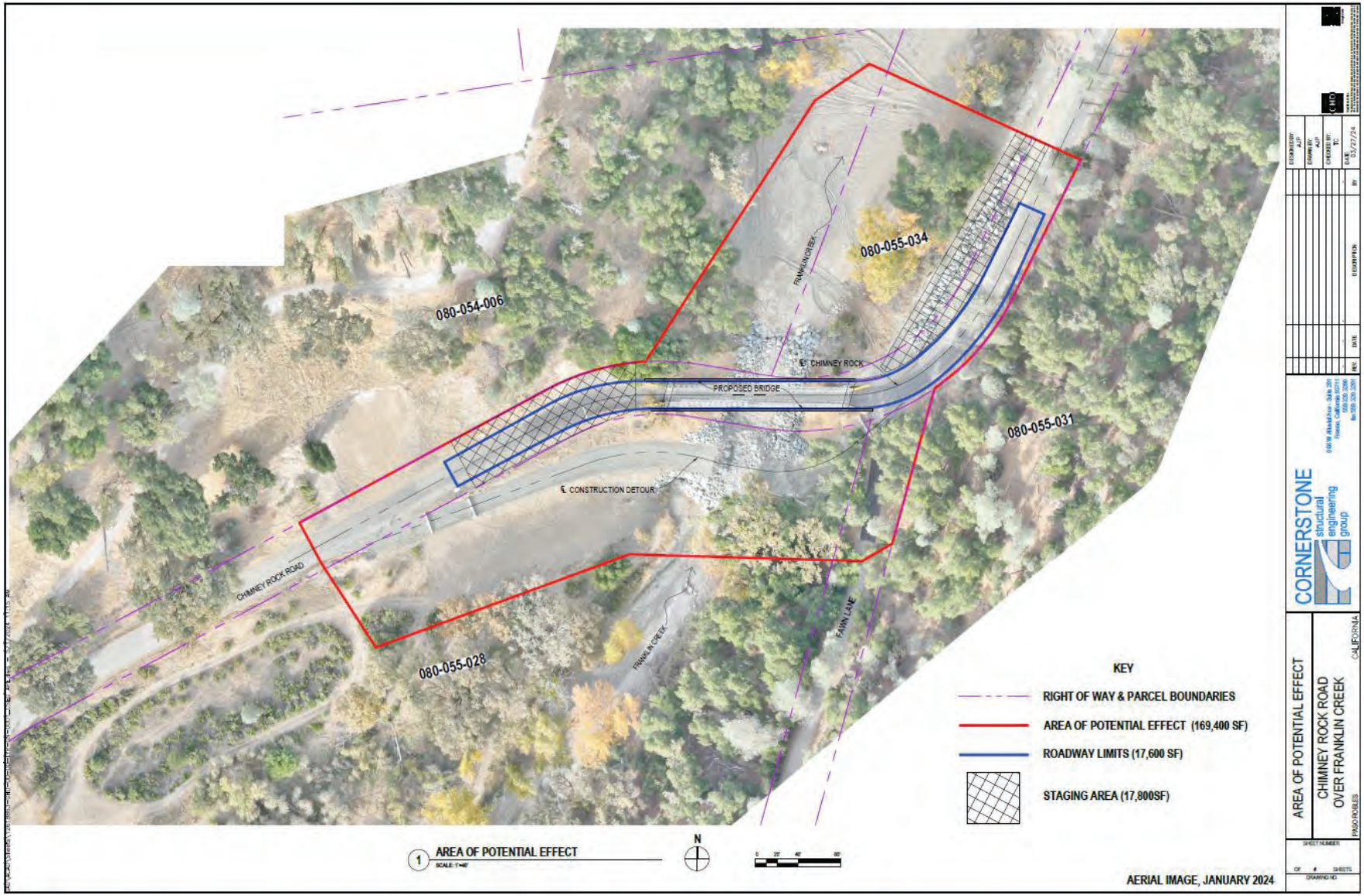

Figure 3. Project plan overview

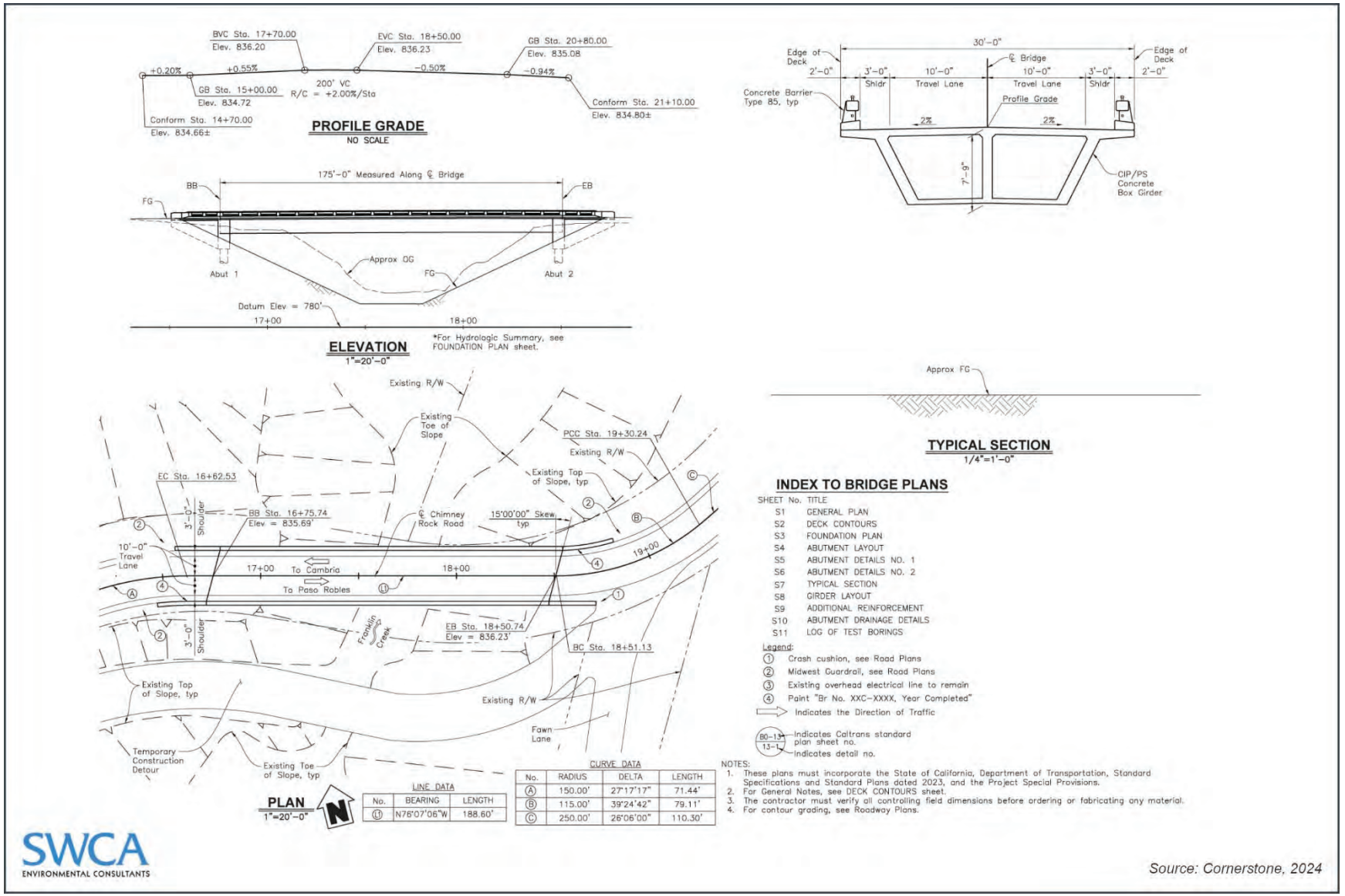

Figure 4. Project cross section view

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

C. Environmental Analysis

The Initital Study Checklist provides detailed information about the environmental impacts of the proposed project and mitigation measures to lessen the impacts.

I. AESTHETICS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:					
(a)	Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

California Scenic Highway Program

The California Scenic Highway Program was created by the State Legislature in 1963 with the intention of protecting and enhancing the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. Scenic Highways within San Luis Obispo County include US 101, State Route 46 (SR 46), portions of State Route 41 (SR 41), State Route 1 (SR 1), and Lake Nacimiento Drive. The project site is not located on or in close proximity to a designated scenic highway. The closest designated scenic highway is located approximately 15 miles northwest of US 101 and approximately 10 miles north of SR 46, which at these locations are designated as eligible for designation as a scenic highway (California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] 2018).

County of San Luis Obispo Land Use Ordinance

The County of San Luis Obispo Land Use Ordinance (LUO) also defines a Sensitive Resource Area (SRA) combining designation that applies to areas having high environmental quality and special ecological or educational significance. The project is not in an SRA combining district.

Existing Conditions

The project site consists of a segment of the existing Chimney Rock Road bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The existing crossing consists of a temporary modular steel truss bridge with one travel lane along the original roadway alignment that measures 170 feet long and 30 feet wide. The road shoulders consist of bare ground and ruderal habitat. There are existing trees located in the creek corridor (Figure 5). Two mature native trees on the pre-existing road embankment were removed when the emergency work was being done.

Figure 5. Photograph of project area facing north

Discussion

(a) *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?*

A scenic vista is generally defined as a high-quality view displaying good aesthetic and compositional values that can be seen from public viewpoints and may be officially or informally designated by public agencies or other organizations. Vistas are inherently expansive views, usually from an open area or an elevated point. A substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista would occur if the project would significantly degrade the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads or other public areas. The project site is not designated as an SRA by the County's LUO and is not located in the view of a scenic vista. Therefore, the project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, and *no impacts* would occur.

(b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The project site is located approximately 15 miles northwest of US 101 and approximately 10 miles north of SR 46, which at these locations are designated as eligible for designation as a scenic highway (Caltrans 2018). The project site is not visible from US 101 or SR 46 due to distance as well as intervening topography, vegetation, and development. Therefore, implementation of the project would not be visible within the viewshed of a designated state scenic highway, and *no impacts* would occur.

Two mature native trees were removed for construction of the emergency repairs and several additional mature native trees may need to be removed for construction of the project. The project site is surrounded by forested land on both sides of the creek crossing. Trimming or removal of several trees would not be considered a substantial aesthetic impact and mitigation for aesthetic impacts is not required. As discussed in Section IV, Biological Resources, trees that are trimmed or removed would be replaced in accordance with County practice, in County ROW at the project site to the extent feasible.

(c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

The project site is located in a rural, non-urbanized area near several residential communities. The current visual character of the project site consists of an existing temporary modular steel truss bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The road shoulders consist of bare ground and ruderal habitat and there are trees located in the creek corridor (Figure 5).

The project would replace the existing temporary steel truss bridge with a new permanent bridge structure. The new permanent bridge would be made of concrete and would be low profile, which is consistent with other bridges and roadways in the area. Further, the proposed bridge would be required to comply with Objective RC-2 of the County's Design Guidelines, which identifies aesthetic design standards for bridges within the county. The proposed bridge design would not include any new architectural features that could detract from the existing visual character of the project area. Therefore, the project would ultimately improve the visual character of the project area by removing the temporary steel structure and associated safety features and installing a permanent bridge that would be consistent with the visual character of the surrounding area. The project may require trimming or removal of several mature native trees; however, the project would not require the clear cutting of any oak woodlands or substantial removal of other trees within the project area in a manner that could substantially alter the existing visual character of the project area. The project does not include other components that could alter the existing visual character of the project area; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The project site is located along a rural roadway and existing nighttime lighting in the project area is limited to intermittent vehicle headlights along Chimney Roack Road. The proposed project would be limited to the construction of a permanent bridge structure and does not include installation of lights

or surfaces that would create glare. Based on the nature of the proposed project, the project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that could adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Conclusion

The project is not located within a scenic vista and is not within the viewshed of a designated scenic highway. Implementation of the project would not result in an adverse change in the existing visual character of the project area or affect day or nighttime views. Therefore, potential impacts related to aesthetic resources would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures would be necessary.

II. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
(a)	Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(c)	Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation's (CDOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and current land use. According to the FMMP, the project site is located on land designated as Grazing Land (CDOC 2022).

Williamson Act

The Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agriculture or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments which are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. The project site is not located within the Agriculture (AG) land use designation and is not subject to a Williamson Act contract.

Soil Resources

No farmland soils would be affected by the project. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) *Soil Survey of San Luis Obispo County, California* and the NRCS Web Soil Survey, the project site is underlain by the following soil types (NRCS 2024):

- **(113) Balcom-Calleguas complex, 50 to 75 percent slopes.** This well drained soil has a high runoff class and a depth to restrictive feature of 20 to 40 inches to paralithic bedrock. The typical soil profile includes loam and weathered bedrock. According to the NRCS, this soil is not considered Prime Farmland. This soil is not included in Table SL-2 of the County COSE.
- **(204) Shimmon-Dibble association, very steep.** This well drained soil has a very high runoff class and a depth to restrictive feature of 20 to 40 inches to paralithic bedrock. The typical soil profile consists of loam, clay loam, and weathered bedrock. According to the NRCS, this soil is not considered Prime Farmland. This soil is not included in Table SL-2 of the County COSE.
- **(300) Corducci and Typic Xerofluvents, 0 to 5 percent slopes, occasionally flooded, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) 14.** This somewhat excessively drained soil has a very low runoff class with a depth to restrictive feature of more than 80 inches. The typical soil profile consists of fine sand, sand, and coarse sand. According to the NRCS, this soil is not considered Prime Farmland. This soil is not included in Table SL-2 of the County COSE.

Forest and Timberland Resources

Forestland is defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g) as land that can support 10 percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.

Timberland is defined in Public Resources Code Section 4526 as land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the board as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of any commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. The project site does not support any timberland.

Discussion

(a) *Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?*

The project site is underlain by land designated as Grazing Land by the FMMP (CDOC 2022). The project site does not consist of designated Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance by the FMMP; therefore, the proposed project would not result in conversion of Farmland, and *no impacts* would occur.

(b) *Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?*

The project site is not located within the Agriculture (AG) land use designation zone and is not subject to a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, the project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract, and *no impacts* would occur.

(c) *Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?*

The project site and surrounding area is not within forest land, timberland, or timberland production land use or zoning designations; therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with the zoning, or cause rezoning of, designated forest land, timberland, or timberland production, and *no impacts* would occur.

(d) *Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?*

The project site and surrounding area is not designated or zoned for forest land uses and does not meet the definition of forest land established in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g). Since the project site does not support forest land, the removal of up to four trees would not result in the loss or conversion of forest land; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

(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?*

As previously evaluated, the project would not result in the conversion of Farmland or forest land and would not interfere with zoning for agricultural or forest land uses. The proposed project would be limited to the replacement of the existing temporary bridge structure with a new permanent bridge crossing over Franklin Creek and would not result in new land uses that could reduce the availability

of water for existing agricultural uses in the vicinity of the project site. Soils at the project site are not classified as Prime Farmland. Therefore, the project would not indirectly result in the conversion of Farmland or forest land, and *no impacts* would occur.

Conclusion

The proposed project would not result in the conversion of Farmland or forest land and would not interfere with zoning for agricultural or forest land uses. Therefore, the project would not result in impacts related to agriculture and forestry resources, and mitigation measures are not necessary.

III. AIR QUALITY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:					
(a)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The project is located in unincorporated San Luis Obispo County, which is located within the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB) and within the jurisdiction of the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD).

Criteria Air Pollutants

For the protection of public health and welfare, the federal Clean Air Act (FCAA) required that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) establish National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for various pollutants. These pollutants are referred to as "criteria" pollutants because the USEPA publishes criteria documents to justify the choice of standards. These standards define the maximum amount of an air pollutant that can be present in ambient air without harm to the public's health. An ambient air quality standard is generally specified as a concentration averaged over a specific time period, such as 1 hour, 8 hours, 24 hours, or 1 year. The different averaging times and concentrations are meant to protect against different exposure effects. The FCAA allows states to adopt additional or more health-protective standards.

California Air Resources Board

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) is the agency responsible for coordination and oversight of state and local air pollution control programs in California and for implementing the California Clean Air Act (CCAA) of 1988. Other CARB duties include monitoring air quality in conjunction with air monitoring networks maintained by air pollution control districts and air quality management districts; establishing California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS), which in many cases are more stringent than the NAAQS; and setting emissions standards for new motor vehicles.

