

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

CA FLAP PLU 406(1) QUINCY JUNCTION ROAD PROJECT STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NO. 2025XXXXXX

SUBJECT

CA FLAP PLU 406(1) Quincy Junction Road Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Federal Highway Administration, Central Federal Lands Highway Division (FHWA-CFLHD), in cooperation with the Plumas County Department of Public Works (County), is proposing the CA FLAP PLU 406(1) Quincy Junction Road Project (project).

The project includes roadway improvements and widening of approximately 1.0 mile of Quincy Junction Road from Bell Lane to Chandler Road. The roadway would be widened to a paved width of 30 feet, which allows for two 11-foot-wide travel lanes and 4-foot-wide shoulders on each side. The project also includes the rehabilitation of the existing pavement, minor drainage improvements, utility relocations, and new cut/fill slopes. Pavement rehabilitation is anticipated to be a full-depth reclamation method, where the existing roadway material would be pulverized and blended in place, compacted, and then new asphalt concrete pavement would be placed over the full-depth reclamation material. Approach roads and driveways would be resurfaced or paved to transition and match the new roadway conditions. Rock cut slopes are anticipated through the middle section of the project area to minimize the extent of adjacent property impacts due to the existing steep slopes. Clear zone improvements are anticipated with the addition of the 4-foot shoulder, but improvements beyond that may be isolated to limit impacts on adjacent properties. New pavement markings and safety signage would also be installed.

Proposed drainage improvements include replacement of approximately 14 existing roadway culverts, installation of new culverts where needed to accommodate roadway widening and transitions to existing driveways, and graded roadway ditches to facilitate proper drainage. The existing box culvert at Clear Creek, a tributary to Greenhorn Creek, would be replaced with a hydraulically equivalent culvert to accommodate the roadway widening. Culverts that contain water at the time of construction would be dewatered prior to replacement. Due to excellent visibility and a short length across the Greenhorn Creek bridge, the proposed roadway shoulder would taper to match the narrower existing bridge shoulder to avoid impacts on the existing structure. Advance warning traffic signs would be installed at this location to advise roadway users of the narrower shoulder. No work in Greenhorn Creek is proposed.

The estimated area of disturbance (project area) is approximately 8.13 acres encompassing the existing road, adjacent areas subject to disturbance, and staging areas along the road.

Construction of the proposed road improvements is scheduled for 2026 and would last one construction season, with work likely starting in spring and finishing in fall. Work in aquatic habitats (culvert replacement and cleaning, headwall extension, and riprap placement at culvert inlet and outlets) would be confined to the low flow season between July 15 and October 31. No night work is proposed for the

project, though construction staging areas and storage may have security lighting which would be directed downward to avoid light impacts on adjoining properties. The construction timing is subject to change based on the availability of funding and receipt of approvals for the project. Traffic delays and short-term road closures are anticipated, with traffic delays being limited to 30 minutes or less. A short-term road closure of approximately three weeks is anticipated for replacement of the Clear Creek box culvert. A traffic detour would be provided during the full road closure at the creek crossing. The detour for through traffic will direct drivers along Chandler Road east to State Route 70 to Lee Road to Bell Lane. Advance notice will be provided for through traffic on Quincy Junction Road.

Existing right-of-way for Quincy Junction Road in the project corridor varies between approximately 60 feet to 100 feet. One partial, permanent right-of-way acquisition (consisting of 10 feet along the frontage of APN 117-022-06 totaling 1,300 square feet) is anticipated for the project. The remainder of the permanent roadway improvements associated with the project would be within the existing Plumas County right-of-way. Temporary construction easements are anticipated on approximately 11 parcels along Quincy Junction Road to provide for construction access and temporary disturbances outside of the right-of-way. No temporary or permanent relocations of utilities are required.

FHWA-CFLHD will retain a construction contractor for the project. The contractor will be responsible for implementing standard construction practices and best management practices (BMP) in accordance with FHWA's Standard Specifications for Construction of Roads and Bridges on Federal Highway Projects (FP-14) and Special Contract Requirements specific to this project, and for complying with applicable permits and authorizations, including the environmental commitments identified for this project.

The project is federally funded through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), with financing allocated from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. FHWA-CFLHD will be completing environmental studies and preparing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation for the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The approximately 8.13-acre project area largely consists of the existing Quincy Junction Road and road right-of-way (ROW). The project alignment intersects Greenhorn Creek, a perennial stream north of Mill Creek. The area is characterized by rural development with farmland at the north and south ends and coniferous forest in the middle. Elevation in the survey area is approximately 3,405 feet above sea level at the south end, 3,438 feet above sea level in the center, and 3,425 feet above sea level at the north end.

The topography along Quincy Junction Road is a graded road prism that runs through agricultural fields and meadows. Greenhorn Creek flows under a two-lane bridge to cross Quincy Junction Road. The topography along Greenhorn Creek is mostly steep earthen banks with some gravel bars. