

# Memorandum

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**Date:** November 30, 2017

**To:** Chris Hodge and TY Lin, Calaveras County Public Works Department

**Cc:** Mark Davis and Tina Sok, Calaveras County Public Works Department

**From:** David Claycomb, HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc.

**Subject:** Community Impacts Assessment for the Whiskey Slide over Jesus Maria Creek Bridge Replacement Project (Federal Aid No. BRLO 5930(0064))

**HELIX Project:** TYL-04.2

**Message:**

## Introduction

This memorandum provides a brief Community Impact Assessment (CIA) to evaluate the potential impacts associated with the proposed Whiskey Slide Road over Jesus Maria Creek Bridge Replacement Project (proposed project). The project site is in unincorporated, central Calaveras County approximately 2.5 miles southeast of the intersection of Whiskey Slide Road with Jesus Maria Road, and approximately 3.5 miles northwest of the intersection of Whiskey Slide Road with Mountain Ranch Road in the town of Mountain Ranch, California. State Route (SR) 49 is approximately 7.3 miles west of the project site. Refer to Figure 1 for the project's location in the region and Figure 2 for an aerial image of the project site.

Calaveras County (County) proposes to replace the Whiskey Slide Road Bridge (Bridge No. 30C0062) at Jesus Maria Creek by constructing a new bridge approximately 30 feet west of the existing alignment. The proposed roadway alignment would be raised to accommodate the new bridge and alignment. The project site is comprised of portions of Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs) 021-001-045 and 021-001-046 which are privately owned. The existing roadway and bridge pass through the parcels within an approximately 30-foot-wide implied dedication easement. Approximately 0.50 acre of new right-of-way (ROW) is anticipated to accommodate the replacement bridge and its roadway approaches within a 60-foot-wide implied dedication easement. The new ROW would come from APN 021-001-046, which is owned by Pat Morales. Approximately 0.1 acre of ROW from the existing roadway easement on the same APN will be removed from County maintenance rolls and returned to the private land owner's control following project construction. Refer to Figure 3 for the site plan with the existing and proposed ROW.

The project is within rural Calaveras County and it would not negatively affect the socioeconomic environment, an established community, or have a significant impact on travel patterns. The proposed project would not require the construction of temporary access nor would it result in traffic disruptions

associated with road or bridge closure. As a result, this memorandum solely addresses the land uses potentially affected: grazing, lands for which a contract under the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (the Williamson Act) has been executed; and utilities. This document has been prepared in support of a Categorical Exclusion being prepared for the project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970.

## **Purpose and Benefits**

The most recent Caltrans bridge inspection report identified the existing bridge as structurally deficient with a sufficiency rating of less than 50. The Federal Highway Bridge Program guidelines provide funding for bridges with a sufficiency rating of less than 80 which are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Bridges that are below 80 qualify for rehabilitation and bridges that are below 50 qualify for replacement or rehabilitation. The purpose of the project is to bring the bridge up to current geometric and structural standards, and provide residents, motorists, pedestrians, and emergency vehicles a safe, all-weather path of travel across Jesus Maria Creek.

## **Affected Environment**

The project site is in a mountainous, rural area of Calaveras County. Through the project site, Whiskey Slide Road is paved and narrow. The existing bridge at Whiskey Slide Road over Jesus Maria Creek is a single-span steel girder structure with a concrete deck built in 1936.

Land use in the vicinity of the project site is undeveloped forested land and residential parcels with cleared pastures. As previously mentioned, the entire property in which the proposed new ROW is located is privately owned, primarily used for residential and grazing land uses. The area proposed to be acquired as ROW is a portion of a pasture frequently used for cattle grazing of up to ten cows. No other known agricultural activities occur in the vicinity. Existing overhead electrical and telephone lines cross the project site at three locations.