County of San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District

The SLOAPCD is the agency primarily responsible for ensuring that the NAAQS and CAAQS are not exceeded and that air quality conditions within the region are maintained. Responsibilities of the SLOAPCD include, but are not limited to, preparing plans for the attainment of the NAAQS and CAAQS, adopting and enforcing rules and regulations concerning sources of air pollution, issuing permits for stationary sources of air pollution, inspecting stationary sources of air pollution and responding to citizen complaints, monitoring ambient air quality and meteorological conditions, and implementing programs and regulations required by the FCAA and the CCAA.

San Luis Obispo County Clean Air Plan

The *San Luis Obispo County 2001 Clean Air Plan* (2001 CAP) is a comprehensive planning document intended to evaluate long-term air pollutant emissions and cumulative effects and provide guidance to the SLOAPCD and other local agencies on how to attain and maintain the state standards for ozone and particulate matter 10 micrometers or less in diameter (PM_{10}). The 2001 CAP presents a detailed description of the sources and pollutants that impact the jurisdiction's attainment of state standards, future air quality impacts to be expected under current growth trends, and an appropriate control strategy for reducing ozone precursor emissions, thereby improving air quality. In order to be considered consistent with the 2001 CAP, a project must be consistent with the land use planning and transportation control measures and strategies outlined in the CAP.

SLOAPCD Criteria Pollutant Thresholds

The SLOAPCD has developed and updated their *CEQA Air Quality Handbook* (most recently updated through a 2023 Administrative Update Version [SLOAPCD 2023a]) to help local agencies evaluate project-specific impacts and determine if air quality mitigation measures are needed, or if potentially significant impacts could result. This handbook includes established thresholds for both short-term construction emissions and long-term operational emissions.

Use of heavy equipment and earth-moving operations during project construction can generate fugitive dust and engine combustion emissions that may have substantial temporary impacts on local air quality and climate change. Combustion emissions, such as nitrogen oxides (NO_X), reactive organic gases (ROG), greenhouse gases (GHGs), and diesel particulate matter (diesel PM), are most significant when using large, diesel-fueled scrapers, loaders, bulldozers, haul trucks, compressors, generators, and other heavy equipment. The SLOAPCD has established thresholds of significance for each of these contaminants.

Operational impacts are focused primarily on the indirect emissions (i.e., motor vehicles) associated with residential, commercial, and industrial development. Certain types of projects can also include components that generate direct emissions, such as power plants, gasoline stations, dry cleaners, and refineries (referred to as stationary source emissions). Operational impacts associated with residential development consist primarily of indirect emissions (i.e., motor vehicles). Certain other types of projects can also include

components that generate direct emissions, such as power plants, gasoline stations, dry cleaners, and refineries (referred to as stationary source emissions). The SLOACPD has established several different methods for determining the significance of project operational air quality impacts:

- Demonstrate consistency with the most recent CAP for San Luis Obispo County;
- Demonstrate consistency with a plan for the reduction of GHG emissions that has been adopted by the jurisdiction in which the project is located that complies with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5;
- Compare predicted ambient criteria pollutant concentrations resulting from the project to federal and state health standards, when applicable;
- Compare calculated project emissions to SLOAPCD emission thresholds; and
- Evaluate special conditions that apply to certain projects.

In addition, many architectural coatings consist of oil-based paints. Solvents contained in these paints evaporate into the atmosphere as the paint dries, contributing to local ozone formation.

Sensitive Receptors

Some land uses are considered more sensitive to changes in air quality than others, depending on the population groups and activities involved. The CARB has identified the following groups who are most likely to be affected by air pollution (i.e., sensitive receptors): children under 14, the elderly over 65 years of age, athletes, and people with cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases. The nearest off-site sensitive land use is a rural residence located approximately 1,020 feet (0.2 mile) southwest of the project site.

Naturally Occurring Asbestos

Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) is identified as a toxic air contaminant by the CARB. Serpentine and other ultramafic rocks are fairly common throughout the county and may contain NOA. If these areas are disturbed during construction, NOA-containing particles can be released into the air and have an adverse impact on local air quality and human health. The project is not located in an area with known potential for NOA to occur (SLOAPCD 2024).

Discussion

(a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

As part of the CCAA, the SLOAPCD is required to develop a plan to achieve and maintain the state ozone standard by the earliest practicable date. The 2001 CAP addresses the attainment and maintenance of the NAAQS and CAAQS.

In order to be considered consistent with the 2001 CAP, a project must be consistent with the land use planning and transportation control measures outlined in the CAP and be generally consistent with the population projections the plan was based on (SLOAPCD 2023a). Adopted land use planning strategies include, but are not limited to, planning compact communities with higher densities within the urban reserve lines of cities and unincorporated communities, providing for mixed land use, and balancing jobs and housing. In addition, regional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) estimates are relied upon for regional air quality planning purposes and are used to determine the strategies to be implemented to reach the emission reduction targets set by CARB through Senate Bill (SB) 375. The proposed project is limited to the construction of a permanent bridge crossing over Franklin Creek to replace the existing temporary steel truss bridge and does not include the construction of new

residential, commercial, or other land uses that could increase population or VMT to and from the project site. Therefore, land use planning strategies such as mixed-use development and planning compact communities are generally not applicable. As described in detail under Impact Discussion II(b), below, the project would not generate air pollutant emissions above SLOAPCD thresholds during project construction or operation. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would be consistent with the air quality goals and objectives included in the County's 2001 CAP, and impacts related to consistency with applicable air quality plans would be *less than significant*.

(b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

Under federal standards, the eastern portion of San Luis Obispo County is currently designated as non-attainment for ozone under the NAAQS. The project site does not fall within this federal non-attainment designation. Under state standards, San Luis Obispo County is currently designated as non-attainment for ozone and PM_{10} under the CAAQS (CARB 2020).

Construction activities associated with the proposed project would result in the generation of criteria air pollutants, including ozone precursors (ROG and NOx) and fugitive dust. Fugitive dust emissions would result from grading operations and ROG and NOx emissions would result from the use of large diesel-fueled equipment. Project grading would result in approximately 3.9 acres of ground disturbance, including approximately 10,000 cubic yards of cut, no fill, and 15,000 square feet of RSP placement.

The SLOAPCD CEQA Air Quality Handbook provides thresholds of significance for construction-related emissions. Based on estimated construction phase length, grading volumes, and other factors, estimated construction-related emissions that would result from the proposed project were calculated using the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) and are compared to applicable SLOAPCD thresholds in Table 1. The CalEEMod results are included in Attachment 1.

Table 1. Construction Emissions Summary

Criteria Pollutant	Highest Daily/Quarterly Emissions	SLOAPCD Threshold	Exceeds Threshold?
Uncontrolled Daily Construction Emissions			
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG) + Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x)	63 lbs./day	137 lbs./day	No
Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM)	4.8 lbs./day	7 lbs./day	No
Uncontrolled Quarterly Construction Emissions			
Reactive Organic Gases (ROG) + Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x)	1.86 ton/quarter	2.5 tons/quarter	No
Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM)	0.08 ton/quarter	0.13 ton/quarter	No
Fugitive Dust (PM_{10})	0.12 ton/quarter	2.5 tons/quarter	No

Notes: All calculations were made using CalEEMod. See Attachment 1 for model results. DPM is equal to combined exhaust PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$, and fugitive dust is equal to fugitive PM_{10} from CalEEMod. CalEEMod calculates quarterly emissions of ROG + NOX but does not generate quarterly emissions for DPM and dust; therefore, maximum annual construction emissions of DPM and dust were divided by 4.

As shown in Table 1, estimated daily and quarterly construction emissions would not exceed SLOAPCD's recommended thresholds of significance.

No operational increases in emissions would result from the project because it would not increase traffic or vehicle miles traveled.

Based on the analysis provided above, potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

(c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

According to the SLOAPCD *CEQA Air Quality Handbook*, projects that occur within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors have the potential to result in adverse impacts involving construction emissions (SLOAPCD 2023). The nearest off-site sensitive land use is a rural residence located approximately 1,020 feet (0.2 mile) southwest of the project site. Further, the project would not result in construction-related or operational criteria air pollutant emissions above established SLOAPCD thresholds. Operation of the project does not include components that could permanently expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Therefore, the project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, and impacts would be *less than significant.*

(d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Construction activities generally have the potential to emit odors from diesel equipment, paints, solvents, fugitive dust, and adhesives. Any odors generated by construction activities would be intermittent and temporary, and generally would not extend beyond the construction area. Any construction odors would be temporary and limited to the construction phase of the proposed project. The project does not include the establishment of new land uses or other activities that could generate long-term odors within the project area.

The project is not located in an area with known potential for NOA; therefore, construction activities would not have the potential to expose workers or surrounding land uses to harmful levels of NOA. The project would require the removal of the existing temporary steel truss bridge and may require the relocation of a utility pole from the project area; however, the project does not include the demolition of any existing buildings or other structures that may contain asbestos-containing material (ACM) or lead containing paint (LCP). Therefore, the project would not result in other emissions or odors that could adversely affect a substantial number of people, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

The project would be consistent with the SLOAPCD 2001 Clean Air Plan and would not exceed established SLOAPCD emissions thresholds during project construction or operation. The project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations during construction. Therefore, potential impacts related to air quality would be less than significant.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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 Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c)	Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(e)	Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

A Biological Resources Assessment (BRA) was prepared by SWCA to evaluate the potential for special-status plant and animal species to occur within the project area and be adversely affected by proposed project activities (SWCA 2024). The BRA includes the results of a desktop review and two biological field surveys. The desktop review included a review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) (USFWS 2024b), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) (CDFW 2024), the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Rare Plant Inventory (CNPS 2024), and other relevant databases. Biological field surveys were conducted on March 21, 2024, and on April 17, 2024. The field survey conducted on April 17, 2024, included an aquatic resources delineation.

Habitat Types

The project area consists of five vegetation alliances, including California sycamore - coast live oak woodland, coyote scrub brush, mixed oak forest and woodland, poison hemlock, and valley oak riparian forest and woodland, and three land cover types, including disturbed/developed, open water, and RSP (Figure 6).

Special-Status Plants

Based on the results of the desktop review, a total of 61 special-status plant species have been documented in the nine queried U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangles in the vicinity of the project site. However, there are only CNDDB occurrences for 10 of these species within 5 miles of the project area. The majority of the project area does not contain sandy soils, patches of serpentine soils, rocky outcrops, or seasonal wetlands, which are key micro-habitat components for several of the special-status plant species that were identified in the literature review. Most of the habitat within the project area was previously disturbed during the emergency work and contains vegetation from the applied hydroseed mix. Therefore, the BRA determined that the project area does not support suitable conditions for any of the special-status plant species and that they are unlikely to occur within the project area. In addition, no special-status plant species were observed during field surveys of the project site.

Special-Status Wildlife

Based on a query of the USFWS IPaC, CNDDB, and other existing literature, a total of 36 special-status wildlife species have been documented in the nine queried USGS quadrangles in the vicinity of the project site and were assessed for their potential to occur in the project area. The BRA determined that suitable habitat conditions are present for nine special-status wildlife species (including nesting birds and roosting bats); however, two species—South-Central California Coast steelhead Distinct Population Segment (DPS) (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus* pop. 9) and Monterey hitch (*Lavinia exilicauda harengus*)—were considered absent upstream of the Nacimiento Dam. The remaining six species with suitable habitat include southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*; formerly *Emys marmorata*), two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Monterey dusky-footed woodrat (*Neotoma macrotis luciana*), and nesting birds. Marginally suitable habitat occurs in the project area for the following six additional special-status animal species: Crotch bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*), California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), Coast Range newt (*Taricha torosa torosa*), pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), and western red bat (*Lasiurus blossevillii*). No special-status wildlife species were observed during field surveys of the project site.

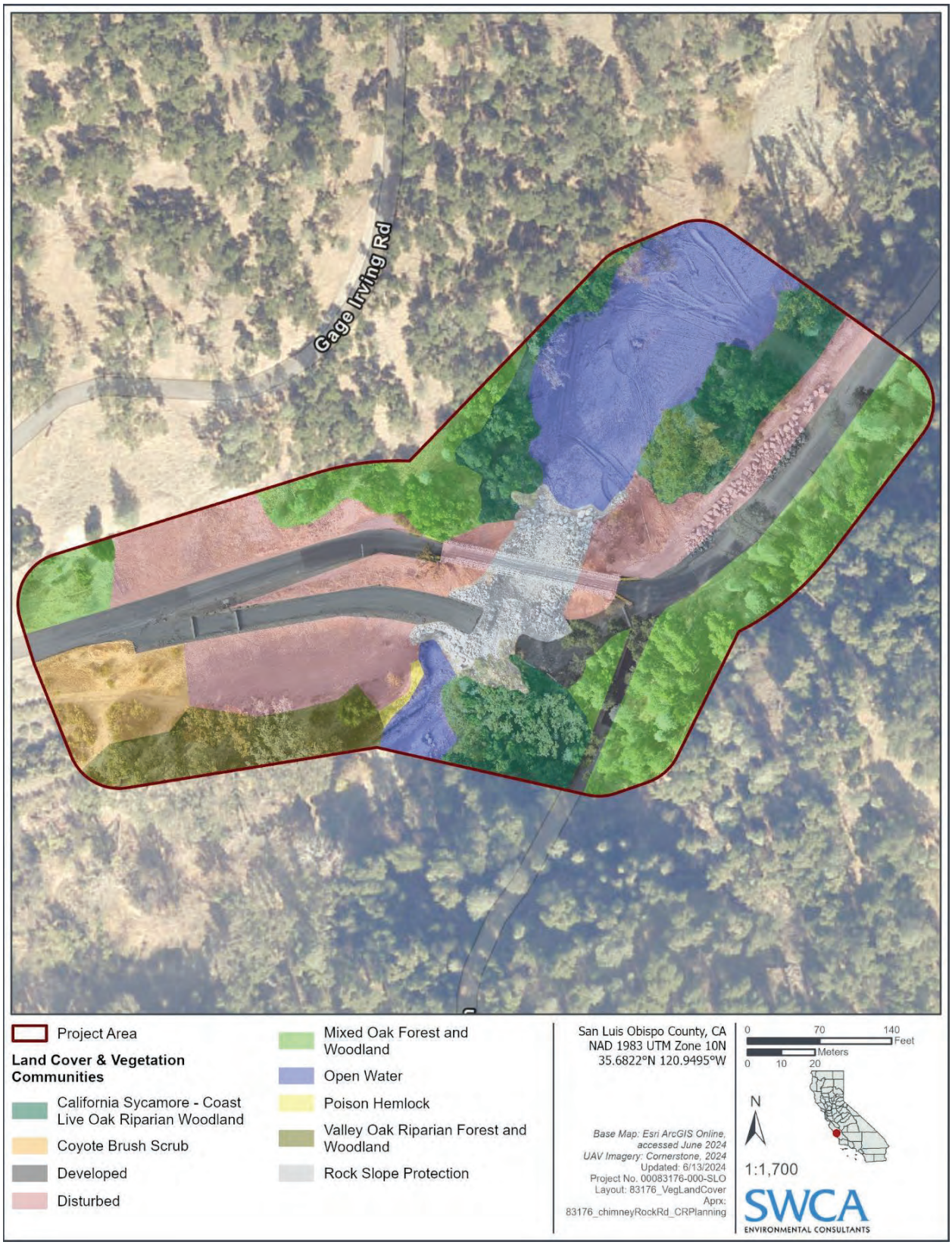

Figure 6. Habitat map

Sensitive Natural Communities

The vegetation alliances within CDFW's current ranking system (CDFW 2023) are based on the vegetation classification system described in the MCV (Sawyer et al. 2009). It is a hierarchical classification based on dominant plant species grouped, at the lowest level, into plant alliances and plant associations (several associations may be under an alliance). Based on this classification system, two sensitive natural community alliances with rarity rankings of S3 occur mapped within the project area: California sycamore - coast live oak riparian woodlands (*Platanus racemose – Quercus agrifolia* Woodland Alliance) and valley oak riparian forest and woodland (*Quercus lobata* Riparian Forest and Woodland Alliance). These two vegetation alliances also correspond to the areas mapped as riparian vegetation and considered waters of the state under the jurisdiction of the CDFW and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

Jurisdictional Areas and Permits

The primary aquatic feature within the project area is Franklin Creek, where it connects with Lake Nacimiento. The jurisdictional waters identified in the project area are assumed to fall under the regulatory jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and other regulatory agencies with purview over the project area, including the CDFW and RWQCB. Those areas that did not meet federal waters (WOTUS) are considered waters of the state (WOTS) and under the jurisdiction of CDFW and RWQCB. A summary of the type and extent of jurisdictional waters within the project area is presented in Table 2 and Figure 7.

Table 2. Extent and Location of Jurisdictional Waters and Wetlands[1]

Feature Type	Area	Length
WOTUS and WOTS (below OHWM[2]) – Pre-storm conditions	1.25 acres	450 linear feet
WOTUS and WOTS (below OHWM) – Post-storm conditions	1.38 acres	530 linear feet
Riparian Bank (above OHWM)	0.91 acre	500 linear feet

[1] Areas of potential jurisdiction are subject to final verification and approval by the regulatory agencies (i.e., USACE, State Water Board/RWQCB, and CDFW).

[2] Ordinary High Water Mark

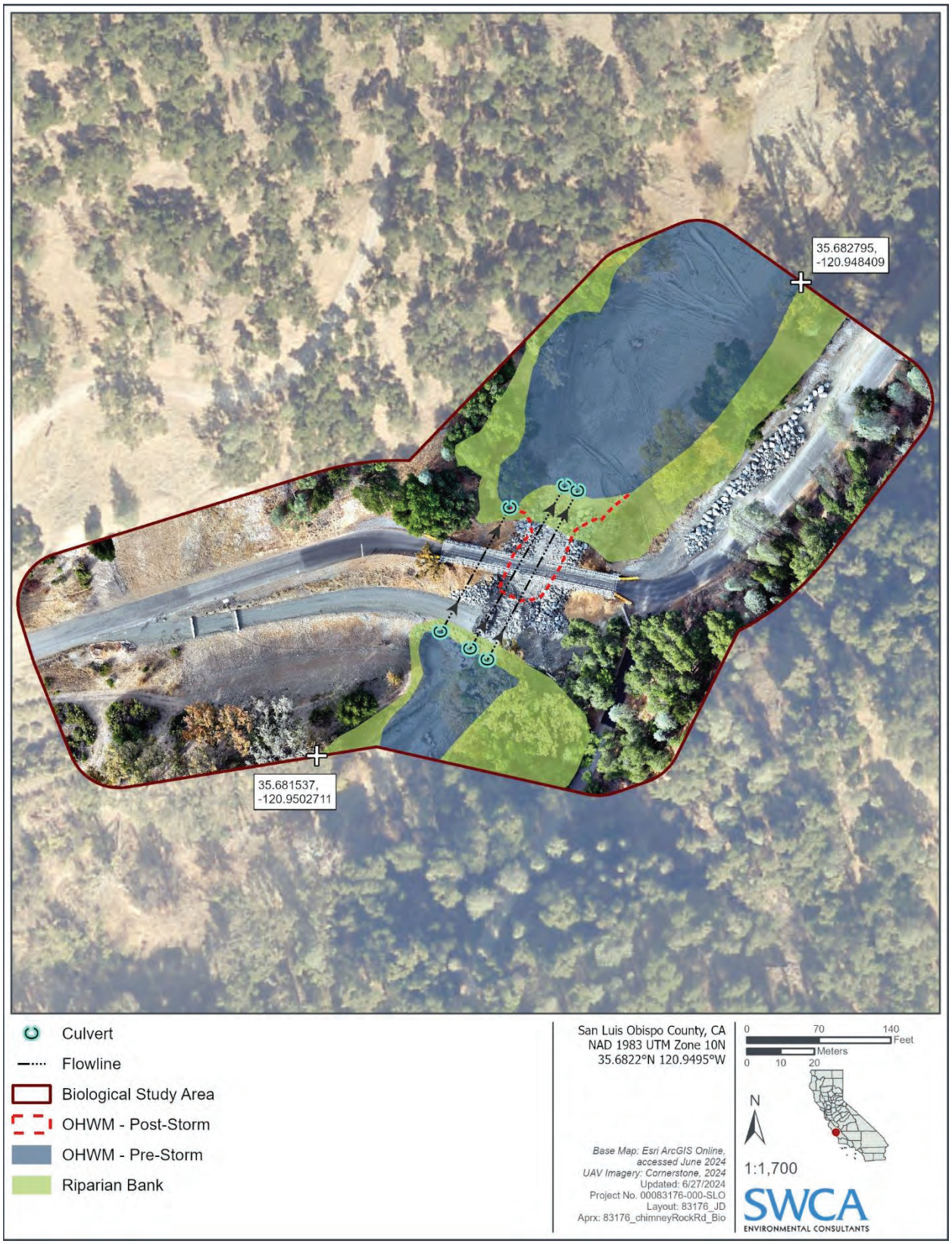

Figure 7. Water resources map

Discussion

(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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?*

Special-Status Plants

The project includes ground-disturbing and vegetation removal activities for construction of the proposed project, which would have the potential to result in direct removal of special-status plant species if present within the project area during construction. No special-status plant species were observed during field surveys of the project site (SWCA 2024). Based on the results of the desktop review, 10 special-status plant species have been previously documented within 5 miles of the project area. However, the majority of the project area does not contain sandy soils, patches of serpentine soils, rocky outcrops, or seasonal wetlands, which are key micro-habitat components for several of the special-status plant species that were identified in the literature review. Most of the habitat within the project area was previously disturbed during the emergency work and contains vegetation from the applied hydroseed mix. Based on existing conditions, the project area does not support suitable conditions for any of the special-status plant species and special-status plant species are unlikely to occur within the project area. Because no special-status plant species are present or expected to occur within the project area, the project would not adversely affect any special-status plant species and impacts related to special-status plants would be *less than significant*.

Special-Status Wildlife

Proposed construction and vegetation removal activities have the potential to result in direct (i.e., take) or indirect (e.g., noise, dust, light pollution) disturbance to special-status wildlife species if present within the project area during project construction. No special-status animal species were observed during field surveys of the project site (SWCA 2024).

Based on the results of the desktop review compared to conditions observed during field surveys of the project site, there is potential for 12 special-status species to occur within the project area. Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-4 require environmental awareness training for project personnel and identify general site maintenance requirements to reduce the potential to adversely affect wildlife within the project area during project construction. The special-status animal species with potential to occur in the project area are evaluated in more detail, below.

Crotch bumble bee

This species is a candidate species for protection under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) that typically inhabits open grassland and scrub habitats. Most of the project area has been disturbed with little ground cover, making it unsuitable for colonies to use for nesting; however, with the hydroseeded areas in peak bloom during the April 17, 2023, site visit, there was abundant floral resources for foraging. Therefore, there is some potential for transient individuals to forage within the project area; however, impacts would be less than significant.

California red-legged frog

This species is a federally threatened species and CDFW Species of Special Concern (SSC) that typically occupies both aquatic and terrestrial habitats during different stages of its life and during different seasons of the year. There are no documented CNDDB occurrences of this species within the

surrounding watershed of Lake Nacimiento and there is a noticeable lack of records within the upper Salinas River watershed. The closest CNDDB occurrences (No. 381, 461, and 98) fall within the Cypress Mountain and Cambria, California USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles, approximately 7 to 8 miles south and west of the project area. The project site provides marginally suitable habitat for this species and there is a potential that the species could be present, particularly if water is present during construction. Mitigation Measure BIO-5 requires preconstruction surveys, relocation, and avoidance measures.

Coast Range newt

Coast Range newt is a CDFW SSC that may be found in habitats such as wet forests, oak woodlands, chaparral, and rolling grasslands. The CNDDB does not document any occurrences within 5 miles of the project area. Franklin Creek may support suitable aquatic habitat for this species; however, with the presence of introduced predators, including fish and bullfrogs, populations may be limited or absent from the creek. Although Coast Range newt is not expected to occur within the project area, this species is not as well documented in the CNDDB; therefore, Mitigation Measure BIO-6 has been identified to reduce impacts to Coast Range newt in the unlikely event this species is present within the project area during initial vegetation clearing activities.

Southwestern pond turtle

Southwestern pond turtle is a proposed threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and a CDFW SSC that inhabits quiet waters of ponds, small lakes, streams, and marshes and requires basking sites such as partially submerged logs, rocks, mats of floating vegetation, or open mud banks. While there is suitable habitat present above and below the bridge, most of the project area has already been impacted from storm damage and emergency repair work. The RSP along the embankments make habitat areas around the bridge less suitable due to the lack of underwater cover, such as undercut banks, tangles of roots, and submerged logs. Additionally, if the area of Franklin Creek within the project area is dry during the start of construction, then pond turtles are unlikely to occur. However, if water is present and the project site is dewatered, then preconstruction surveys and the presence of a biological monitor would reduce potential impacts to southwestern pond turtle to less than significant. Therefore, Mitigation Measure BIO-6 has been identified to require preconstruction surveys for southwestern pond turtle.

Two-striped garter snake

Two-striped garter snake is a CDFW SSC that typically occurs in aquatic habitats and forages underwater. The project area contains suitable aquatic habitat to support this species; however, given the presence of nonnative fish and bullfrogs throughout Lake Nacimiento and into the lower portions of Franklin Creek, the typical prey base of tadpoles and newt larvae may no longer occur in the project area, ultimately reducing the potential for two-striped garter snake to occur in the project area. If the area of Franklin Creek within the project area is dry during the start of construction, then two-striped garter snake is unlikely to be present. However, if water is present and the project site is dewatered, then preconstruction surveys and the presence of a biological monitor would reduce potential impacts to two-striped garter snake to less than significant. Therefore, Mitigation Measure BIO-6 has been identified to require preconstruction surveys for two-stripes garter snake.

Bald eagle

Bald eagle is listed as endangered under the CESA, a Fully Protected species under California Fish and Game Code Section 3511 (i.e., no permitted take or possession at any time), and protected under the

federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA). This species generally occurs on ocean shores, lake margins, and rivers and utilizes these habitats for both nesting and wintering. Habitat within and immediately adjacent to the project area contains suitable nesting and foraging habitat for bald eagle and there is a previous nest recorded within 0.6 mile of the project area; therefore, there is potential for this species to nest within the vicinity of the project site and/or be seen foraging in the project area during construction activities. Mitigation Measure BIO-7 has been identified to require preconstruction nesting bird surveys to reduce potential impacts.

Golden eagle

Golden eagle is a Fully Protected species under California Fish and Game Code Section 3511 (i.e., no permitted take or possession at any time) and protected under the federal BGEPA. This species typically occurs in open and semi-open habitats, most commonly in mountainous areas with hunting grounds where prey is abundant. There is suitable nesting and foraging habitat for golden eagle in the adjacent hillsides of the project area; therefore, there is potential for this species to nest within the vicinity of the project site and/or be seen foraging in the project area during construction activities. Mitigation Measure BIO-7 has been identified to require preconstruction nesting bird surveys to reduce potential impacts.

Nesting birds and raptors

In addition to those species protected by the federal or state government, all native avian species are protected by federal and state legislature, most notably the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code. The mixed oak woodlands, valley oak riparian forest, and California sycamores adjacent to Franklin Creek provide particularly suitable nesting habitat for nesting birds and raptors. Mitigation Measure BIO-7 has been identified to require preconstruction nesting bird surveys to reduce potential impacts.

Monterey dusky-footed woodrat

Monterey dusky-footed woodrat is a CDFW SSC that typically occurs in dense chaparral, hardwood and conifer mixed forests, and riparian woodlands. Most of the vegetation within the project area has already been impacted and no longer provides suitable habitat for woodrats; however, there is suitable habitat further upslope in the adjacent mixed oak forest and riparian habitat. Mitigation Measure BIO-6 has been identified to require biological monitoring during initial ground disturbance to minimize impacts to this species or their nests if they are observed within the project area.

Roosting bats

Three special-status bat species, that are all CDFW SSC, have potential to occur in the project area, including pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, and western red bat. Pallid bat roosts are typically located in caves, crevices, mines, and occasionally in hollow trees and buildings. Similarly, Townsend's big-eared bat may use trees for day and night roosts, but requires caves, mines, rock faces, bridges, or buildings for maternity roosts. The open nature of the truss bridge does not provide suitable crevices or "cave-like" conditions for these two species; however, the trees surrounding the creek may provide suitable non-maternal roosting sites. Western red bat primarily roosts in trees, often in edge habitats adjacent to streams, fields, or urban areas. Suitable foraging habitat is present within the project area, and the surrounding trees may provide suitable roosting habitat. Mitigation Measure BIO-6 has been identified to require biological monitoring during initial ground disturbance to minimize potential impacts to roosting bats if present.

Conclusion

No special-status plant species are expected to occur within the project area; therefore, no impacts to special-status plant species would occur. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-7 would reduce potential impacts to special-status wildlife species during construction activities. Based on implementation of the identified mitigation measures, the project would not adversely affect special-status species; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(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 Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

As previously identified, the primary aquatic feature within the project area is Franklin Creek. Within the project area, Franklin Creek supports riparian habitat.

Preliminary project impacts to riparian habitat were estimated based on 65% plans. Pre-storm conditions were used to calculate permanent and temporary impacts to channel habitat (below the OHWM) and riparian bank. Based on the 65% project plans, the project is expected to permanently impact approximately 0.11 acre (4,603 square feet) of channel habitat and approximately 0.08 acre (3,642 square feet) of riparian bank. Based on 65% plans, the project is expected to temporarily impact approximately 0.26 acre (44,192 square feet) of channel habitat and approximately 0.25 acre (11,107 square feet) of riparian bank. The project will also result in the removal of the remaining culvert.

Removal of the pre-existing solid fill (the culverted road crossing) will result in the creation of a new channel and riparian bank under the new bridge. Therefore, the proposed project will result in a net increase in the overall stream channel and riparian habitat from pre-project conditions. Removal of the pre-existing fill (the culverted road crossing) will result in the creation of a new channel and riparian bank adjacent to and under the new bridge. This transition from a culverted system to an open channel system provides a substantial increase in the function and value of the aquatic habitat. Stream channel rehabilitation includes 0.23 acres and 135 linear feet (LF) of stream channel temporarily disturbed as a part of the project. Stream channel re-establishment includes 0.15-acre of stream channel including 0.05 acre of former riparian habitat (culverted embankment). Riparian habitat rehabilitation includes 0.23 acre and 179 LF of riparian habitat temporarily disturbed as a part of the project. The remaining 0.05 acre of temporary impacts to riparian will be re-established as streambed habitat. Mitigation Measures BIO-8 through BIO-12 would require erosion control and pollution prevention measures during construction.

There are two sensitive natural communities within the project area, including California sycamore - coast live oak riparian woodlands (*Platanus racemose – Quercus agrifolia* Woodland Alliance) and valley oak riparian forest and woodland (*Quercus lobata* Riparian Forest and Woodland Alliance) (Figure 6). The two vegetation alliances also correspond to the areas mapped as riparian vegetation and considered waters of the state under the jurisdiction of the CDFW and RWQCB. The project would result in minor temporary impacts to California sycamore – coast live oak riparian woodlands adjacent to the northwestern abutment of the bridge as a result of the removal of four trees within the riparian bank, three oak trees and one dead tree. The project would have no impact on valley oak riparian forest and woodland. Mitigation Measure BIO-13 identifies avoidance requirements and requires replanting of removed and/or impacted trees to avoid the loss of trees within the project area. With implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-13, the project would not conflict with the County's LUO.

Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

No wetlands meeting the federal jurisdictional criteria were identified in the project area. Therefore, the project would not have an adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands, and there would be *no impact*.

(d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

The project site consists of a segment of the existing Chimney Rock Road bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The existing crossing consists of a temporary modular steel truss bridge. Based on the developed nature of the project area that experiences frequent vehicle disturbance, the potential for wildlife movement through the project site is low. Prior to the winter storms of 2023, Franklin Creek at Chimney Rock Road flowed through three 8-foot-diameter CMP culverts, ultimately reducing the ability for migratory fish movement within the project area. The project would be limited to the construction of a permanent bridge crossing over Franklin Creek within the general alignment of the existing roadway and bridge crossing; therefore, the project would not result in new or expanded development in a manner that could interfere with migratory species. Further, connection of Franklin Creek above and below Chimney Rock Road would no longer be conveyed through culverts, but through an open channel, ultimately resulting in a net positive impact on the movement of wildlife species within the project area. Trees within the project area have the potential to provide nesting habitat for migratory bird species. The project would result in impacts to existing trees and vegetation within the project area. Mitigation Measure BIO-13 requires replanting of removed and/or impacted trees, which would ensure long-term migratory nesting bird habitat would remain within the project area. Based on implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-13, the project would not interfere with the movement of any migratory wildlife species; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

County LUO Chapter 22.58 establishes regulations for clear-cutting oak woodlands. The project would result in minor temporary impacts to California sycamore – coast live oak riparian woodlands adjacent to the northwestern and southwestern abutments of the bridge as a result of the removal of one dead grey pine tree and up to 6 oak trees. The project would have no impact on valley oak riparian forest and woodland. Mitigation Measure BIO-13 identifies avoidance requirements and requires replanting of removed and/or impacted trees to avoid the loss of trees within the project area. With implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-13, the project would not conflict with the County's LUO; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(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?

