

PROPOSED MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to replace the rock slope protection (RSP) at twenty-four bridges along an 8-mile distance of Interstate 10 (I-10), from Krume Ditch, (Postmile [PM] R92.9) to Wide Ditch (PM R101.1) in an unincorporated portion of Riverside County, California. These bridges are located between Hayfield Road and Eagle Mountain Road, just west of Desert Center.

The purpose of the project is to replace the RSP to current construction standards at each bridge to protect the structural integrity of these bridges to prevent bridge collapse.

Determination

This proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is included to give notice to interested agencies and the public that it is the Caltrans' intent to adopt an MND for this project. This does not mean that the Caltrans' decision regarding the project is final. This MND is subject to change based on comments received by interested agencies and the public.

Caltrans has prepared an Initial Study for this project and, pending public review, expects to determine from this study that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The proposed project would have no effect on agriculture and forest resources, energy, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, utilities and service systems, and wildfire.

In addition, the proposed project would have no significantly adverse effects on cultural resources, air quality, aesthetics, and greenhouse gas emissions.

With the following mitigation measures incorporated, the proposed project would have less than significant effects to biological resources, and hazards and hazardous material.

BIO-1 Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) Fencing: To protect the sensitive habitat ESA fencing will be used to delineate the sensitive habitat.

BIO-2 Transplantation: If Alverson's foxtail cactus or Utah vine milkweed cannot be avoided, the biologist will translocate this species outside of the construction work zone and delineate appropriately.

BIO-3 Preconstruction Nesting Bird Survey: If construction occurs within nesting bird season (Feb 1 – Sept 30), conduct pre-construction nesting bird surveys before construction to locate and avoid nesting birds. If an active avian nest is located, a no construction buffer will be established and monitored.

BIO-4 Lighting: Artificial lighting shall be directed at the work site only.

BIO-5 Biological Monitor: A qualified biologist will be designated who will oversee compliance of all protective measures and will notify the resident engineer of project activities that are not compliant. The resident engineer must stop work until the protective measures are implemented.

BIO-6 Workers Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP): A qualified biologist will present a biological resource information program/WEAP prior to ground-disturbing activities to all personnel that will be present within the proposed project limits for longer than 30 minutes at any given time.

BIO-7 Pre-construction Clearance Survey for Desert Tortoise: Immediately prior to the start of any ground-disturbing activities and prior to the installation of any desert tortoise exclusion fencing, clearance surveys for

the desert tortoise will be conducted by the biologist, as appropriate. The entire project area will be surveyed for desert tortoise and their burrows by the qualified biologist before the start of any ground disturbing activities.

BIO-8 Temporary Desert Tortoise Fencing: Temporary exclusion fencing will be installed outlining the perimeter of any construction staging, storage or batch plant areas to prevent entry by desert tortoises into the work site. Exclusion fencing will be installed following United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidelines (2005) or more current protocol. The biologist will ensure that desert tortoises cannot pass under, over, or around the fence. The biologist must regularly check the fenced area and make any necessary repairs should it become damaged.

BIO-9 Desert Tortoise under Vehicles and/or Equipment: The qualified Biologist and project personnel shall carefully check regularly under parked vehicles or equipment for desert tortoises before moving any vehicles or equipment. Desert tortoises found within the staging and/or construction areas will be allowed to move away from such areas to a location away from danger, on their own accord. Workers will not be allowed to capture, handle, or relocate tortoises. Project activities shall re-commence only once the desert tortoise is safely outside the project areas or required protected areas.

BIO-10 Desert Tortoise in Work Area: If at any time a desert tortoise is observed in the Caltrans' Right of Way (ROW), the qualified biologist will have the authority to halt any activity, through the Resident Engineer or other identified authority in charge of implementation, that may pose a threat to desert tortoises and to direct movements of equipment and personnel to avoid injury or mortality to desert tortoises.

BIO-11 Injured Desert Tortoise: The qualified biologist will inform USFWS and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) of any injured or dead tortoises found on site (verbal notification within 24 hours and written notification within 5 days).

BIO-12 Desert Tortoise Monitoring Reports: The qualified biologist will conduct on-site monitoring and submit monitoring reports for desert tortoise and during construction.

BIO-13 Predation Prevention: Workers are prohibited from feeding all wildlife.

HW-1 Aerially Deposited Lead (ADL) Investigation: If the soil at the proposed project site is found to contain lead at unacceptable levels, a lead compliance plan will be required and implemented to minimize the possible hazardous exposure of lead to workers.

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Date