The Calaveras County General Plan Future Land Use Map indicates the project site is within an Agriculture Preserve (AP; Calaveras County, 1996), and the project site is zoned AP (Calaveras County 2015). AP zoning applies to lands for which a Williamson Act contract has been executed. The Draft General Plan Land Use Map characterizes the project site's land use as Resource Production (40-160 acres; Calaveras County 2014). This designation identifies land primarily used for agricultural, timber, and mineral operations.

The County of Calaveras General Plan (1996) indicates that the general soils type within the project vicinity is "Group 6" which is characterized by acid, rocky, or stony soil over slate rock. Conifers grow well in this soil, with oaks, shrubs, and grasses also prevalent. Currently, these soils support annual grasses, riparian habitat, and mixed-conifer forest. The General Plan indicates that there are no prime agricultural lands identified in the County.

The project area was burned by the Butte Fire during the summer of 2015. The upland habitats south of the bridge and wooded upland habitats north of the bridge were substantially burned, exposing soils. The riparian habitat was not significantly altered, and still operates as grazing land.

Based upon a review of maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) of the California Resources Agency, there are no data available for Calaveras County identifying “Prime Farmland,” “Unique Farmland,” or “Farmland of Statewide Importance” (California Department of Conservation 2015).

### **Analysis of Farmland Impacts**

The FMMP does not include data for Calaveras County; therefore, the project would not affect Farmlands pursuant to the FMMP; however, many lands in the County are capable of supporting agriculture. The project site is identified in the General Plan as a “High Capability Agricultural Land” (Calaveras County 1996; Figure IV-7).

The project site and immediate surrounding areas are zoned as Agricultural Preserve (AP) and are under a Williamson Act contract. The project would convert approximately 0.5 acre of land from APN 021-001-046 that is currently zoned AP to transportation land uses under establishment of new ROW within an implied dedication easement. The land to be converted would consist primarily of the existing dedicated easement for the existing roadway alignment which is in transportation land uses, and would include a portion of the cleared pasture north of the creek, and forested land south of the creek. The conversion of the current zoning of AP to transportation land uses would conflict with the AP zoning, which would be a potentially significant impact. The existing structure and associated approaches would be demolished as a part of this project, and approximately 0.1 acre of ROW from the existing roadway easement in the same APN would be transferred back to the owner’s control following construction, and would partially offset the impacts of the land conversion.

The Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection requires notification whenever land within an AP contract may be required by a public agency for a public use. Notification to the California Department of Conservation is proposed as mitigation to reduce potentially significant impacts associated with the conversion of lands in a Williamson Act contract.

### **Analysis of Grazing Impacts**

The project site crosses through a pasture frequently used for cattle grazing, which could be temporarily affected during construction activities. Existing fences on either side of the bridge would be removed and temporary replacement fencing would be installed to ensure a continuation of the localized grazing activities. Once construction activities are complete, the fences would be replaced, and grazing activities could resume in that immediate area. Any previously disturbed areas would be revegetated and available for grazing, including the 0.1 acre of existing bridge approaches. Due to the temporary nature and small amount of land affected by the construction of this project, the proposed project would not have a significant effect on grazing. Refer to Figure 3 for the locations of the existing and proposed fences.

### **Analysis of Utilities Impacts**

The County does not provide public utilities, such as water and wastewater, to areas designated in the General Plan as Resource Production. Properties with this land use type operate on private wells and septic systems, which will not be affected by construction of the proposed project.

There are two utility service providers with facilities in the project site: Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) and AT&T. The County coordinated with both utility providers to determine the utilities present in the project site, and potential impacts to the utilities as a result of the proposed project. Through coordination with both utility providers, the County verified that neither of them has operating underground utilities within the project site limits — PG&E has no underground utilities, and existing underground utilities owned by AT&T were abandoned in place following the 2015 Butte Fire through the area. Both providers have aerial utility lines on shared poles that cross the project site at three locations, which was confirmed during a site visit on October 27, 2017 with representatives from the County, PG&E, and AT&T present. The private property owner, Pat Morales, met with the County and utility representatives, and provided permission to access her property to inventory the utilities and measure the heights of the overhead lines.

All aerial utility lines crossing the project site connect to a utility pole (west utility pole) located approximately 220 feet west of Whiskey Slide Road at its intersection with the driveway to Pat Morales' house. Overhead utility lines extend from the west utility pole, eastward, where they cross Whiskey Slide Road approximately 85 feet north of the existing bridge, and connect to a utility pole on Pat Morales' property (east utility pole). Additional overhead utility lines extend to the southeast, where they cross Whiskey Slide Road approximately 110 feet south of the existing bridge, and connect to a utility pole on a hilltop east of Whiskey Slide Road (south utility pole). Refer to Figure 3 for the locations of the existing utility lines and poles.

During the site visit, the heights of the aerial utility lines for each provider were measured, and reviewed against a preliminary design of the proposed project, in which the proposed roadway profile is several feet higher in elevation than the existing roadway. The minimum roadway clearance height to PG&E lines is 24 feet, and the minimum roadway clearance height to AT&T lines is 18 feet.

It was determined that for both providers, the utility lines between the west utility pole and the south utility pole would not need to be relocated - the PG&E lines would cross the proposed roadway alignment at approximately 81 feet above the proposed roadway elevation, and the AT&T lines would cross the proposed roadway alignment at approximately 49 feet above the proposed roadway elevation. The vertical clearance for both utilities would exceed minimum standards at that location.

The PG&E lines between the west utility pole and the east utility pole would cross the proposed roadway alignment at approximately 28 feet above the proposed roadway elevation, and AT&T lines would cross the proposed roadway alignment at approximately 12 feet above the proposed roadway elevation. The vertical clearance of the PG&E lines would exceed minimum standards at that location and would not need to be relocated; however, the AT&T lines would need to be raised or relocated to achieve the minimum 18-foot vertical clearance. AT&T indicated that if a relocation is needed, it could be done without causing an interruption to either PG&E or their own services.

Because no service interruptions are expected to occur, no notifications to customers would be required; however, both utility owners plan to provide phone and mail notification to any residents who may be affected by any potential utility interruptions at least one week prior to the utility line work being performed related to construction on the project.

**Avoidance Minimization and/or Mitigation Measures:**

The following measures are proposed:

- Pursuant to Government Code Section 51291(b - e), the County shall notify the California Department of Conservation of the conversion of contracted land zoned as AP that is proposed for acquisition by the Calaveras County Department of Transportation, prior to the decision to acquire the property located in the AP. The County shall provide separate notification to the Director of Conservation within 10 working days upon completion of the acquisition. Should there be any significant changes to the acquisition, or should the County decide to not acquire the property, the County shall provide separate notification to the Director of Conservation.
- Existing fencing on the private property will be affected by project construction. The County shall provide the property owner of the affected property with temporary fencing for the duration of construction, and permanent replacement fencing that shall be installed following construction. The County shall coordinate with the property owner of the affected property regarding the locations and extent of temporary and replacement fencing. The County shall be responsible for the removal and proper disposal of removed fencing (if not salvaged), and installation of temporary and replacement fencing.