The project does not overlap with any adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other conservation plans. Therefore, the project would not conflict with any approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plans, and *no impacts* would occur.

Conclusion

Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-13 have been included to avoid and/or minimize potential impacts related to biological resources in the project area. The project would not conflict with a Habitat Conservation Plan. Upon implementation of the identified mitigation measures, potential impacts related to biological resources would be less than significant.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c)	Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Regional Conditions

The project site is located in an area historically occupied by two Native American tribes—the northernmost subdivision of the Chumash, the Obispeño (after Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa), and the Salinan. However, the precise location of the boundary between the Chumashan-speaking Obispeño Chumash and their northern neighbors, the Hokan-speaking Playanos Salinan, is currently the subject of debate, as those boundaries may have changed over time.

As defined by CEQA, a historical resource includes:

1. A resource listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR).
2. Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant. The architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural records of California may be considered to be a historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence.

Existing Conditions

A Cultural Resources Survey Report (CRSR) was prepared for the proposed project to determine the presence and the likelihood of presence of cultural resources within the project area (SWCA 2024a). The CRSR includes

the results and findings of a background review and pedestrian survey of the project area. A records search was conducted at the Central Coast Information Center (CCIC) located at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History to identify any previously recorded cultural resources within the project site and a 0.25-mile radius of the project site, hereafter referred to as the project area. The records search did not reveal any previously recorded resources within the project area. In addition, a search of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File (SLF) was conducted and did not reveal any tribal cultural resources within the project area. A pedestrian field survey of the project site was conducted on April 25, 2024, and no cultural resources or evidence of cultural resources was observed (SWCA 2024a). On July 16, 2024 California Native American Tribes were contacted for consultation on the project under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Assembly Bill 52 pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Discussion

(a) *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?*

The project would replace the existing temporary modular steel truss bridge with a permanent bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The temporary modular steel truss bridge is not eligible for listing in the CRHR. There are no historical resources located within the project area; therefore, the project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, and *no impacts* would occur.

(b) *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?*

Construction of the proposed project would require approximately 3.9 acres of ground disturbance. Based on the results of the CRSR, there are no known cultural archaeological resources within the project area (SWCA 2024a). Because there are no known archaeological resources within the project area, proposed construction and ground-disturbing activities would not result in adverse changes to known archaeological resources. However, there is still some potential for inadvertent discovery of unknown cultural resources if present within the proposed work area during proposed construction activities. Mitigation Measures CR-1 through CR-4 have been identified to address initial ground disturbance and inadvertent discovery of previously unknown cultural resources and requires that in the event an unknown cultural resource site is encountered, all work within the vicinity of the find must be halted until a qualified archaeologist is retained to evaluate the nature, integrity, and significance of the find. Based on implementation of Mitigation Measures CR-1 through CR-4, proposed construction activities would not result in adverse impacts to known or unknown cultural archaeological resources; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

(c) *Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?*

The CRSR did not identify any previously discovered or evidence of human remains within the project area (SWCA 2024a). Further, the project would be required to comply with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, which outlines the protocol for inadvertent discovery of human remains. California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98. The County Coroner must be notified of the find immediately. If the human remains are determined to be prehistoric, the coroner will notify the California NAHC, which will determine and notify a Most Likely Descendant (MLD). The MLD shall complete the inspection of the project site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive

analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials. Based on required compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, impacts related to disturbance of human remains would be *less than significant.*

Conclusion

No archaeological or historical resources are known or expected to occur within or adjacent to the project site. In the event unanticipated archaeological resources or human remains are discovered during future construction activities, implementation of Mitigation Measure CR-1 and adherence with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 procedures would reduce potential impacts to less than significant. As requested by the Xolon Salinan Tribe and Salinan Tribe of Monterey & San Luis Obispo Counties, initial ground disturbing activities would be monitored by an archaeologist and a tribal representative as specified in Mitigation Measure CR-2 (see Tribal Cultural Resources). With the inclusion of the Mitigation Measures CR-1 through CR-4, potential adverse impacts to cultural resources would be reduced to a less than significant level.

VI. ENERGY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Local Utilities

Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) is the primary electricity provider for urban and rural communities within San Luis Obispo County. PG&E utilizes clean energy sources, including 38% from renewable energy sources and an additional 57% from GHG-free energy sources (PG&E 2022).

Central Coast Community Energy (3CE), a Community Choice Aggregator (CCA), is a locally controlled public agency supplying clean and renewable electricity for residents and businesses in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, and Santa Barbara Counties, as well as multiple incorporated cities within these counties. 3CE is based on a CCA model, which means that 3CE partners with the local utility (i.e., PG&E), which continues to provide consolidated billing, electricity transmission and distribution, customer service, and grid maintenance services. 3CE is currently on a pathway to achieving 60% clean and renewable energy by 2025 and 100% clean and renewable energy by 2030, which is 15 years ahead of California's mandate for zero emissions (3CE 2023).

Local Energy Plans and Policies

The County COSE establishes goals and policies that aim to reduce VMT, conserve water, increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, and reduce associated GHG emissions. The County COSE provides the basis and direction for the development of the *County of San Luis Obispo EnergyWise Plan* (County EWP), which outlines in greater detail the County's strategy to reduce government and community-wide GHG emissions through a number of goals, measures, and actions, including energy efficiency and development and use of renewable energy resources.

The County LUO includes a Renewable Energy Overlay combining designation to encourage and support the development of local renewable energy resources, conserving energy resources and decreasing reliance on environmentally costly energy sources. The project site is located within the Renewable Energy Overlay combining designation.

Discussion

(a) Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

During construction, fossil fuels, electricity, and natural gas would be used by construction vehicles and equipment. The energy consumed during construction would be limited in nature and would be typical of other similar construction activities in the county. Federal and state regulations in place require the use of fuel-efficient equipment and vehicles and require wasteful activities, such as diesel idling, to be limited. Construction contractors, in an effort to ensure cost efficiency, would not be expected to engage in wasteful or unnecessary energy and fuel practices.

Following construction, the project would continue to operate as an existing roadway and associated bridge crossing and would not require significant use of energy resources, such as electricity or natural gas. The project does not include the installation of new streetlights or other components that would require the consumption of electricity or natural gas. Further, the project does not include the establishment of new land uses or activities that could generate an increase in vehicle trips to and from the project site or would otherwise increase the use of fossil fuels.

Energy consumption during construction would be limited in duration and would not conflict with a state or local plan for renewable energy and would not be wasteful, unnecessary, or inefficient. Based on the negligible amount of energy consumption required for operation of the project, the project would not cause a substantial increase in energy use. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

In order to be compliant with the policies set forth in the County COSE, the project would be required to reduce GHG emissions where feasible in energy consumption. As previously evaluated, proposed construction activities would require the use of energy in the form of diesel fuel and gasoline for worker and construction vehicles and equipment. The energy consumed during construction would be temporary and would not represent a significant or wasteful demand on available resources. The proposed project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway and associated bridge crossing and does not include components that could increase energy consumption or associated GHG emissions. Therefore, construction and operation of the project would be consistent with the goals and policies of the County's COSE.

The project site is located within the Renewable Energy Overlay (RE) combining designation. The project does not include the construction of solar electric facilities or other renewable energy facilities that would be applicable to permit streamlining or development standards included in County Land Use Ordinance Section 22.14.100.

Based on the negligible increase in energy consumption and associated GHG emissions, the project would comply with the County's COSE, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

The project would not result in unnecessary, wasteful, or inefficient energy use during short-term construction or long-term operations and would not conflict with state or local renewable energy or energy efficiency plans. Therefore, potential impacts related to energy would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(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? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	☐	☐	☐	☒
	(ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f)	Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Earthquake Fault Zones

San Luis Obispo County is in a geologically complex and seismically active region. The *County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Safety Element* identifies three active faults that traverse through the county and are currently zoned under the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act: San Andreas, Hosgri-San Simeon, and Los Osos. The nearest Alquist-Priolo fault is the Hosgri-San Simeon Fault, located approximately 17 miles west of the project site. Other faults within the project region include the Rinconada Fault, approximately 7 miles northeast of the project site; the Nacimiento Fault, approximately 1.75 miles west/northwest of the project site; the Oceanic Fault, approximately 9 miles southwest of the project site; and the Cambria Fault, approximately 12 miles southwest of the project site (CDOC 2015).

Seismic and Other Geologic Hazards

Ground shaking refers to the motion that occurs in response to regional and local earthquakes. Seismic ground shaking is influenced by the proximity of the project site to an earthquake fault, the intensity of the seismic event, and the underlying soil composition. Ground shaking can endanger life and safety due to damage or collapse of structures or lifeline facilities.

Liquefaction is the sudden loss of soil strength due to a rapid increase in soil pore water pressures resulting from ground shaking during an earthquake. Liquefaction potential increases with earthquake magnitude and ground shaking duration. Low-lying areas adjacent to creeks, rivers, beaches, and estuaries underlain by unconsolidated alluvial soil are most likely to be vulnerable to liquefaction. Based on the County Safety Element Liquefaction Hazards Map, the project site is located in an area with low potential for liquefaction.

Landslides and slope instability can occur as a result of wet weather, weak soils, improper grading, improper drainage, steep slopes, adverse geologic structure, earthquakes, or a combination of these factors. The County Safety Element identifies several policies to reduce risk from landslides and slope instability. These policies include the requirement for slope stability evaluations for development in areas of moderate or high landslide risk and restrictions on new development in areas of known landslide activity unless development plans indicate that the hazard can be reduced to a less-than-significant level prior to beginning development. According to the County Safety Element Maps, the project site is primarily located in an area with very high and moderate potential for landslide.

Shrink/swell potential is the extent to which the soil shrinks as it dries out or swells when it gets wet. Extent of shrinking and swelling is influenced by the amount and kind of clay in the soil. Shrinking and swelling of soils can cause damage to building foundations, roads, and other structures. Soils at the project site consist of Balcom-Calleguas complex, 50 to 75 percent slopes; Shimmon-Dibble association, very steep; and Corducci and Typic Xerofluvents, 0 to 5 percent slopes, occasionally flooded, MLRA 14, which are primarily comprised of sand, loam, and bedrock. Therefore, soils at the project site have low potential for expansion (NRCS 2024).

The County General Plan identifies a Geologic Study Area (GSA) combining designation for areas where geologic and soil conditions could present new developments and/or their occupants with potential hazards to life and property. The project site is not located within a GSA.

Paleontological Setting

Paleontological resources are fossilized remains of ancient environments, including fossilized bone, shell, and plant parts; impressions of plant, insect, or animal parts preserved in stone; and preserved tracks of insects and animals. According to the USGS, the project site is underlain by Monterey Shale from the upper and middle Miocene (Tml). Tml typically contains local abundant foraminifera, micro shells, and fish scales (USGS 2004). Due to the age of this formation, there is potential for paleontological resources to be present within the bedrock.

Discussion

(a) *Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:*

(a-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? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.*

The project site is located greater than 15 miles from any mapped Alquist-Priolo Act fault zones within the county (CDOC 2015). Therefore, the project would not result in risk of loss, injury, or death related to rupture of a known Alquist-Priolo Act fault zone or other known active fault and *no impacts* would occur.

(a-ii) *Strong seismic ground shaking?*

San Luis Obispo County is located in a seismically active region and there is potential for seismic ground shaking to occur at the project site. Potentially active faults within the project region include the Rinconada Fault, approximately 7 miles northeast of the project site; the Nacimiento Fault, approximately 1.75 miles west/northwest of the project site; the Oceanic Fault, approximately 9 miles southwest of the project site; and the Cambria Fault, approximately 12 miles southwest of the project site (CDOC 2015). The proposed bridge would be required to meet or exceed seismic design standards

identified in Caltrans Seismic Design Criteria (SDC), Version 2.0 (Caltrans 2019) and other applicable engineering standards to reduce risk associated with seismic ground shaking. The purpose of the proposed project is to construct a safe bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The proposed bridge design is being informed by site-specific geotechnical data and a detailed engineering design that ensures conformance with state and federal seismic design standards. Based on project design and required compliance with Caltrans and other applicable engineering standards, the project would not result in the risk of loss, injury, or death as a result of seismic ground shaking; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(a-iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Based on the County Safety Element Liquefaction Hazards Map, the project site is located in an area with low potential for liquefaction. The proposed bridge would be required to meet or exceed seismic design standards identified in Caltrans SDC, Version 2.0 (Caltrans 2019) and other applicable engineering standards to further reduce the risk associated with liquefaction. The purpose of the proposed project is to construct a safe bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The proposed bridge design is being informed by site-specific geotechnical data and a detailed engineering design that ensures conformance with state and federal seismic design standards, including liquefaction. Based on project design and required compliance with Caltrans and other applicable engineering standards, the project would not result in the risk of loss, injury, or death as a result of liquefaction; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(a-iv) Landslides?

The project site consists of moderately to steeply sloping topography in an area with very high and moderate potential for landslides. The proposed bridge would be required to meet or exceed seismic design standards identified in Caltrans SDC, Version 2.0 (Caltrans 2019) and other applicable engineering standards to reduce the risk associated with landslides. The proposed bridge design is being informed by site-specific geotechnical data and a detailed engineering design that ensures conformance with state and federal seismic design standards, including landslides. Based on project design and required compliance with Caltrans and other applicable engineering standards, the project would not result in the risk of loss, injury, or death as a result of landslide; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

The proposed project would require approximately 3.9 acres of ground disturbance. Proposed ground disturbance has the potential to increase erosion and loss of topsoil at the project site that could run off into Franklin Creek and surrounding areas. The proposed project would disturb more than 1 acre of soils and would be required to comply with State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) General Construction Permit requirements, including preparation and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Protection Plan (SWPPP) with Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce the potential for erosive runoff during project construction. In addition, Mitigation Measure BIO-2 has been identified in Section IV, *Biological Resources*, to reduce potential impacts related to an increase in erosion and other pollutants at the project site and runoff into Franklin Creek through the implementation of construction BMPs and drainage protection measures during construction activities. Based on compliance with applicable policies and implementation of identified mitigation measures, impacts associated with soil erosion and loss of topsoil during construction activities would be reduced to less than significant. Following construction, the creek slopes would be improved to a 2:1 slope and RSP

would be placed on the abutment fill slopes and vegetated, which would provide an increased hydraulic cross section as well as reduce the anticipated erosion and/or scour of the abutment slopes. Based on implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2 and required compliance with the SWRCB, the project would not result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(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?

The purpose of the proposed project is to construct a safe bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The proposed bridge design is being informed by site-specific geotechnical data and a detailed engineering design that would ensure that the final bridge design would avoid or minimize risk as a result of potential ground-failure events. The project would also be required to meet or exceed seismic design standards identified in the Caltrans SDC and other applicable engineering practices to reduce the risk associated with ground failure. Based on project design and required compliance with applicable roadway design standards, the project would not result in risk related to potential ground-failure events; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

Typically, expansive soils are comprised of clay. Soils at the project site are primarily comprised of sand, loam, and bedrock and, therefore, have low potential for expansion (NRCS 2024). Further, the proposed bridge design is being informed by site-specific geotechnical data and a detailed engineering design that ensures conformance with state and federal design standards. Based on existing conditions and project design, the project would not result in risk to life or property as a result of development on expansive soils; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant.*

(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?

The project does not include the installation of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

(f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

The project site is underlain by Tml, which typically contains local abundant foraminifera, micro shells, and fish scales (USGS 2004). Due to the age of this formation, there is potential for paleontological resources to be present within the bedrock. Most of the soils at the project site have a depth to restrictive feature of approximately 20-40 inches (1.7 to 3.3 feet) to the bedrock. Portions of the project site consist of an existing roadway prism, which reduces the potential for intact paleontological resources to be present within the project area. This formation is found at a depth below fill, and the only project impacts to paleontological resources would be directional drilling into a small portion of this formation. Paleontological monitoring of deep drilling activities is generally considered infeasible and of limited value because paleontological resources can be obscured, preventing inspection of observation and if intact, would be removed from their stratigraphic context. Therefore, monitoring would not provide any meaningful protection, and no mitigation measures are proposed.

Conclusion

The project site is not within the GSA combining designation or an area of high risk of landslide, liquefaction, subsidence, or other unstable geologic conditions. Future development would be required to comply with standard engineering practices to properly safeguard against seismic and geologic hazards. Based on implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2 and required compliance with existing RWQCB regulations, implementation of the project would not result in a substantial increase in erosion or loss of topsoil. Therefore, potential impacts related to geology and soils would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures identified throughout this document.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

GHGs are any gases that absorb infrared radiation in the atmosphere. The primary GHGs that are emitted into the atmosphere as a result of human activities are carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), NO_X, and fluorinated gases. These are most commonly emitted through the burning of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, and coal), agricultural practices, decay of organic waste in landfills, and a variety of other chemical reactions and industrial processes (e.g., the manufacturing of cement).

