

January 6, 2022
File: 185705051

Attention: Mr. Darrell Cardiff
Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans District 1 Local Assistance
1656 Union Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Mr. Cardiff,

Section 4(f) De Minimis Finding for the Little River Trail Project

The California Coastal Trail is a non-motorized public pedestrian and bicycle multi-use trail along the state's coastline spanning from Mexico to Oregon. The Little River Trail Project (project) would close a critical gap in the California Coastal Trail, improving recreational and non-motorized access to coastal communities, recreational areas, and other coastal resources between the communities of McKinleyville and Trinidad in Humboldt County (Figure 1, attached). The northern extent of the project alignment is where Scenic Drive culminates at US Highway 101 (US 101), while the southern extent is at Clam Beach Drive. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic currently must use the US 101 adjoining paved shoulder, separated from through motorized traffic only by road striping. This condition presents a hazard to public safety.

The entire proposed trail alignment would be within the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) right-of-way, with the exception of the northernmost section, which is currently mapped as being on Trinidad Coastal Land Trust (TCLT) property (Figure 2, attached). However, Caltrans would acquire the right-of-way either in fee or as a permanent easement. The proposed trail alignment is also immediately adjacent to the eastern edge of Little River State Beach, on both the north and south sides of the river. A feasibility study for the Little River Trail was completed in 2014 by Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA) with support from the State Coastal Conservancy. Pending funding, Caltrans has agreed to finalize design, environmental permitting, and construct the Little River Trail. It is also responsible for federal oversight of the project, while RCAA is responsible for local administration. Caltrans would own and maintain the Little River Trail as a Caltrans facility. Additionally, the project is entirely within the California Coastal Zone.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project would construct an approximately 1-mile Class I Bike Path (pedestrian and bicycle trail) from Scenic Drive to Clam Beach. The trail would be a paved pathway, alternating between an approximately 10-foot wide trail (5 feet per travel lane) with 2-foot wide shoulders on either side and an approximately 8-foot wide trail (4 feet per travel lane) with 2-foot wide shoulders on either side, depending on site constraints. The trail would cross the Little River via the existing US 101 bridge, which would be widened up to 2 feet to accommodate the additional width required for the trail. In order to accommodate the trail on the bridge, the project also includes modifications to the US101 Little River Bridge and realignment of the southbound travel lanes South of the Little River, the trail alignment would be located into and/or on top of the undeveloped vegetated surface and along the US 101 Crannell Road off-ramp within the Caltrans right of way.

The project is being designed in accordance with the Caltrans Highway Design Manual, 7th Edition (Caltrans 2020). In addition, the project would be designed in accordance with other specific applicable standards, including the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Caltrans 2021) and the Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design (Department of Justice 2010).

GEOTECHNICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Additional geotechnical investigations are required during the project design phase in order to obtain necessary information to support retaining wall type selection and design. The investigation would occur north

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of Little River, between the Scenic Drive trailhead and the Little River. The geotechnical investigations would employ drill rigs and ancillary equipment and would require tree and vegetation removal along the trail alignment for access. Any excess sediments that result from geological investigations are expected to be relatively small in quantity and would be hauled offsite by the contractor for legal disposal or reuse.

RETAINING WALLS

Two retaining walls would be necessary to maintain accessible slopes, minimize the construction footprint, and facilitate crossing an existing culvert over an unnamed tributary along the northern trail alignment between the Scenic Drive trailhead and the Little River. The final retaining wall design would follow further geotechnical investigations and recommendations. Construction scenarios for the retaining walls are summarized below and include a soldier pile wall with ground anchors, cantilever soldier pile walls, mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) wall, and a concrete boardwalk structure. More than one retaining wall construction scenario may be included in the final design, which would also determine the final number, length and heights of required retaining wall structures. The retaining wall structures would not be easily visible since there is no access or use on the west side of the trail.

Retaining walls may also be necessary to maintain slope stability south of the Little River along the Crannell Road off-ramp and would involve similar construction scenarios.

SOLDIER PILE WALL WITH GROUND ANCHORS

The soldier pile wall construction scenario would include a retaining wall on the western edge of the trail only. Soldier piles would be installed in a drilled hole approximately 18 feet below grade and anchored into the ground with horizontal ground anchors. Horizontal lagging would extend above and below grade. A structural concrete waler beam and concrete cap would be installed on top of the lagging, resulting in a total above grade height of approximately 8 feet, although final structure heights would vary based on site-specific conditions and final designs. A safety railing would be attached to the structural concrete cap. Temporary sheet piling would be installed on the western and eastern edge of the trail to facilitate the drilling process for the soldier piles and construction of the retaining wall.