**Attachments**

Figure 1 - Site & Vicinity Map

Figure 2 - Aerial Photograph

Figure 3 - Utilities and Project Features

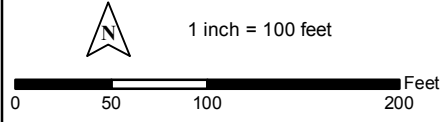
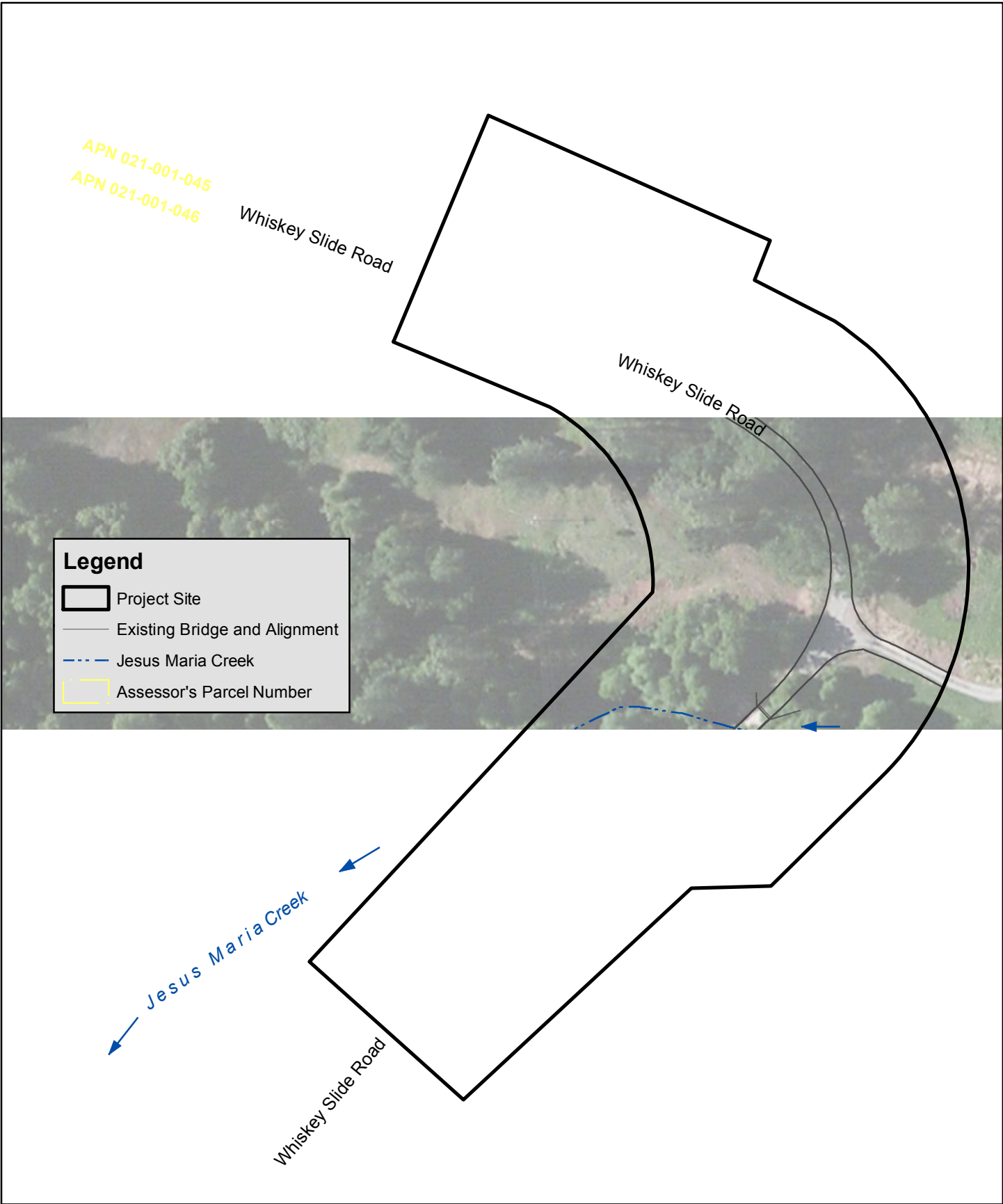
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<[http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/overview/Pages/survey\\_area\\_map.aspx](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/overview/Pages/survey_area_map.aspx)>