State Regulatory Setting

Assembly Bill (AB) 1279 (the California Climate Crisis Act) was signed into law in September 2022. This law established the revised GHG reduction goals, including the following:

- Achieve net zero GHG emissions as soon as possible, but no later than 2045;
- Maintain net negative GHG emissions thereafter (following 2045); and
- Reduce statewide anthropogenic GHG to at least 85% below 1990 levels by 2045.

The 2008 Scoping Plan was first approved by the CARB on December 11, 2008, and is updated every 5 years. The most recent update released by the CARB is the 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality (2022 Scoping Plan), which was finalized and adopted in December 2022. The 2022 Scoping Plan lays out the strategies for achieving carbon neutrality and reducing anthropogenic (i.e., human caused) GHG emissions by 85% below 1990 levels no later than 2045, as directed by AB 1279 (CARB 2022).

Regional Regulatory Setting

SLOAPCD recently developed and published the 2023 Administrative Update Version of the CEQA Air Quality Handbook, which included updated thresholds of significance for GHG emissions. These thresholds have been established through the year 2045, the last year specified in AB 1279 and the CARB 2022 Scoping Plan Update for California to achieve its net zero GHG emissions target (SLOAPCD 2023b).

For projects with an initial operational year of 2030 or earlier, if emissions are at or below an applicable threshold for that operational year, then the project is considered to be doing its fair share toward the state's Senate Bill (SB) 32 GHG reduction target. For projects with an operational year of 2045, the SLOAPCD has established that the GHG efficiency threshold for new development is 4.0 metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent ($MTCO_2e$) per service population per year (SLOAPCD 2023a).

Discussion

(a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

During construction, fossil fuels, electricity, and natural gas would be used by construction vehicles and equipment. Federal and state regulations in place require fuel-efficient equipment and vehicles and prohibit wasteful activities, such as diesel idling. Construction contractors, in an effort to ensure cost efficiency, would not be expected to engage in wasteful or unnecessary energy and fuel practices that could lead to substantial GHG emissions.

Typically, operational GHG emissions are generated from electricity and fossil fuel use. Following construction, the project would continue to operate as an existing roadway and associated bridge crossing and would not require significant use of energy resources, such as electricity or fossil fuels. The project does not include the installation of new streetlights or other components that would require the consumption of electricity or natural gas. Further, the project does not include the establishment of new land uses or activities that could generate an increase in vehicle trips to and from the project site that could increase the use of fossil fuels.

Based on the negligible amount of energy consumption required for construction and operation of the project, the project would not cause a substantial increase in GHG emissions; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

As described under Impact Discussion VIII(a), the project would result in a minimal short-term increase in construction related GHG emissions and no increase in operational GHG emissions. Overall project consistency with the County EWP and the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) prepared by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is evaluated below.

EnergyWise Plan Consistency

The County EWP includes numerous measures to reduce GHG emissions associated with energy use, motor vehicle use, water use, waste generation, and construction. It is important to note, however, that the County EWP is based on year 2020 GHG-reduction targets and has not yet been updated to reflect year 2030 GHG-reduction targets, per SB 32.

Proposed construction activities would require the use of energy in the form of diesel fuel and gasoline for worker and construction vehicles and equipment. Energy consumption would be limited to the temporary impacts of construction and would not represent a significant or wasteful demand on available energy resources. The proposed project would not include components which could increase energy consumption through operation. Therefore, construction and operation of the project would be consistent with goals and policies of the County's EWP.

2023 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

SLOCOG's 2023 RTP serves as the blueprint for regional land use and transportation development patterns. It includes visions, goals, and policies relevant to the proposed project. The project does not include development of retail, business, or commercial uses that would be open to the public; therefore, land use planning strategies, such as mixed-use development and planning compact communities, are generally not applicable. The proposed project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway and associated bridge crossing and does not include components that could increase population or associated VMT within the region, which is consistent with the 2023 RTP goals and policies related to VMT.

Based on the analysis provided above, the project would be consistent with applicable state and local policies and programs intended to reduce GHG emissions, and potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

The project would not generate significant GHG emissions above existing levels and would not exceed any applicable GHG thresholds, contribute considerably to cumulatively significant GHG emissions, or conflict with plans adopted to reduce GHG emissions. Therefore, potential impacts related to GHG emissions would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c)	Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(e)	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, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f)	Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(g)	Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Hazardous Materials Sites

The Hazardous Waste and Substances Site (Cortese) List is a planning document used by the state, local agencies, and developers to comply with CEQA requirements related to the disclosure of information about the location of hazardous materials release sites. The California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) maintains the EnviroStor database, which tracks DTSC cleanup, permitting, enforcement, and investigation efforts at hazardous waste facilities and sites with known contamination, such as federal superfund sites, state response sites, voluntary cleanup sites, school cleanup sites, school investigation sites, and military evaluation sites. The SWRCB maintains the GeoTracker database, which contains records for sites that impact, or have the potential to impact, water in California, such as Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites, Department of Defense sites, and Cleanup Program sites. The remaining data regarding facilities or sites identified as meeting the Cortese List requirements can be located on the CalEPA website: https://calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/. Based on a query of the DTSC EnviroStor and SWRCB

GeoTracker databases, there are no previously recorded hazardous materials or LUST sites located within or adjacent to the project site (DTSC 2024; SWRCB 2024).

Wildfire Hazards

The County Safety Element provides a Fire Hazard Zones Map that indicates unincorporated areas in the county within moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs). The project site is located in a State Responsibility Area (SRA) in a very high FHSZ. According to the County's Land Use View, the project site has an estimated response time of greater than 15 minutes. For more information about fire-related hazards and risk assessment, see Section XX, *Wildfire*.

Emergency Response Plans

The County also has adopted general emergency plans for multiple potential natural disasters, including the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, Emergency Operations Plan (County EOP), Earthquake Emergency Response Plan, Dam and Levee Failure Plan, Hazardous Materials Response Plan, County Recovery Plan, and Tsunami Response Plan.

Discussion

(a) *Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?*

The project would require limited quantities of hazardous substances, including gasoline, diesel fuel, hydraulic fluid, solvents, oils, paints, etc. during construction, which has the potential to result in an accidental spill or release. Construction contractors would be required to comply with applicable federal and state environmental and workplace safety laws for the handling, transport, and storage of hazardous materials, including California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 22, Division 4.5. Operation of the project would be limited to the operation of the proposed bridge and would not require the routine use of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials. Therefore, impacts associated with the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be *less than significant.*

(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?*

The project does not include the handling or use of hazardous materials or volatile substances that would result in a significant risk of upset or accidental release conditions. As previously discussed, temporary construction activities would include the use of construction equipment, vehicles, and commonly used hazardous substances, including, but not limited to, paint, solvents, oils, fuel, and gasoline. Commonly used hazardous substances within the project site would be transported, stored, and used according to regulatory requirements and existing procedures for the handling of hazardous materials.

Aerially deposited lead (ADL) from the historical use of leaded gasoline exists along heavily traveled roadways throughout California (i.e., Principal Arterial roadways, freeways, and expressways). Chimney Rock Road is located in a rural area and is classified as a local roadway that experiences approximately 623 average daily trips. Based on the limited number of past and present daily vehicle trips, significant ADL is not expected to occur in the project area.

The project is not located in an area with known potential for NOA; therefore, construction activities would not have the potential to expose workers or surrounding land uses to harmful levels of NOA. The project would require the removal of the existing temporary steel truss bridge and may require

the relocation of a utility pole from the project area; however, the project does not include the demolition of any existing buildings or other structures that may contain ACM or the demolition of the existing roadway or yellow thermoplastic traffic striping that may contain LCP.

Based on existing conditions and required compliance with CCR Title 22, the project would not create significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(c) *Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?*

The nearest school is Cappy Culver Elementary School, located approximately 5.75 miles northeast of the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school, and *no impacts* would occur.

(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?*

Based on a query of the DTSC EnviroStor and SWRCB GeoTracker databases, there are no previously recorded hazardous materials or LUST sites located within or adjacent to the project site (DTSC 2024; SWRCB 2024). Therefore, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment related to disturbance of a hazardous materials site and *no impacts* would occur.

(e) *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, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?*

The project site is not located within an airport land use plan and the nearest airport is Rancho San Simeon Airstrip, located approximately 10.4 miles southwest of the project site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing and working in the project area, and *no impacts* would occur.

(f) *Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

The project includes the construction of a new permanent bridge over Franklin Creek to replace an existing temporary steel truss bridge. The existing steel truss bridge is a temporary solution to vehicle travel over Franklin Creek and is limited to one travel lane. The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a permanent two-lane bridge for vehicle crossing along Chimney Rock Road at Franklin Creek. Therefore, the proposed project would ultimately improve vehicle travel, emergency vehicle access, and evacuation efforts along Chimney Rock Road.

Construction activities would include the implementation of temporary traffic detours to route vehicles along a temporary haul road located immediately south of the project site to maintain vehicle travel throughout the project area during the 9-month construction period. Based on the implementation of the detour route, the project would also maintain emergency and other vehicle ingress and egress. Following construction, the detour route would be removed and vehicle flow along

Chimney Rock Road would ultimately be improved. Therefore, the project would not interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, including the County's General Plan Safety Element of EOP, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

(g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

The project site is located in an SRA in a very high FHSZ and consists of an existing roadway and steel truss bridge. The project would be limited to the construction of a permanent bridge over Franklin Creek and would not result in the construction of any structures or buildings that could increase the potential for a wildfire to occur in the immediate or surrounding area. Construction activities would be required to be conducted in accordance with Chapter 33 of the 2022 California Fire Code (CFC; Fire Safety During Construction and Demolition) to reduce the risk of wildfire ignition during short-term construction activities. Based on required compliance with CFC requirements, the project would not exacerbate wildfire risks; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

Based on required compliance with 22 CCR Division 4.5 and state and local health department requirements, the proposed project would not result in significant hazards related to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. The project site is not located within 0.25 mile of a school or within or adjacent to a previously recorded hazardous materials site. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in airport-related hazards to people residing or working in the project area. The proposed project would not impede emergency access or evacuation efforts. Based on required compliance with CFC requirements, the project would not result in risk associated with wildfire. Therefore, potential impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials would be less than significant.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b)	Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☒	☐

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c)	Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	☐	☒	☐	☐
	(ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☒	☐	☐
	(iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(e)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

Regional Setting

The RWQCB's Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin (Basin Plan; RWQCB 2019) describes how the quality of surface water and groundwater in the Central Coast Region should be managed to provide the highest water quality reasonably possible. The Basin Plan outlines the beneficial uses of streams, lakes, and other waterbodies for humans and other life. There are 24 categories of beneficial uses, including, but not limited to, municipal water supply, water contact recreation, non-water contact recreation, and cold freshwater habitat. Water quality objectives are then established to protect the beneficial uses of those water resources. The RWQCB implements the Basin Plan by issuing and enforcing waste discharge requirements to individuals, communities, or businesses whose discharges can affect water quality.

The project site is not located within a Sustainable Groundwater Management Act medium or high priority basin and is not subject to a groundwater sustainability plan.

The USACE, through Section 404 of the CWA, regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands. Waters of the United States are typically identified by the presence of an ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) and connectivity to traditional navigable waters or other jurisdictional features. The SWRCB and nine RWQCBs regulate discharge of fill and dredged material in California, under Section 401 of the CWA and the Porter-Cologne Act, through the State Water Quality Certification Program. State Water Quality Certification is necessary for all projects that require a USACE permit, fall under other federal jurisdiction, or have the potential to impact waters of the state. Waters of the state are defined by the Porter-Cologne Act as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state.

Local Setting

Per the County's Stormwater Program, the County Public Works Department is responsible for ensuring that new construction sites implement BMPs during construction, and that site plans incorporate appropriate post-construction stormwater runoff controls. Construction sites that disturb 1 acre or more must obtain coverage under the SWRCB's Construction General Permit. The Construction General Permit requires the preparation of a SWPPP to minimize on-site sedimentation and erosion. There are several types of projects that are exempt from preparing a SWPPP, including routine maintenance to existing developments, emergency construction activities, and projects exempted by the SWRCB or RWQCB.

For planning purposes, the flood event most often used to delineate areas subject to flooding is the 100-year flood, which is defined as an area with 1% chance for annual flooding. The County Safety Element establishes policies to reduce flood hazards and flood damage, including, but not limited to, prohibition of development in areas of high flood hazard potential, discouragement of single road access into remote areas that could be closed during floods, and review of plans for construction in low-lying areas. All development located in a 100-year flood zone is subject to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations. According to FEMA FIRM 06079C0350G (effective date 11/16/2012), a majority of the central portion of the project site (Franklin Creek) is in Zone A, an area with 1%-annual risk of major flood event (i.e., a 100-year flood zone) and remaining portions of the property are located within Zone X, an area with minimal food hazard (FEMA 2024).The County provides maintenance of existing drainage facilities within the County right-of-way as well as some limited drainage improvements as a function of the Public Works Department Road Maintenance Division. As a function of the operating road system, the drainage issues related to the road system are addressed when such drainage work protects the County maintained road system in a cost beneficial way or is directly related to County road improvement projects and is necessary to prevent property damage, including directing flow of streams across roadways through culverts and bridges (San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District 2014).

The project site is located in the Nacimiento River Watershed, which is located at the northern boundary of San Luis Obispo County with a few sub-watersheds located in Monterey County. The Nacimiento Watershed contains Lake Nacimiento, the largest reservoir in San Luis Obispo County totaling 2.26 square miles. The primary aquatic feature within the project area is Franklin Creek, where it connects with Lake Nacimiento.

Discussion

(a) *Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?*

The project site is located over Franklin Creek and would require work within the bed and bank of the creek. In addition to direct impact to Franklin Creek, construction and ground disturbing activities have the potential to increase erosion and other pollutants at the project site that could run off into Franklin

Creek and surrounding areas. Mitigation Measure BIO-2 has been identified in Section IV, *Biological Resources*, to reduce potential impacts related to an increase in erosion and other pollutants at the project site and runoff into Franklin Creek through the implementation of construction BMPs and drainage protection measures during construction activities. Mitigation Measure BIO-2 also identifies spill response procedures for hazardous materials spills, and conditions regarding equipment and vehicle fueling and maintenance to prevent inadvertent releases that could adversely impact Franklin Creek and/or groundwater quality. In addition, the project would result in more than 1 acre of ground disturbance and would be required to prepare and implement a SWPPP with BMPs in accordance with the SWRCB General Construction Permit requirements to address erosion and other pollutant releases during construction activities to avoid adverse effects to surface and/or groundwater quality. Operation of the project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway and crossing over Franklin Creek and would not result in new land uses or other activities that could generate a new permanent source of pollutants that could adversely affect surface water or groundwater quality.

Based on implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2 and required compliance with SWRCB requirements to reduce short- and long-term pollutant release at the project site, the project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

The project site is not located within a Sustainable Groundwater Management Act medium or high priority basin and is not subject to a groundwater sustainability plan. The project would replace the existing temporary steel truss bridge over Franklin Creek with a new permanent bridge crossing. The project would generally be installed within the footprint of the original roadway alignment and would be limited to a marginal increase in impervious surface area at the project site. The marginal increase in impervious surface area would not interfere with groundwater recharge. The project does not include components that could impede recharge within Franklin Creek. In addition, the project does not require any connections to water and would not require any long-term operational water use. Therefore, the project would not decrease groundwater supply or interfere with groundwater recharge, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

(c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

(c-i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

The project site is located over Franklin Creek and would require work within the bed and bank of the creek. Additionally, the project would require approximately 3.9 acres of ground disturbance and would result in a marginal increase in impervious surface area within the project area. The proposed project would disturb more than 1 acre of soils and would be required to comply with SWRCB General Construction Permit requirements, including preparation and implementation of a SWPPP with BMPs to further reduce the potential for erosive runoff during project construction. In addition, Mitigation Measure BIO-2 has been identified in Section IV, *Biological Resources*, to reduce potential impacts related to an increase in erosion and other pollutants at the project site and runoff into the on-site drainage through the implementation of construction BMPs and drainage protection measures during construction activities. Based on compliance with applicable policies and implementation of identified mitigation measures, impacts associated with soil erosion and loss of topsoil during construction

activities would be reduced to less than significant. A water diversion plan would be implemented during proposed bridge construction activities if water is present in Franklin Creek or the water level in Lake Nacimiento extends upstream into the proposed project site. The anticipated means and methods of an upstream water diversion would include using the existing temporary haul road as a cofferdam and the remaining 8-foot-diameter CMP culvert to dewater approximately 180 feet of stream length. Although historical summer lake levels are low enough to consider the following scenario unlikely, on the downstream side of the site, another temporary cofferdam may be needed to prevent water from Lake Nacimiento from encroaching on the construction site, which would then bypass using the remaining CMP culvert. Both upstream and downstream cofferdams would use gravel bags or similar to block the water, with plastic sheeting placed at the entrance and exit of the diversion to prevent erosion, siltation, or seepage. BMPs including discharge to a non-erodible energy-dissipating surface would prevent increased turbidity of the waterway from piped and pumped water. Implementation of an appropriately designed water diversion plan as described above would reduce the potential to increase erosion by addressing potential surface flows during construction activities. Following construction, the creek slopes would be improved to a 2:1 slope and RSP would be placed on the abutment fill slopes and be vegetated, which would provide an increased hydraulic cross section as well as reduce the anticipated erosion and/or scour of the abutment slopes. Based on required compliance with the SWRCB, the project would not result in substantial erosion or siltation; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(c-ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?