CANTILEVER SOLDIER PILE WALL 14-FOOT DESIGN HEIGHT

The 14-foot maximum design height cantilever soldier pile wall includes retaining structures on both the western and eastern edge of the trail. On the western edge, soldier piles would be installed in a drilled hole approximately 30 feet below grade and anchored into the ground. Horizontal lagging would be installed above and below grade, with a maximum exposed height limit of 14 feet. A concrete cap and safety railing would be installed on top of the lagging. Temporary sheet piling would be installed on the western and eastern edge of the trail to facilitate the drilling process for the soldier piles and construction of the retaining wall.

CANTILEVER SOLDIER PILE WALL 12-FOOT DESIGN HEIGHT

The 12-foot maximum design height cantilever soldier pile wall includes retaining structures on both the western and eastern edge of the trail. On the western edge, soldier piles would be installed in a drilled hole approximately 20 feet below grade and anchored into the ground. Lagging would be installed above and below grade, with a maximum exposed height limit of 12 feet. A concrete cap and safety railing would be installed on top of the lagging. If necessary, a concrete retaining wall would also be constructed on the eastern edge of the trail with an above-grade height of approximately 6 feet. Temporary sheet piling would be installed on the western and eastern edge of the trail to facilitate the drilling process for the soldier piles and construction of the retaining wall.

MECHANICALLY STABILIZED EARTH WALL

A mechanically stabilized earth wall (MSE) approximately 18 feet tall would be constructed on the eastern edge of the trail to retain the cutslope above and below grade. On the western edge of the trail, MSE wall

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panels approximately 16 feet tall would be installed to elevate and retain the trail. A safety railing would be installed at the top edge of the MSE wall.

CONCRETE BOARDWALK STRUCTURE

Cast-in-drilled-holes piles approximately 16 feet tall would be installed below grade with a drill rig. The piles would be topped with bent caps approximately 2 feet tall to form the base of the trail. The bent caps would be topped with an 8-inch-thick concrete slab.

GRADING AND FILL

Grading would need to occur along the entire trail alignment to achieve accessible slopes and suitable trail width. Similarly, fill would be placed and compacted along the alignment to establish the trail prism.

BARRIER INSTALLATION

South of the Little River, barriers would be installed to separate the trail from US 101 or the Crannell Road off-ramp. End treatments or similar safety modifications would be installed at the end of the barriers.

ANCILLARY TRAIL FEATURES CONSTRUCTION

Ancillary trail features, such as lookouts or other nature viewing areas, would be constructed adjacent to the primary alignment. Ancillary trail features may include benches, interpretive signage, and other features related to public access and education.

US ROUTE 101 LITTLE RIVER CROSSING

The trail would cross the Little River via the existing US 101 bridge. The existing travel lanes would be reconfigured to support the multi-use trail. Under the scenario with the greatest potential for environmental impacts under consideration, the bridge deck would be widened 2 feet on the western edge. Other lane reconfiguration scenarios would not require bridge deck widening. For all scenarios considered, additional pilings or in-water work would not be required to support reconfiguring the travel lanes or widening the bridge deck. The existing lanes would be reconfigured to accommodate a 10-foot trail in addition to Caltrans standard shoulder and travel lane widths (Illustration 1). As a result of the widening and lane shifts, the bridge and portions of US 101 immediately north and south of the bridge would need to be repaved and restriped. To accommodate lane shifts on the bridge, the existing vegetation in the median between the northbound and southbound lanes of US 101 would be removed and replaced with pavement. The existing barrier between the travel lanes would be replaced and extended.

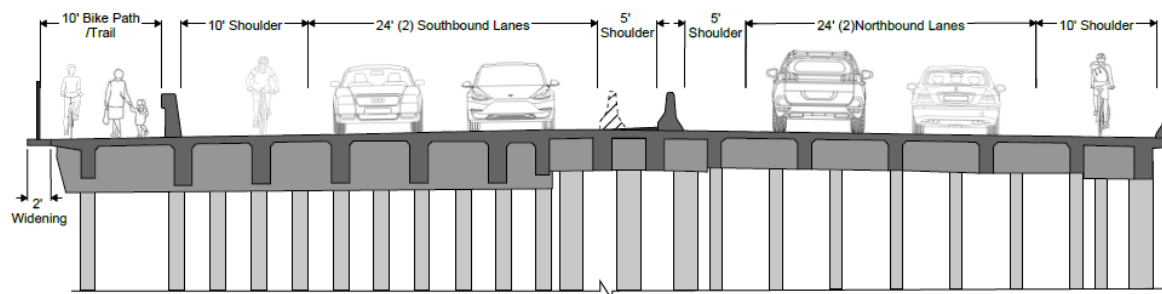


Illustration 1. Conceptual Overview of Little River Bridge Design Approach

Bridge deck widening would include removing the existing concrete bridge barrier and installing additional concrete reinforcement and new barrier and railings to widen the bridge by approximately 2 feet. To widen the bridge, a temporary shoulder closure would be established with a k-rail for the duration of work. A temporary