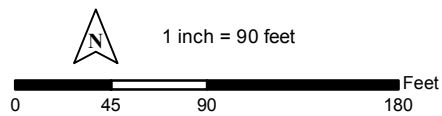
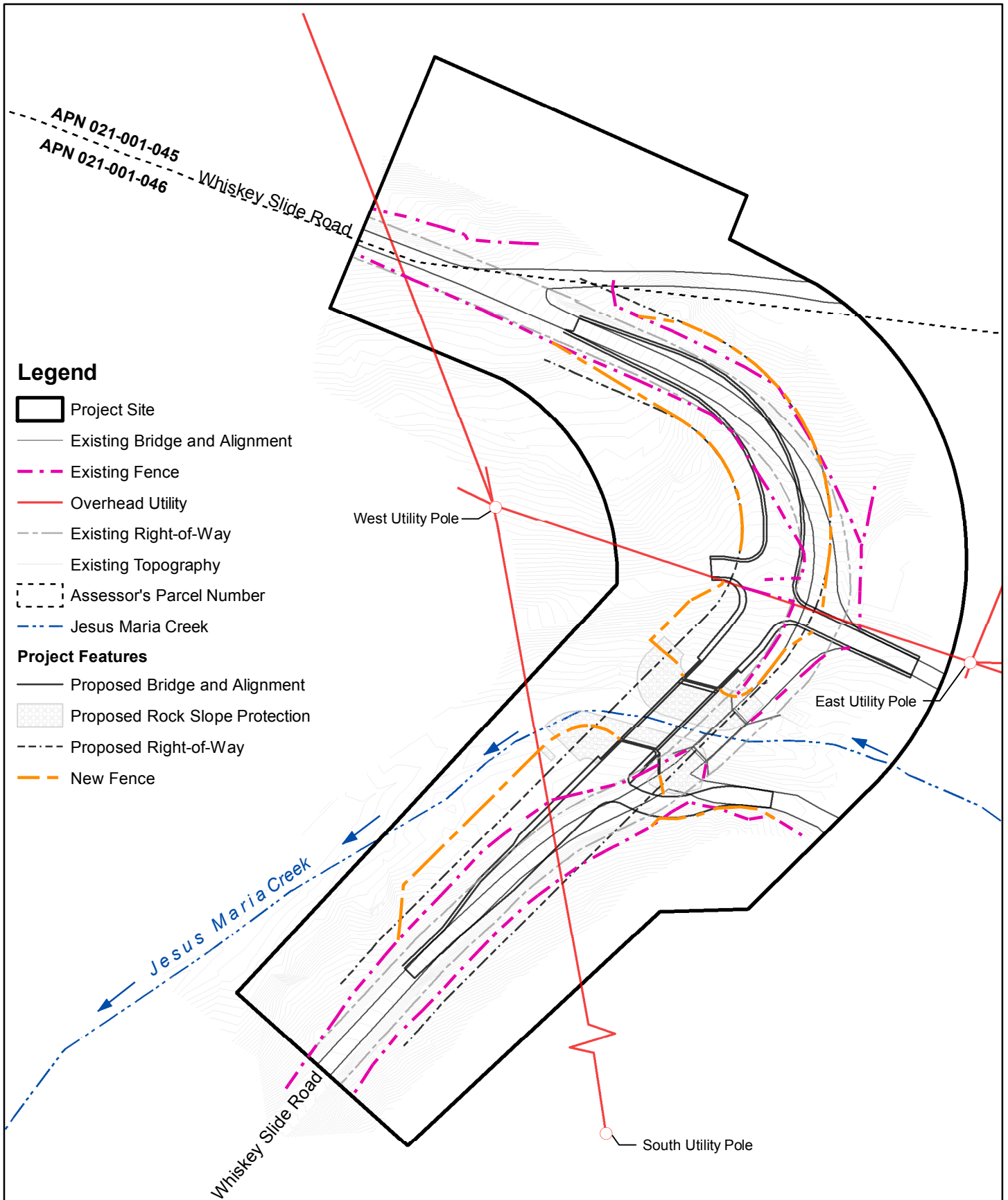




**Figure 2 - Aerial Photograph**  
 WHISKEY SLIDE ROAD OVER JESUS MARIA CREEK  
 (30C0062) BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT  
 Calaveras County, CA

Source: ESRI World Imagery (June 19, 2014)  
 Map Date: November 2017





Map Date: November 2017

### Figure 3 - Utilities and Project Features

WHISKEY SLIDE ROAD OVER JESUS MARIA CREEK  
(30C0062) BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Calaveras County, CA