A water diversion plan as described above in section X(c-i) would be implemented during proposed bridge construction activities if water is present. Construction of the permanent bridge will increase flow capacity underneath the roadway where it had been previously washed out. The increase in impervious surface of the new bridge deck is not anticipated to increase the rate or amount of surface runoff. Following construction, the creek slopes would be improved to a 2:1 slope, which would ultimately improve surface flows and drainage conditions in comparison to existing conditions. Based on the implementation of a water diversion plan and project design, the project would not increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(c-iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

As previously identified, construction of the new bridge would have direct impacts to Franklin Creek and may also result in indirect impacts associated with proposed ground disturbing activities and a marginal increase in impervious surface area within the project site. The project site is not located in a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) stormwater management area. Mitigation Measure BIO-2 has been identified in Section IV, *Biological Resources*, to reduce potential impacts related to an increase in erosion and other pollutants at the project site and runoff into the on-site drainage through the implementation of construction BMPs and drainage protection measures during construction activities. The proposed project would disturb more than 1 acre of soils and would be required to comply with SWRCB General Construction Permit requirements, including preparation and implementation of a SWPPP with BMPs to further reduce the potential for polluted runoff during project construction. A water diversion plan would be implemented during proposed bridge construction activities to address potential surface flows during construction activities. With

compliance with applicable policies and implementation of identified mitigation measures, impacts associated with polluted runoff during construction activities would be reduced to less than significant. Following construction, the creek slopes would be improved to a 2:1 slope, which would provide an increased hydraulic cross section, improve drainage conditions, and reduce potential erosion. Therefore, the proposed project design would reduce the potential for long-term polluted runoff from the project site. Based on the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2 and a water diversion plan if needed, and proposed project design, the project would not create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(c-iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

According to FEMA FIRM 06079C0350G (effective date 11/16/2012), a majority of the central portion of the project site is in Zone A, an area with 1%-annual risk of major flood event (i.e., a 100-year flood zone) and remaining portions of the property are located within Zone X, an area with minimal food hazard (FEMA 2024). The project would result in direct and indirect impacts on Franklin Creek. A water diversion plan would be implemented during proposed bridge construction activities to address potential surface and flood flows during construction activities. During construction, excavation would occur within the 100-year floodplain to restore the channel bottom to better than existing (pre-storm) conditions while also cutting the existing fill slopes to the proposed 2:1 slope, which are necessary to provide an increased hydraulic cross section as well as to reduce the anticipated erosion of the abutment slopes. Following construction activities, any equipment used to restore the channel bottom and create the necessary fill slopes would be removed and would not result in any long-term features that could impede flood flows within Franklin Creek. Following construction activities, the new permanent bridge would provide a minimum of 2 feet of freeboard above the 100-year water surface elevation. The proposed bridge and approach roadway vertical grades would be approximately 2.5 feet higher than Chimney Rock Road to allow for adequate drainage. Therefore, the project would not impede long-term flood flows within the project area and would ultimately improve existing drainage conditions associated with this portion of Franklin Creek. Therefore, impacts related to flood flows would be *less than significant*.

(d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

As noted above, the new permanent bridge would provide a minimum of 2 feet of freeboard above the 100-year water surface elevation. According to the California Department of Water Resources – Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) Dam Breach Inundation Maps, the project site is not located in the inundation (seiche) boundary associated with the Nacimiento Dam (DSOD 2024). Based on the San Luis Obispo County Tsunami Inundation Maps, the project site is not located in an area with potential for inundation by a tsunami (CDOC 2020). Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

The project site is not located within a Sustainable Groundwater Management Act medium or high priority basin and is not subject to a groundwater sustainability plan. The project would not increase water demand, deplete groundwater supplies, or interfere with groundwater recharge. The project site is under the jurisdiction of the Central Coast RWQCB and would be subject to the Basin Plan, which sets water quality objectives and criteria to protect water quality in the Central Coast region (RWQCB

2019). Mitigation Measure BIO-2 has been identified in Section IV, *Biological Resources*, to reduce potential impacts related to an increase in erosion and other pollutants at the project site and runoff into the on-site drainage through the implementation of construction BMPs and drainage protection measures during construction activities. The project would also be required to comply with SWRCB requirements to reduce the potential for polluted runoff from the project site. Based on implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2 and required compliance with SWRCB regulations, the project would not conflict with the Basin Plan or other local or regional plans or policies intended to manage water quality or groundwater supplies; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation.*

Conclusion

The project site is not located within a Sustainable Groundwater Management Act medium or high priority basin and is not subject to a groundwater sustainability plan. Based on implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2; required compliance with the SWRCB, and RWQCB requirements; and project design, the project would not result in adverse impacts related to water quality, groundwater quality, or stormwater runoff and would not risk release of pollutants due to project inundation. The project is not within a tsunami or seiche zone. The project would be consistent with the RWQCB Basin Plan. Therefore, upon implementation of the identified mitigation measures, impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be less than significant.

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

Regional Setting

The County Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) provides policies and standards for the management of growth and development in each unincorporated community and rural areas of the county and serves as a reference point and guide for future land use planning studies throughout the county. The project site is located in the County's ROW and is surrounded by land within the Rural Lands and Residential Rural land use designations.

The County LUCE also contains the area plans of each of the four inland planning areas: Carrizo, North County, San Luis Obispo, and South County. The area plans establish policies and programs for land use, circulation, public facilities, services, and resources that apply "areawide," in rural areas, and in unincorporated urban

areas within each planning area. Part three of the LUCE contains each of the 13 inland community and village plans, which contain goals, policies, programs, and related background information for the County's unincorporated inland urban and village areas. The project is in the Nacimiento Subarea of the North County Planning Area.

Discussion

(a) *Physically divide an established community?*

The proposed project would provide a permanent two-lane bridge for vehicle crossing along Chimney Rock Road over Franklin Creek; therefore, the proposed project would ultimately improve vehicle travel along Chimney Rock Road. Construction activities would include the implementation of temporary traffic detours to route vehicles along a temporary haul road located immediately south of the project site to maintain vehicle travel throughout the project area during the 9-month construction period. Following construction, the detour route would be removed and vehicle flow along Chimney Rock Road would ultimately be improved. The project would not result in the removal or blockage of existing public roadways or other circulation paths and would not otherwise include any features that would physically divide an established community; therefore, impacts would *be less than significant*.

(b) *Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?*

As evaluated throughout this Initial Study, the project would be consistent with standards and policies set forth in the County's General Plan, Municipal Code, SLOAPCD 2001 Clean Air Plan, SLOCOG 2023 RTP/SCS, and other applicable planning documents. The project would be required to implement Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-15 and CR-1 to mitigate potential impacts associated with Biological Resources, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, and Hydrology and Water Quality, which is consistent with the identified plans and policies intended to avoid or mitigate adverse environmental effects. Upon implementation of the identified mitigation, the project would not conflict with other local policies or regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Conclusion

Implementation of the proposed project would not physically divide an established community. Upon implementation of mitigation measures identified throughout this document, the project would be consistent with the County's General Plan, Municipal Code, SLOAPCD 2001 Clean Air Plan, SLOCOG 2023 RTP/SCS, and other applicable documents. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant upon implementation of the identified mitigation measures.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975 requires that the State Geologist classify land into mineral resource zones (MRZ) according to the known or inferred mineral potential of the land (Public Resources Code Sections 2710–2796). The project site is not within an MRZ and there are no active mines or sand and gravel pits in the vicinity of the project site.

Discussion

(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?

The project is not located within a designated MRZ (California Geological Survey 2011a). There are no known mineral resources in the project area; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

(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?

The project is not located within a designated MRZ (California Geological Survey 2011a). There are no known mineral resources in the project area; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Conclusion

No impacts to mineral resources would occur, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XIII. NOISE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in:					
(a)	Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or 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, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Regional Setting

The *County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Noise Element* provides a policy framework for addressing potential noise impacts in the planning process. The purpose of the County Noise Element is to minimize future noise conflicts. The County Noise Element identifies the major noise sources in the county (highways and freeways, primary arterial roadways and major local streets, railroad operations, aircraft and airport operations, local industrial facilities, and other stationary sources) and includes goals, policies, and implementation programs to reduce future noise impacts. Among the most significant polices of the County Noise Element are numerical noise standards that limit noise exposure within noise-sensitive land uses and performance standards for new commercial and industrial uses that might adversely impact noise-sensitive land uses.

All sound levels referred to in the County Noise Element are expressed in A-weighted decibels (dBA). A-weighting deemphasizes the very low and very high frequencies of sound in a manner similar to the human ear. The nearest off-site noise-sensitive land use is a rural residence located approximately 1,020 feet (0.2 mile) southwest of the project site.

Discussion

(a) *Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?*

The project site is located in a rural area and existing ambient noise levels consist of intermittent vehicle noise along Chimney Rock Road. During project construction, noise from construction activities may intermittently dominate the noise environment in the immediate project area. The project would require the use of typical construction equipment (e.g., dozers, excavators, etc.) during proposed construction activities. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), noise from standard construction equipment generally ranges from 80 to 85 dBA at 50 feet from the source, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Construction Equipment Noise Emission Levels

Equipment Type	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 50 Feet from Source
Concrete Mixer, Dozer, Excavator, Jackhammer, Man Lift, Paver, Scraper	85
Heavy Truck	84
Crane, Mobile	83
Concrete Pump	82
Backhoe, Compactor	80

Source: FHWA (2018)

Noise attenuates by 6 dB per doubling of distance. The nearest off-site noise-sensitive land use is a rural residence located approximately 1,020 feet (0.2 mile) southwest of the project site. Therefore, noise levels at the nearest off-site residence would fall below the County's noise thresholds. Further, construction-related noise would be short term and intermittent and would not result in a permanent increase in ambient noise within the project area. According to County LUO Section 22.10.120.A.4, construction noise is exempt from the County's noise standards between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on weekends. While County projects are not bound by the LUO standards, the County strives to maintain consistency with them and would require the contractor to follow them to the maximum extent possible.

The project does not include the establishment of new land uses that could permanently increase ambient noise levels within the project area. The project would replace the temporary bridge crossing over Franklin Creek with a permanent two-lane bridge crossing along an existing roadway segment. Therefore, operational noise generated by the project would be generally consistent with existing noise levels in the project area.

Short-term construction activities would not exceed the County's noise standards, and the project would not generate a substantial increase in temporary or permanent ambient noise levels; therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

(b) *Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?*

The project would require the use of standard construction equipment and would also require pile-driving activities, which would generate groundborne noise and vibration during short-term ground-disturbing activities. However, these activities would be limited in duration and limited to the

immediate work area and is not anticipated to disturb distant off-site residences. Further, County LUO Section 22.10.170 exempts construction-related vibration from the County's vibration standards between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. While County projects are not bound by the LUO standards, the County strives to maintain consistency with them and would require the contractor to follow them to the maximum extent possible. Operation of the project does not include new features that could generate substantial groundborne noise. Therefore, impacts related to exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels would be *less than significant*.

(c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or 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, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

The project site is not located within an airport land use plan and the nearest airport is Rancho San Simeon Airstrip, located approximately 10.4 miles southwest of the project site; therefore, the project would not expose project occupants to excessive airport-related noise, and *no impacts* would occur.

Conclusion

The project would not generate a substantial increase in temporary or permanent ambient noise levels or groundborne noise. The project site is not located within an airport land use plan or within 2 miles of an airport. Therefore, potential impacts related to noise would be less than significant, and mitigation measures are not necessary.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Induce substantial unplanned 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)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

California Regional Housing Needs Plan

California State Housing Element Law requires SLOCOG and other regional councils of government in California to "determine the existing and projected housing need for its region" and to determine each

jurisdiction's share of the regional housing need in the region. SLOCOG's "6th Cycle" Regional Housing Needs Plan set a target for the creation of 10,810 new dwelling units for the region over the 2020 to 2028 planning period. The County's share is 3,256 new dwelling units, of which 1,170 (35.9%) must be affordable to very low-, low-, and moderate-income households (SLOCOG 2019).

County of San Luis Obispo 2020-2028 Housing Element

The County Housing Element establishes the framework to facilitate housing development and address current and projected housing needs, provides an assessment of housing needs for the unincorporated county, and provides a summary of the County's progress in implementing the programs from the previous Housing Element. The County Housing Element identifies goals, objectives, policies, and programs to guide County decision-making and focused efforts during the planning period.

The County Housing Element also includes an analysis of vacant land in urban areas that are suitable for residential development to show there is adequate land zoned for housing to meet projected housing needs over the plan's planning period (2020–2028). This analysis takes into consideration zoning provisions, development standards, growth patterns, environmental constraints, infrastructure, and various housing types. The County Housing Element does not identify land in this area for population growth.

Discussion

(a) *Induce substantial unplanned 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)?*

The purpose of this project is to provide a permanent two-lane bridge for vehicle crossing along Chimney Rock Road at Franklin Creek to replace a temporary steel truss bridge that was installed in 2023 when the previous permanent roadway (consisting of embankment over three corrugated metal pipe culverts) was destroyed during winter storms in January and March 2023. The project would provide a new permanent bridge crossing and does not include any features that could facilitate additional growth within the area or facilitate unplanned growth in a previously isolated area. Further, the project does not include the development of new residences, businesses, or other uses that could directly induce population growth within the area. Proposed construction activities have the potential to generate short-term employment opportunities; however, project construction is expected to use workers from the local employment force and would not require workers to relocate to the project area. Operation of the project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway segment and would not generate new employment opportunities or other activities that could otherwise facilitate population growth within the area. Therefore, the project would not result in unplanned or substantial population growth, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

(b) *Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?*

The project site does not consist of any existing residences and the project would not require the demolition of any existing residential structures. Therefore, the project would not displace existing people or housing or necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere, and *no impacts* would occur.

Conclusion

The proposed project would not result in substantial or unplanned population growth and would not displace existing housing or necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Therefore, potential

impacts related to population and housing would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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:				
	Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
	Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Fire Protection Services

Fire protection services in unincorporated San Luis Obispo County are provided by CAL FIRE, which has been under contract with the County to provide full-service fire protection since 1930. CAL FIRE responds to emergencies and other requests for assistance, plans for and takes action to prevent emergencies and to reduce their impact, coordinates regional emergency response efforts, and provides public education and training in local communities. The nearest CAL FIRE station is Station 35 located approximately 2.3 miles southeast of the project site.

Law Enforcement Services

Police protection and emergency services in the unincorporated portions of the county are provided by the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office Patrol Division responds to calls for service, conducts proactive law enforcement activities, and performs initial investigations of crimes. The nearest sheriff's station is the North Station located approximately 16 miles southeast of the project site.

Public Schools

San Luis Obispo County has a total of 12 school districts that currently enroll approximately 34,000 students in over 75 schools. The project site is located in the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District (PRJUSD). The nearest school within the PRJUSD is Pat Butler Elementary School located approximately 5.75 miles northeast of the project site.

Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

Within the County's unincorporated areas, there are currently 23 parks, three golf courses, four trails/staging areas, and eight Special Areas that include natural areas, coastal access, and historic facilities currently operated and maintained by the County. The nearest park is Larry Moore Park located approximately 15 miles southeast of the project site.

Discussion

(a) *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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:*

Fire protection?

The project does not include the construction of new buildings or structures that would directly increase demand on existing fire protection services and would not facilitate unplanned or substantial population growth in a manner that would increase demand on existing fire protection services. The project would not require new or physically altered governmental facilities for fire protection services; therefore, *no impacts* related to fire protection would occur.

