

California Department of Transportation

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT 10 PLANNING
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June 23, 2025

Ms. Trina Walley
Executive Director
Calaveras County Resource
Conservation District
423 E. Saint Charles Street
San Andreas, CA 95249

**CAL-12-PM 8.258 NW Fuel
Reduction Project –
Conservation - SCH
2025051369**

Ms. Walley,

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the NW Calaveras Fuel Reduction Project Initial Study that covers vegetation management for fuels reduction intended to protect life, property, infrastructure, and habitat from catastrophic wildfire in the Valley Springs and Rancho Calaveras communities. The geographic scope of the NW Calaveras Fuel Reduction Project (Project) was identified by the local California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Unit as a prioritized area for fuels reduction activities to reduce the probability of wildfire and support future fire suppression efforts. Areas targeted for treatment are decadent and in need of fuels management to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire and promote a more resilient landscape. Treatments will reduce heavy vegetative fuels, increase tree canopy spacing, and cut dead trees which present a hazard to infrastructure. The goal of the proposed Project is to treat a contiguous landscape as much as possible. Proposed treatment methods include the following: mastication, hand cutting and piling, hand cutting and lopping/scattering, hand cutting and chipping (broadcast or chip/haul), prescribed fire (broadcast or pile burning), and prescribed herbivore grazing.

The project is located in all areas connecting Quail Oaks Road, Carol Lane, Crestview Drive, Lake View Road areas within Rancho Calaveras, Burson, and Quail Oaks communities, in between State Route (SR) 12 and SR 26 southwest of Valley Springs.

Caltrans has the following comments:

Caltrans suggests that the Calaveras County Resource Conservation District continue to coordinate with Caltrans in identifying and addressing potential pedestrian safety and cumulative transportation impacts from this project and other developments near this location. This will assist Caltrans in ensuring that pedestrian, traffic safety, and quality

standards are maintained for the traveling public on existing and future state transportation facilities in Calaveras County.

Environmental

If there are any construction related activities that will encroach into Caltrans Right of Way (ROW) as a result of the project, the project proponent must apply for an Encroachment Permit with the Caltrans District 10 Encroachment Permit Office. All California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation, including the final Initial Study (IS) – Mitigated Negative Declaration, with supporting technical studies, must be submitted with the Encroachment Permit Application. These studies may include an analysis of potential impacts to any cultural sites, historic properties, biological resources, hazardous waste/materials, scenic highways, and/or other environmental resources within Caltrans Right of Way, at the project site(s). Evidence of consultation with local Native American tribes and interested parties will need to be presented within the technical documents for approval of encroachment in the Caltrans ROW. Avoidance and Minimization measures (AMM) BIO-1 states that the nesting season is from February 1 through August 31. However, Caltrans considers the nesting season to be between February 1 and September 30. If work will occur in Caltrans ROW between February 1 and September 30 of any given year, a pre-construction bird survey must be conducted by a qualified biologist prior to the start of any construction related activities in Caltrans ROW.

If an active nest is observed, a protective buffer must be established around the nest per CDFW guidelines. No work is allowed within the protective buffer limits until the young have fledged and until authorized by the Caltrans District 10 Environmental Office. Results of the pre-construction bird survey(s) must be provided to the Caltrans District 10 Environmental Office prior to the start of construction. If any previously unknown cultural resources are discovered during construction in Caltrans ROW, all work must stop within a 100-foot radius of the discovery. The Caltrans D10 Environmental Office must be notified immediately. The Caltrans Professionally Qualified Staff (PQS) will investigate the discovery. No work shall resume within the 100-foot radius until authorized by the Caltrans PQS. This may differ from AMM CUL-1.

If there are impacts to water resources within Caltrans ROW, Caltrans will need to review the correspondence with the permitting authorities (California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW], United States Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board) and/or be provided copies of any required permits prior to the start of any construction in Caltrans ROW. If there are impacts to any special status species, critical habitat, or Essential Fish Habitat that exist within Caltrans ROW, evidence of consultation with CDFW, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and/or National Marine Fisheries Service shall be provided to Caltrans with the Encroachment Permit application.

Traffic Operations

Please provide the intersections on the State Highway System that this Project plan to use for ingress/egress of the equipment vehicles. Make sure that these intersections can accommodate equipment vehicles turning movements.

Hydrology

Since this project is encompassing and bounding between SR 12 to the north and SR 26 to the east, there are numerous existing drainage systems including but not limited to cross culverts, ditches, and storage basins, if any, along the aforementioned State Highways. We would like to ensure that the proposed project will not adversely and significant impact the existing drainage systems nor change the existing drainage flow patterns.

Should there be any changes to this project proposal in the future which will significantly impact the existing State drainage facilities or adversely change the existing stormwater runoff patterns within the State ROW, additional review will be required.

Encroachment Permits

If any project activities encroach into Caltrans ROW, the project proponent must submit an application for an Encroachment Permit to the Caltrans District 10 Encroachment Permit Office. Appropriate environmental studies must be submitted with this application. For more information, please visit the Caltrans Website at: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep/applications>

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Shiferaw Jemberie (209) 986-9635 (email: Shiferaw.jemberie@dot.ca.gov) or me at (209) 639 -8832 (email: Gregoria.ponce@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Gregoria Ponce'

Gregoria Ponce', Chief
Office of Rural Planning

cc: Bret Sampson, Director, Calaveras County Planning Department
State Clearinghouse (SCH)