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work platform and debris containment system would be installed below the existing bridge deck using a snooper truck on the bridge deck, which would require lane closure. Overhanging brackets to support the platform and debris containment system would be installed on the face of the existing edge girder using drilled-in anchors. The existing concrete barrier and edge of the deck would be removed by chipping. Existing reinforcement bars would be extended with mechanical couplers. Formwork would be installed below the edge of the bridge deck. Bridge reinforcement would be completed, followed by pouring a widened deck. Forms would be stripped, and the railing would be installed. The temporary work platform would be removed, and drill holes would be patched using a snooper truck from the bridge deck.

Temporary lane closures on the US 101 Little River Bridge would be required for bridge widening, barrier construction, and striping. Temporary lane closures would follow Caltrans requirements for temporary roadway closures, including signage and public noticing.

DRAINAGE AND STORMWATER IMPROVEMENTS

The Class 1 facility will be exempt from MS4 stormwater requirements. The trail would be constructed to mimic the existing site topography and be outsloped to the maximum extent feasible. In localized areas where outsloping is not feasible, traditional drainage inlets and storm drainage piping would be deployed to convey stormwater through the trail prism. Stormwater would be discharged through energy dissipation devices such as riprap aprons and/or outlet basins to prevent scour, protect the outlet structure, and minimize the potential for downstream erosion.

UTILITY RELOCATION

Two Caltrans streetlights located south of the Little River along the US 101 off-ramp would be relocated outside the trail footprint in coordination with Caltrans. Additionally, a drainage inlet located adjacent to the US 101 off-ramp, and one located just north of the Little River Bridge in the highway median would need to be modified to accommodate planned improvements for this project.

Signage to direct southbound cyclists to exit northbound US 101 in Trinidad to access the trail may also be incorporated. Interpretive signage along the trail would promote education of the coastal resources and surrounding environment.

STRIPING AND SIGNAGE

The trail would include required striping and signage in order to comply with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Caltrans 2021). Striping and directional signage would indicate two travel directions.

Signage to direct southbound cyclists to exit northbound US 101 in Westhaven to access the trail may also be incorporated. Interpretive signage along the trail would promote education of the coastal resources and surrounding environment.

TRAIL LIGHTING

The project may include streetlight installation at either trailhead or to improve safety in key locations. Any exterior lighting would be designed to protect wildlife and nighttime views, including views of the night sky. The project would be designed to be consistent with the recommendations of the International Dark-Sky Association, which includes standards for fixtures, shielding, wattage, placement, height, and illumination levels. To comply with these requirements, lighting for the project would use the minimum lumens necessary; and it would be directed downward, shielded, and at pedestrian level when feasible. This would help ensure lighting is contained within the site and does not cause significant lighting and glare impacts for surrounding land uses and sensitive habitat areas.

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TRAILHEAD DEVELOPMENT

Trailhead improvements would include signage, striping for parking, and additional trail amenities such as benches or picnic tables. At the Scenic Drive trailhead, parking spaces may be delineated within the existing cul-de-sac footprint. The existing Clam Beach parking area near the southern trailhead is located on State Parks property. The parking area would continue to be used but would not be expanded as a result of the project.

Additional parking at the southern trailhead is not proposed. Crosswalks, directional and/or interpretative signage upgrades, and shoulder striping improvements may be installed along Clam Beach Road, which is State Parks property, to improve safety between the existing parking area and the new trailhead in coordination with Caltrans, State Parks, and the County of Humboldt.

CONSTRUCTION ACCESS

The project would be accessed via US 101, Scenic Drive, and Clam Beach Drive. No new access roads would need to be constructed in order to implement the project.

ESTABLISH EXCLUSION AREAS AND EROSION CONTROL

Sensitive biological areas would be excluded with protective fencing prior to construction, except for areas that would be unavoidably impacted during construction. Erosion control Best Management Practices (BMPs) would also be installed prior to construction.

VEGETATION REMOVAL

Clearing and grubbing of vegetation would occur within the construction footprint, including tree removal north of the Little River. During project design, contractors mapped trees 6 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) or greater. One hundred seventeen (117) trees that are 6-inch dbh or greater would be removed to clear the proposed alignment for trail installation, many of which are Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and other native species. Final tree removal numbers by species may be adjusted as the design progresses.

CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT AND STAGING

Equipment required for construction would include drill rigs, concrete mixer and pump trucks, all terrain forklifts, snooper truck, compressors, tracked excavators, backhoes, graders, bulldozers, dump trucks, skid steers, and pick-up trucks. Jackhammers or similar pieces of equipment may be necessary to support bridge widening. It is not anticipated that any temporary utility extensions, such as electric power or water, would be required for trail construction. Water from legal sources would be used for dust control and compaction and re-vegetation. Equipment would be staged in an existing graveled area at the southern end of the project alignment, on the east side of US 101.

CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

Construction could require up to two construction seasons. If feasible, vegetation clearing would occur first prior to construction, between September 2 and February 14 (outside of the special status bird nesting period). Construction would require up to 8 months, beginning in March and concluding by October 15.

SECTION 4(F) REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, codified in federal law in 49 USC 303, declares that "it is the policy of the United States Government that special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites."

Reference: Section 4(f) De Minimis Finding for the Little River Trail Project

Section 4(f) specifies that the federal Secretary of Transportation may approve a transportation program or project requiring the use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state, or local significance, or land of a historic site of national, state, or local significance (as determined by the federal, state, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park, area, refuge, or site) only if:

- There is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that land; and the program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use; or
- It is determined that use of the property will have a de minimis impact.

For publicly owned public parks, recreation areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges, a *de minimis* impact is one that will not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes of the Section 4(f) property. Section 4(f) also considers project effects on historic sites. Relative to historic sites, a *de minimis* impact means that the Federal Highway Administration has determined (in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) that either no historic site is affected by the project or that the project will have "no adverse effect" on the historic site. A *de minimis* impact determination does not require analysis of feasible and prudent avoidance alternatives. However, if a historic site is involved, then coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer is also needed.

Responsibility for compliance with Section 4(f) was assigned to Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 326 and 327, including *de minimis* impact determinations, as well as coordination with those agencies that have jurisdiction over a Section 4(f) resource that may be affected by a project action.

FINDINGS

Section 4(f) does not apply to privately owned lands having no Section 4(f) triggers (e.g., historic sites). Although the TCLT parcel at the north end of the proposed trail alignment is accessible to the public, it is privately owned and managed. Caltrans would acquire right-of-way either in fee or as a permanent easement prior to construction for the portion of TCLT's property that would be used for the Little River Trail and assume permanent operational and maintenance responsibility for the trail segment. The provisions of Section 4(f) would not be triggered by the proposed project.

The multi-modal trail would be a compatible use of and benefit to the Little River State Beach lands. By closing a critical gap in the California Coastal Trail, the project promotes coastal resources, nature study, and multi-modal transportation while maintaining the visual and ecological integrity of the project area.

Little River State Beach is a publicly-owned state recreational facility managed by California State Park, and is thus a Section 4(f) property. The proposed trail alignment would closely follow the west side of US 101. Addition of the proposed multi-modal trail access at this location is anticipated to reduce the demand for vehicular parking in the State Beach parking area by creating multi-modal access alternatives. Use of Caltrans right-of-way for the paved trail would avoid project-related permanent impacts on Little River State Beach property, and the existing parking area (State Parks property) along Clam Beach Drive would not be expanded. Work in the State Beach parking area and the new trailhead would be coordinated in advance between Caltrans, State Parks, and the County. The State Beach's existing parking area would be enhanced by installing crosswalks, directional and/or interpretative signage upgrades, and the addition of shoulder striping along Clam Beach Road. These improvements would not require ground disturbance or roadway widening.

Clam Beach Drive, including public beach access parking at the southernmost end of the project area, would remain open during project construction. Staging would be in Caltrans right-of-way on the east side of US 101. Construction activities related to noise, the appearance of equipment on the landscape (visual resources), and the movement of equipment throughout the project area (accessibility) would have a *de minimis* effect on the indirect recreational use of public lands. Section 4(f) would not be triggered, and no special use permit or temporary construction easement would be needed from California State Parks.

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With regard to Section 4(f) resources that may be affected by the project, the following determinations were made in accordance with 23 USC 101(a) *de minimis* impact:

- The project would have no adverse effect on a historic property in accordance with 36 CFR part 800.
- The project would not adversely affect a publicly owned park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge, including the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the property for protection under Section 4(f). Project-related impacts on Section 4(f) resources would be *de minimis*.

Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you.

Regards,

Stantec Consulting Services Inc.