Police protection?

The project does not include the construction of new residences, businesses, or other uses that would directly increase demand on existing police protection services and would not facilitate unplanned or substantial population growth in a manner that would increase demand on existing police protection services. The project would not require new or physically altered governmental facilities for police protection services; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Schools?

As discussed in Section XIV, *Population and Housing*, the project would not induce direct or indirect population growth. The project would not result in an increase of school-aged children in the area; therefore, the project would not create an increased demand on local schools, and *no impacts* would occur.

Parks?

As discussed in Section XIV, *Population and Housing*, the project would not induce direct population growth and would result in deterioration of existing recreation facilities or require the expansion of new facilities; therefore, the project would not require the construction of new or physically altered public recreation facilities, and *no impacts* would occur.

Other public facilities?

As discussed in Section XIV, *Population and Housing*, the project would not induce direct population growth and would not significantly increase the demand on public facilities, such as libraries or post offices, or result in the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Conclusion

No impact to public services would occur, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XVI. RECREATION

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Would the project 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Parks and Recreation Element

The *County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Parks and Recreation Element* establishes goals, policies, and implementation measures for the management, renovation, and expansion of existing parks and recreation facilities and the development of new parks and recreation facilities in order to meet existing and projected needs and to assure an equitable distribution of parks throughout the county. The nearest County-maintained recreational facilities are located in Paso Robles approximately 15 miles southeast of the project site. In addition, recreational facilities associated with Lake Nacimiento are located approximately 5 miles northeast of the project site.

2015/16 San Luis Obispo County Bikeways Plan

The *2015/16 San Luis Obispo County Bikeways Plan* identifies and prioritizes bikeway facilities throughout the unincorporated area of the county, including bikeways, parking, connections with public transportation, educational programs, and funding. The plan also includes descriptions of bikeway design and improvement standards, an inventory of the current bicycle circulation network, and a list of current and future bikeway projects within the county. This roadway is not identified in the County Bikeways Plan.

Discussion

(a) Would the project 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?

As discussed in Section XIV, *Population and Housing*, the project includes the construction of a new permanent two-lane bridge over Franklin Creek to replace an existing temporary steel truss bridge and would not facilitate unplanned or substantial population growth in a manner that would increase the use of existing recreational facilities and lead to substantial deterioration of existing recreational facilities; therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

(b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

The project does not include the development of new or expanded recreational facilities, including bicycle lanes; therefore, *no impacts* related to adverse physical effects on the environment as a result of construction or expansion of recreational facilities would occur.

Conclusion

The project would not increase the use of existing recreational facilities in a manner that would result in physical deterioration and does not include the construction of new or expanded recreational facilities that could result in adverse environmental impacts. Therefore, no impacts to recreation would occur, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XVII. TRANSPORTATION

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Senate Bill 743 and Vehicle Miles Traveled

In 2013 SB 743 was signed into California State law with the intent to "more appropriately balance the needs of congestion management with statewide goals related to infill development, promotion of public health through active transportation, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions" and required the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to identify new metrics for identifying and mitigating transportation impacts within CEQA. As a result, in December 2018, the California Natural Resources Agency certified and adopted updates to the State CEQA Guidelines. The revisions included new requirements related to the implementation of SB 743 and identified VMT per capita, VMT per employee, and net VMT as new metrics for transportation analysis under CEQA (as detailed in Section 15064.3[b]).

The County has developed a VMT Program (*Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines* [San Luis Obispo County Department of Public Works, October 2020]). The program provides interim operating thresholds and includes a screening tool for evaluating VMT impacts. Screening criteria were developed for projects within San Luis Obispo County based on methodology provided in the *County of San Luis Obispo VMT Thresholds Study* (GHD 2020).

Regional Transportation Planning

SLOCOG holds several key roles in transportation planning within the county. As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), SLOCOG is responsible for conducting a comprehensive, coordinated transportation program, preparing an RTP/SCS, allocating state funds for transportation projects, and administering and allocating transportation development act funds required by state statutes. The RTP, adopted June 7, 2023, is a long-term blueprint of San Luis Obispo County's transportation system that identifies and analyzes the transportation needs of the region and creates a framework for project priorities. Chimney Rock Road has not been identified for planned multimodal roadway improvements in the 2023 RTP.

Local Transportation Planning

The County's Framework for Planning (Inland), Part I of the County LUCE, establishes goals and strategies to meet pedestrian circulation needs by providing usable and attractive sidewalks, pathways, and trails to establish maximum access and connectivity between land use designations. The LUCE sets forth policies and programs to address transportation impacts.

Existing Conditions

The project site consists of an existing segment of Chimney Rock Road. The existing bridge crossing over Franklin Creek is a temporary modular steel truss bridge. The existing steel truss bridge consists of one travel lane along the original roadway alignment and measures 170 feet in length and 13 feet 7 inches in width. According to County traffic count data from 2018, this portion of Chimney Rock Road experiences approximately 623 average daily trips. There is no posted speed limit along this portion of Chimney Rock Road. Upon completion of the bridge, the design speed for the horizontal curves on either side of the bridge would be 25 miles per hour. There are no existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities along this portion of Chimney Rock Road.

Discussion

(a) *Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?*

The project includes the construction of a new permanent two-lane bridge over Franklin Creek to replace an existing temporary steel truss bridge that was installed in 2023 when the previous permanent roadway was destroyed during winter storms in January and March 2023. The proposed bridge replacement would create a safe travel route for vehicles along Chimney Rock Road. Therefore, the project would ultimately improve existing roadway conditions, which is consistent with the goals and policies of the County's Framework for Planning (Inland). Further, the project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway segment and would not facilitate an increase in vehicle trips that could worsen roadway or intersection conditions or increase regional VMT, which is consistent with the goals and policies of the 2023 RTP. Further, the project site is not identified as an area with existing or planned bikeways in the County Bikeways Plan. The project would be consistent with the County's Framework for Planning (Inland), the SLOCOG RTP, and the County's Bikeways Plan; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(b) *Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?*

The County VMT Program provides interim operating thresholds and includes a screening tool for evaluating VMT impacts. Section 15064.3(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines states that transportation projects that reduce, or have no impact on, vehicle miles traveled should be presumed to cause a less than significant impact on transportation. The project would be limited to the construction of a permanent bridge to replace an existing temporary bridge along Chimney Rock Road over Franklin Creek. Therefore, the project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway segment and would not facilitate an increase in vehicle trips to and from the project site. In accordance with Section 15064.3(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the project would have no impact on VMT; therefore, project impacts would be *less than significant*.

(c) *Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?*

The project includes the construction of a new permanent bridge crossing over Franklin Creek to replace the existing temporary steel truss bridge crossing. The permanent bridge alignment would be constructed along the existing centerline of Chimney Rock Road and would consist of two 10-foot-wide travel lanes, two 3-foot-wide shoulders, and Type 85 concrete barriers (post and beam, 2 feet wide), totaling 30 feet in width. The proposed superstructure would be supported on seat type abutments founded on drilled pile foundations.

The proposed bridge would be required to comply with relevant Caltrans and County Public Works requirements to avoid hazardous roadway design features. The proposed bridge would ultimately improve vehicle flow and safety along Chimney Rock Road by creating a stable, two-lane travel roadway. The project does not include the establishment of new land uses or activities that could introduce incompatible land uses (i.e., farm equipment) along proximate roadways. Based on required compliance with Caltrans and County Public Works Department requirements, the project would not result in hazards due to proposed roadway design features; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

The project includes the construction of a new permanent bridge over Franklin Creek to replace an existing temporary steel truss bridge. The existing steel truss bridge is a temporary solution to vehicle travel over Franklin Creek and is limited to one travel lane. The proposed project would provide a permanent two-lane bridge for vehicle crossing along Chimney Rock Road over Franklin Creek; therefore, the proposed project would ultimately improve vehicle travel and emergency vehicle access along Chimney Rock Road.

Construction activities would include the implementation of temporary traffic detours to route vehicles along a temporary haul road located immediately south of the project site to maintain vehicle travel throughout the project area during the 9-month construction period. Based on the implementation of the detour route, the project would also maintain emergency vehicle access and vehicle ingress and egress. Following construction, the detour route would be removed and vehicle flow along Chimney Rock Road would ultimately be improved. Therefore, the project would not interfere with emergency vehicle travel, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

The project would be consistent with the County's Framework for Planning (Inland), the SLOCOG RTP, and the County's Bikeways Plan and would not generate vehicle trips that would exceed existing VMT thresholds. In addition, the project would be consistent with Caltrans and County Public Works Department design standards to avoid hazardous roadway design. The proposed project would ultimately improve vehicle travel and emergency vehicle access along Chimney Rock Road. Therefore, impacts related to transportation would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
	(i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or	☐	☒	☐	☐

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(ii)	A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

Approved in 2014, AB 52 added tribal cultural resources to the categories of resources that must be evaluated under CEQA. Tribal cultural resources are defined as either of the following:

1. Sites, features, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following:
    a. Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the CRHR; or
    b. Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k).
2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in Public Resources Code Section 5024.1.

Recognizing that tribes have expertise with regard to their tribal history and practices, AB 52 requires lead agencies to provide notice to tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of a proposed project if they have requested notice of projects proposed within that area. If the tribe requests consultation within 30 days upon receipt of the notice, the lead agency must consult with the tribe regarding the potential for adverse impacts on tribal cultural resources as a result of a project. Consultation may include discussing the type of environmental review necessary, the presence and/or significance of tribal cultural resources, the level of significance of a project's impacts on the tribal cultural resources, and available project alternatives and mitigation measures recommended by the tribe to avoid or lessen potential impacts on tribal cultural resources. The County coordinated with Tribal representatives pursuant to Assembly Bill 52. The Xolon-Salinan Tribe and Salinan Tribe of Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties recommended that initial ground disturbing activities be monitored by a cultural resources specialist from each of their tribes.

Discussion

(a) *Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:*

(a-i) *Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?*

(a-ii) *A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.*

Pursuant to AB 52, the County provided notice to local California native tribes with geographic and/or cultural ties to the project region. Referral letters were sent to tribal representatives on July 15, 2024. Tribal consultation resulted in information being conveyed to the County about the archaeological sensitivity of the region and the recommendation that excavation activities be monitored by a representative of both the Xolon-Salinan Tribe and Salinan Tribe of Monterey & San Luis Obispo Counties has been incorporated in Mitigation Measure CR 2.

Based on the results of the CRSR, there are no known cultural or tribal cultural archaeological resources within the project area (SWCA 2024a). Mitigation Measures CR-3 and 4 have been identified to address inadvertent discovery of previously unknown cultural resources and requires that in the event an unknown cultural resource site is encountered, all work within the vicinity of the find must be halted until a qualified archaeologist is retained to evaluate the nature, integrity, and significance of the find. In addition, the project would be required to comply with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, which identifies the proper protocol in the event of inadvertent discovery of human remains, including the cessation of work within the vicinity of the discovery, identification of human remains by a qualified coroner, and if the remains are identified to be of Native American descent, contact with the NAHC. Based on required compliance with the County LUO and California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, the project is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts to known or unknown cultural archaeological resources; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Conclusion

No tribal cultural resources are known or expected to occur within or adjacent to the project site. In the event unanticipated sensitive resources are discovered during project activities, implementation of Mitigation Measure CR-3 and adherence with California Health and Safety Code procedures would reduce potential impacts to less than significant; therefore, potential impacts to tribal cultural resources would be less than significant. As requested by the Xolon Salinan Tribe and Salinan Tribe of Monterey & San Luis Obispo Counties, initial ground disturbing activities would be monitored by an archaeologist and a tribal representative specified by mitigation measure CR-2. With the inclusion of the mitigation measures CR-1 through CR-4, potential adverse impacts to cultural resources would be reduced to a less than significant level.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b)	Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(c)	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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(e)	Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Stormwater

Per the County's Stormwater Program, the County Public Works Department is responsible for ensuring that new construction sites implement BMPs during construction, and that site plans incorporate appropriate post-construction stormwater runoff controls. Construction sites that disturb 1 acre or more must obtain coverage under the SWRCB's Construction General Permit. Electricity

Electricity

PG&E is the primary electricity provider for urban and rural communities within San Luis Obispo County. There is an overhead PG&E electrical line located south of the existing temporary bridge. The line may be relocated as part of the project to either be installed on new overhead utility lines or installed within the permanent bridge superstructure.

Solid Waste Facilities

There are three landfills in San Luis Obispo County: Cold Canyon Landfill, located south of the city of San Luis Obispo; Chicago Grade Landfill, located near the community of Templeton; and Paso Robles Landfill, located east of the city of Paso Robles.

Discussion

(a) *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?*

The project would not require any additional utility extensions or relocations. The proposed electrical line would be replaced and/or installed within the proposed project footprint. As evaluated throughout this Initial Study, the project has the potential to result in adverse construction-related impacts related to Biological Resources, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, and Hydrology and Water Quality. Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-15 and CR-1 have been included to avoid and/or minimize adverse construction-related impacts to less-than-significant levels and construction of proposed utility infrastructure and connections have been incorporated into this analysis. Therefore, upon implementation of the identified mitigation measures, installation of utility infrastructure is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts to the environment; therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(b) *Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?*

The project does not require any connections to water and would not require any long-term operational water use. During construction, water may be used for dust suppression; however, any water used during construction would be limited in volume and supplied from off-site sources. Therefore, *no impact* would occur.

(c) *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?*

The project does not require connection to any public or private wastewater treatment providers. Portable restrooms would likely be used by workers and other personnel throughout the construction period; therefore, the project would not require short- or long-term connections to wastewater treatment providers, and *no impact* would occur.

(d) *Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?*

Construction of the project may result in a temporary increase in solid waste, which would be disposed of in accordance with applicable state and local laws and regulations and would not generate solid waste in excess of local infrastructure capacity. The project would result in the operation of an existing roadway and bridge crossing; therefore, operational solid waste generated by the project would be consistent with existing operations and would not generate waste in excess of state or local standards or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

As previously described, the project would be limited to the operation of an existing roadway and would not result in the long-term generation of solid waste above existing conditions. Construction-related waste (i.e., excavated soils) would be disposed of according to federal and state regulations. The project operational impacts would not result in an increase in long-term solid waste and would be compliant with solid waste reduction statutes and regulations. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-15 and CR-1 would reduce potential adverse environmental impacts related to relocation of utility infrastructure to less-than-significant levels. The project does not require connection to groundwater resources or a local water or wastewater provider. The project would not generate solid waste in exceedance of state or local regulations. Therefore, with implementation of the identified mitigation measures, impacts related to utilities and service systems would be less than significant.

XX. WILDFIRE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:					
(a)	Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Wildfire Behavior

Topography influences wildland fire to such an extent that slope conditions can often become a critical wildland fire factor. Conditions such as speed and direction of dominant wind patterns, the length and steepness of slopes, direction of exposure, and/or overall ruggedness of terrain influence the potential intensity and behavior of wildland fires and/or the rates at which they may spread. The project site is located in an SRA in a very high FHSZ (CAL FIRE 2024) and according to the County's Land Use View, the project site has an estimated response time of greater than 15 minutes.

California Fire Code

The CFC provides minimum standards for many aspects of fire prevention and suppression activities. These standards include provisions for emergency vehicle access, water supply, fire protection systems, and the use of fire-resistant building materials.

Discussion

(a) *Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

The project site is located in an SRA in a very high FHSZ (CAL FIRE 2024). The project includes the construction of a new permanent bridge over Franklin Creek to replace an existing temporary steel truss bridge. The existing steel truss bridge is a temporary solution to vehicle travel over Franklin Creek and is limited to one travel lane. The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a permanent two-lane bridge for vehicle crossing along Chimney Rock Road at Franklin Creek. Therefore, the proposed project would ultimately improve vehicle travel, emergency vehicle access, and evacuation efforts along Chimney Rock Road.

Construction activities would include the implementation of temporary traffic detours to route vehicles along a temporary haul road located immediately south of the project site to maintain vehicle travel throughout the project area during the 9-month construction period. Based on the implementation of the detour route, the project would also maintain emergency vehicle access and vehicle ingress and egress. Following construction, the detour route would be removed and vehicle flow along Chimney Rock Road would ultimately be improved. Therefore, the project would not interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, including the County's General Plan Safety Element of EOP, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

(b) *Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?*

The project site is located in an SRA in a very high FHSZ and consists of an existing roadway and steel truss bridge. The project area is characterized by moderately to steeply sloping topography and scattered oaks and riparian vegetation. The project would be limited to the construction of a permanent bridge over Franklin Creek and would not result in the construction of any structures or buildings that could increase the potential for a wildfire to occur in the immediate or surrounding area. Construction activities would be required to be conducted in accordance with Chapter 33 of the 2022 CFC (Fire Safety During Construction and Demolition) to reduce the risk of wildfire ignition during short-term construction activities. Based on required compliance with CFC requirements, the project would not exacerbate wildfire risks; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

The project includes the construction of a new permanent bridge over Franklin Creek to replace an existing temporary steel truss bridge. The project may relocate an overhead utility line adjacent to the project area. Construction activities would be required to be conducted in accordance with Chapter 33 of the 2022 CFC (Fire Safety During Construction and Demolition) to reduce the risk of wildfire ignition during short-term construction activities. Further, the project would not introduce new utility infrastructure or increase the density of existing overhead lines that could otherwise increase risk of wildfire ignition in the project area. Based on required compliance with CFC requirements, the project would not exacerbate wildfire risks; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

(d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

The project site is located in a very high FHSZ in an SRA (CAL FIRE 2024). As previously identified, the project site is characterized by moderately to steeply sloping topography with very high and moderate risk of landslides. Further, the project site is located within a 100-year flood zone.

The project includes the construction of a new permanent bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The purpose of the proposed project is to construct a safe bridge crossing over Franklin Creek. The proposed bridge design is being informed by site-specific geotechnical data and a detailed engineering design that ensures conformance with state and federal design standards. The proposed bridge would be constructed in accordance with Caltrans and other applicable engineering standards to reduce risk associated with post-fire ground-failure events and therefore impacts would be *less than significant*.

Conclusion

Based on required compliance with CFC, Caltrans, and other applicable engineering requirements, the proposed project and associated activities would not result in significant adverse impacts related to wildfire, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	Does the project have the potential to substantially 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, substantially 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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b)	Does the project 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)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c)	Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

(a) *Does the project have the potential to substantially 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, substantially 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?*

Based on the analysis provided in individual resource sections above, the project has the potential to disturb sensitive biological resources and unknown cultural and/or tribal cultural resources. Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-13 have been identified and would reduce potential impacts related to sensitive biological resources to less than significant. Additionally, implementation of Mitigation Measures CR-1 through CR 4 and adherence to California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 would reduce impacts to unknown cultural and/or tribal cultural resources if present within the project area. Therefore, potential impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

(b) Does the project 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)?

Based on the nature of proposed development and the analysis provided in resource sections above, the project would have the potential to result in environmental impacts associated with Biological Resources, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, and Hydrology and Water Quality that could have a cumulative effect with other development projects in the project region. Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-13 and CR-1 through CR 4 have been identified to reduce potential environmental impacts associated with the project to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, based on the implementation of project-level mitigation measures and discretionary review and CEQA review of other projects within the project area, potential impacts would be *less than cumulatively considerable with mitigation*.

(c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Based on the nature and scale of proposed development and the analysis provided in individual resource sections above, the project does not have the potential to have environmental effects that could result in substantial adverse effects on human beings.

Conclusion

Potential impacts associated with mandatory findings of significance would be less than significant with mitigation.

Exhibit A - Initial Study References and Agency Contacts

The County Public Works Department has contacted various agencies for their comments on the proposed project. With respect to the subject application, the following have been contacted (marked with an ☒) and when a response was made, it is either attached or in the application file:

Contacted	Agency	Response
☒	County Public Works Department	Not Applicable
☒	County Environmental Health Services	None
☒	County Agricultural Commissioner's Office	None
☐	County Airport Manager	Not Applicable
☐	Airport Land Use Commission	Not Applicable
☒	Air Pollution Control District	None
☒	County Sheriff's Department	None
☐	Regional Water Quality Control Board	None
☐	CA Coastal Commission	Not Applicable
☒	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife	None
☒	CA Department of Forestry (Cal Fire)	None
☐	CA Department of Transportation	Not Applicable
☐	Community Services District	Not Applicable
☐	Other	Not Applicable
☐	Other	None

** "No comment" or "No concerns"-type responses are usually not attached

The following checked ("☒") reference materials have been used in the environmental review for the proposed project and are hereby incorporated by reference into the Initial Study. The following information is available at the County Public Works Department.

☒ Project File for the Subject Application

County Documents

☐ Coastal Plan Policies

☒ Framework for Planning (Coastal/Inland)

☒ General Plan (Inland/Coastal), includes all maps/elements; more pertinent elements:

- ☒ Agriculture Element
- ☒ Conservation & Open Space Element
- ☐ Economic Element
- ☒ Housing Element
- ☒ Noise Element
- ☒ Parks & Recreation Element/Project List
- ☒ Safety Element

☒ Land Use Ordinance (Inland/Coastal)

☐ Building and Construction Ordinance

☐ Public Facilities Fee Ordinance

☐ Real Property Division Ordinance

☐ Affordable Housing Fund

☐ Airport Land Use Plan

☒ Energy Wise Plan

☒ North County Area Plan/Nacimiento Sub Area

☐ Design Plan

☐ Specific Plan

☐ Annual Resource Summary Report

☐ Circulation Study

Other Documents

☒ Clean Air Plan/APCD Handbook

☒ Regional Transportation Plan

☐ Uniform Fire Code

☒ Water Quality Control Plan (Central Coast Basin – Region 3)

☒ Archaeological Resources Map

☐ Area of Critical Concerns Map

☐ Special Biological Importance Map

☒ CA Natural Species Diversity Database

☒ Fire Hazard Severity Map

☒ Flood Hazard Maps

☒ Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey for SLO County

☒ GIS mapping layers (e.g., habitat, streams, contours, etc.)

☒ Other See reference list below.

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

The following project-specific information and/or reference materials have been considered as a part of the Initial Study:

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California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC). 2024. EnviroStor Database. Available at: https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/. Accessed May 2024.

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County of San Luis Obispo. 2015. 2015/16 San Luis Obispo County Bikeways Plan. Available at: https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/public-works/forms-documents/committees-programs/bicycle-advisory-committee/plans-documents/2016-bikeways-plan. Accessed May 2024.

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County of San Luis Obispo Flood Control and Water Conservation District. 2014. *Templeton Drainage and Flood Control Study and Project 8 Addendum.* Available at:https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/public-works/forms-documents/water-resources/drainage-studies/templeton-drainage-study. Accessed May 2024.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). 2024. Flood Map Service Center. Available at: https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home. Accessed May 2024.

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Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). 2024. Web Soil Survey. U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. Available at: https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx. Accessed May 2024.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). 2022. Exploring Clean Energy Solutions. Available at: https://www.pge.com/en_US/about-pge/environment/what-we-are-doing/clean-energy-solutions/clean-energy-solutions.page. Accessed May 2024.

Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). 2019. *Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin*. Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. Available at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/publications_forms/publications/basin_plan/docs/2019_basin_plan_r3_complete_webaccess.pdf. Accessed May 2024.

San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD). 2023a. *CEQA Air Quality Handbook; 2023 Administrative Update Version to APCD Board Adopted 2012 Version*. Available at: https://storage.googleapis.com/slocleanair-org/images/cms/upload/files/CEQA%20Handbook%202023_Final.pdf. Accessed May 2024.

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San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG). 2019. 2019 Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan 2020-2028. Available at: https://www.dropbox.com/s/stbw4b26apatv3f/_2019%20RHNA%20Plan_adopted_final.pdf?e=1&dl=

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State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2024. GeoTracker Database. Available at: https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/. Accessed May 2024.

SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA). 2024a. Cultural Resources Survey Report.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). 2004. Geologic map of the Lime Mountain quadrangle, San Luis Obispo County, California. Available at: https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/Prodesc/proddesc_81162.htm. Accessed May 2024.

Exhibit B - Mitigation Summary

The purpose of a Mitigation Monitoring Plan is to provide a program to examine, document and record compliance with the environmental plans and specifications pertinent to the proposed project, in order to comply with Section 21081.6 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This plan provides the standards and methods necessary to ensure and document the implementation of the environmental mitigation measures which have been included in the project description as well as with the conditions of approval placed on project permits. Responsibility for ensuring successful implementation of the Mitigation Monitoring Plan lies with the County of San Luis Obispo, as the project proponent and Lead Agency for the project under CEQA. If the recommended mitigation measures and monitoring plan are implemented successfully, the potential significant adverse effects stemming from project construction will be reduced to a level of insignificance.

Mitigation monitoring will be carried out by the County Public Works Department Environmental Programs Division. Upon approval of the CEQA document and issuance of all required permits, the Environmental Programs Division will assign internal responsibility for compliance with each mitigation measure to one or more members of the project team. Responsible parties include the Environmental Programs Division, the Project Manager (PM), the Resident Engineer (RE), and/or on-site monitors.

Mitigation measures are organized into project design, pre-construction, construction, and post-construction tasks. Compliance with mitigation measures is documented in the project file through written reports, accompanied by project photos where necessary. Post-construction monitoring of revegetation and other project components is documented by yearly reports, on a schedule typically determined by one or more of the project permits. Depending on the complexity of the post construction mitigation effort, tasks will be carried out by county staff or technical experts under contract to the County. Post-construction monitoring is typically conducted for three to five years, depending on permit requirements and success criteria.

Biological Resources

BIO-1 Environmental Awareness Training. Prior to construction, all personnel shall participate in an environmental awareness training program conducted by a qualified biologist. The program shall include a description of the special-status resources and federally designated critical habitat within the project boundary. If appropriate, the biologist may train and designate a representative of the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department or other designee to provide crew training as needed during construction.

BIO-2 Protective Fencing. Prior to initiation of any construction activities, including vegetation clearing or grubbing, sturdy high-visibility fencing shall be installed to delineate the specified project disturbance limits and protect environmentally sensitive areas (ESA). This ESA fencing will be placed so that unnecessary adverse impacts to the adjacent habitats are avoided, including oak woodland and aquatic environments. No construction work (including storage of materials) shall occur outside of the specified project limits. The fencing will remain in place during the entire construction period, shall be monitored periodically by a qualified biologist, and shall be maintained as needed by the contractor.

BIO-3 Trash. During construction, trash shall be contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, trash, and construction debris shall be removed from the work areas.

BIO-4 Pets. During construction, no pets shall be allowed on the construction site.

BIO-5 California Red-Legged Frog. For protection of California red-legged frog that may occur in the project area during construction, the following measures shall be implemented by qualified biologist(s):

(1) Biologists familiar with the California red-legged frog and its habitat shall conduct a pre-construction survey, and if detected notify the USFWS and USACE prior to start of construction. If the agencies determine that adverse effects to federally endangered species or critical habitat cannot be avoided, the proposed project will not commence until the USACE completes the appropriate level of consultation with the USFWS.

(2) Work will be conducted during the dry season to the maximum extent feasible to avoid when activities would be most disruptive to aquatic species.

(3) If water is diverted or pumped from streams or other fresh water, any pumps used shall be fitted with an anti-entrapment device to prevent species protected under FESA from being drawn into the pump or impinged on intake screening. Intakes for the pumps will be completely screened with wire mesh no larger than 0.2 inches or submerged in crushed rock to prevent aquatic species from entering the pump system. Upon completion of activities, all diversion structures shall be removed in a manner that will allow flow to resume with the least amount of disturbance to the substrate.

(4) A qualified biologist shall survey the aquatic area used for pumping before pumps are installed. If any life stage of the California red-legged frog is found and these individuals are likely to be killed or injured by work activities, a qualified biologist shall relocate the California red-legged frog the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat where the frog would not be affected by activities.

(5) Any open pits or holes shall be covered at the end of each workday and inspected each morning. If any wildlife protected under FESA are discovered, procedures from (1) above shall apply.

BIO-6 Biological Monitoring. Biological monitoring specified by Mitigation Measure BR-5 shall include observations, monitoring, and appropriate response for species protected under FESA and any other special-status wildlife species. A biological monitor shall be present during initial vegetation clearing and disturbance to aquatic habitats to avoid impacts to special-status wildlife species.

BIO-7 Nesting Birds. If feasible, vegetation within the project area shall be removed during the fall or winter (September 2 to February 1) prior to construction, to minimize the potential for construction impacts to nesting birds.

For construction activities proposed during the typical nesting season (February 1 to September 1), pre-construction nesting bird surveys will be conducted by qualified biologists no more than two weeks prior to the start of construction to determine presence/absence of nesting birds. Nesting bird surveys will continue throughout the construction period as needed until the end of nesting season.

If active nests are encountered on site immediately prior to or during construction, an appropriate avoidance buffer will be established around the occupied nest(s). If the identified nest(s) belongs to a special-status species the County will consult with the appropriate agencies to determine appropriate measures. Avoidance measures if necessary will be accomplished by installation of high visibility orange construction fencing or flagging around the occupied areas with the appropriate setback. A qualified biological monitor will facilitate installation of the fence or flagging and will conduct periodic site visits to ensure that the fencing remains intact for the duration of construction activities in proximity to the active nest(s) and he or she will continue to monitor the nest(s). Construction activities will not occur within the nesting bird avoidance buffer area(s) until the biological monitor determines that either: a) all young have fledged and that the nest(s) are no longer occupied, or b) construction activity is not precluding nesting activity.

BIO-8 Dewatering. If construction dewatering is required, dewatering discharge will be pumped to an appropriate storage tank or similar for settling prior. Dewatering water may be used for dust control or discharged in an upland, vegetated location where it can infiltrate the ground surface without causing erosion.

Dewatering activities will not discharge directly to the creek channel.

BIO-9 Construction Timing. Construction activities in jurisdictional areas will be targeted to the dry season (generally May 1 through October 31) to the extent feasible to minimize potential water quality impacts to the creek and potential for sedimentation and erosion control issues due to precipitation events.

BIO-10 Erosion Control. During construction, erosion control measures (e.g., silt fencing, fiber rolls, and barriers) will remain available onsite and will be utilized as necessary to prevent erosion and sedimentation beyond the project disturbance limits. No synthetic plastic mesh products will be used for erosion control and use of these materials onsite is prohibited. Erosion control measures and other suitable Best Management Practices used will be checked to ensure that they are intact and functioning effectively and maintained on a daily basis throughout the duration of construction. The contractor will also apply adequate dust control techniques, such as site watering, during construction to protect water quality.

BIO-11 Accidental Spills. Prior to construction, the contractor will prepare a Hazardous Materials Response Plan to allow for a prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. Workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

BIO-12 Vehicle Fueling. During construction, the cleaning and refueling of equipment and vehicles will occur only within a designated staging area and at least 60 feet (20 meters) from jurisdictional areas. At a minimum, equipment and vehicles will be checked and maintained on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and avoid potential leaks or spills.

BIO-13 Oak Trees. Native oak trees greater than 4-inch-diameter at breast height (DBH) that are trimmed or removed for the project will be replaced in accordance with County practice. Replacement trees will be planted in County right-of-way in the project area or in similar settings in the general vicinity, with the goal of replacing the existing tree functions as close to the project area as feasible.

Cultural Resources

CR-1 Worker Awareness Training. Prior to construction, an archaeologist will provide a pre-construction archaeological briefing to all construction crews prior to initiating ground disturbing activities. The briefing will provide guidance on historical and archaeological resources and appropriate procedures to follow if such finds are inadvertently exposed during the project.

CR-2 Monitoring. During initial ground disturbance in native soil within the waterway, cultural resource monitoring shall be conducted by a qualified archaeologist, with advance notification provided to a representative from the Xolon-Salinan Tribe and the Salinan Tribe of Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties to provide for the identification, evaluation, treatment, and protection of any cultural resources that are affected by or may be discovered during construction of the proposed project. "Initial ground disturbance" is defined as first-pass construction disturbance; once areas of native soil have been disturbed by construction and have been found not to contain cultural materials, archaeological and tribal monitoring is not necessary during subsequent construction disturbance. If the archaeological team, in direct coordination with the County and the tribes, determines the potential for encountering archaeological resources is negligible, archaeological monitoring may be reduced or cease at any time. The permittee shall allow each tribe to be equally represented in all tribal cultural monitoring. A monitoring schedule will be coordinated prior to construction to give each tribe equal representation while ensuring that site safety is maintained at a relatively narrow project site.

CR-3 Resource Discovery. During construction, if previously unidentified cultural materials are unearthed, work will be halted in that portion of the project area until a qualified archaeologist can assess the significance

of the find. Additional archaeological surveys will be needed if the project limits are extended beyond the present survey limits.

CR-4 Human Remains. During construction, as specified by California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, if human remains are found on the project site, the person responsible for the excavation, or his or her authorized representative, will immediately notify the San Luis Obispo County Coroner's office, and the County Environmental office by telephone. No further excavation or disturbance of the discovery or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains (as determined by an Archaeologist and/or Native American monitor) will occur until the Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code 5097.98.