Connie MacGregor

Project Manager

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Attachment: Figure 1. Project Location
Figure 2. Project Overview

cc. Denise Newman, RCAA

References

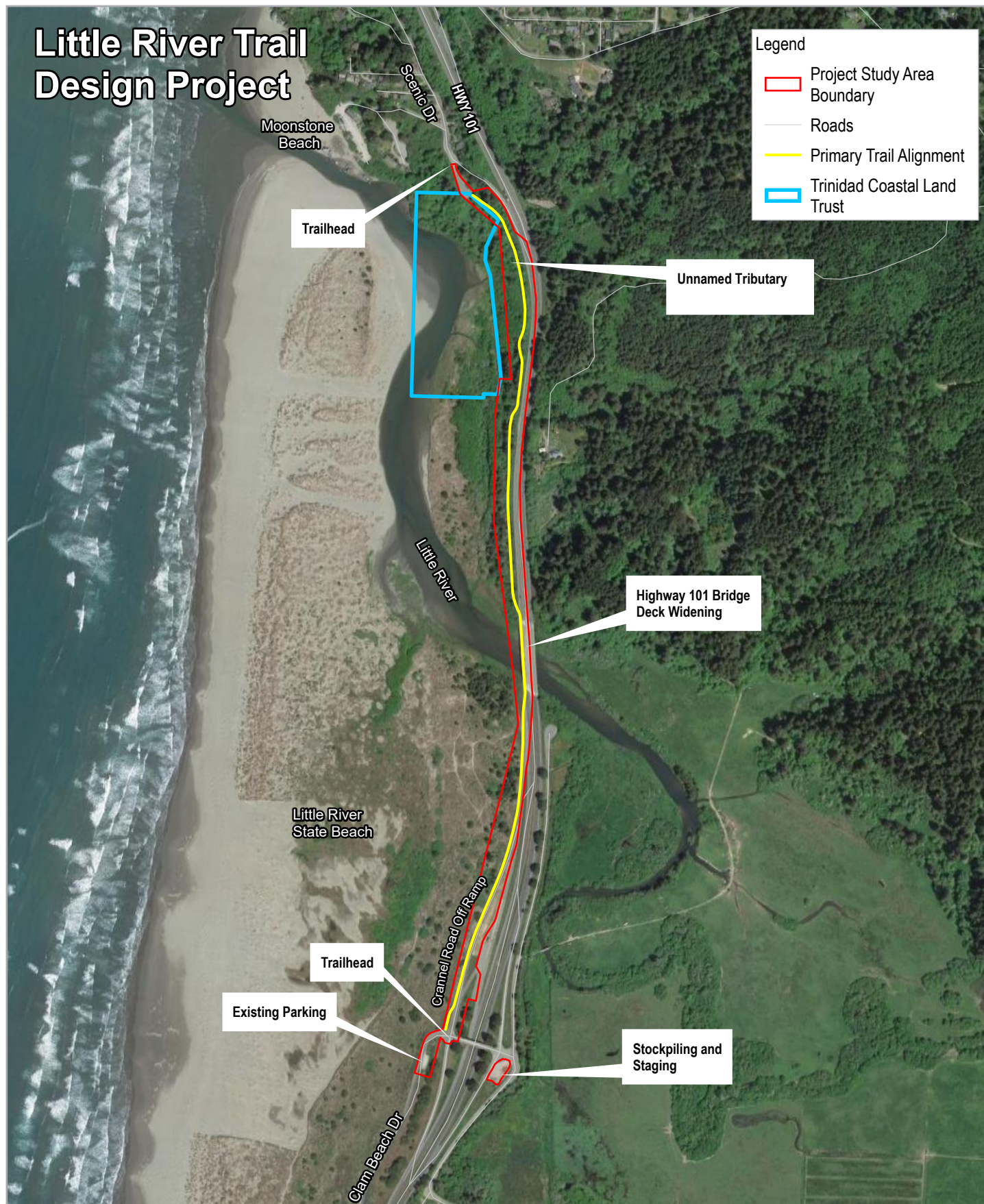
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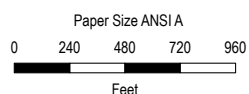
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Little River Trail Design Project

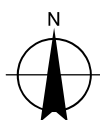


Legend

- Project Study Area Boundary
- Roads
- Primary Trail Alignment
- Trinidad Coastal Land Trust



Map Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
Horizontal Datum: North American 1983
Grid: NAD 1983 StatePlane California I FIPS 0401 Feet



Redwood Community Action Agency
Little River Trail Project Description

Project No. 11212216
Revision No. -
Date 6/2/2021

Project Overview

FIGURE 2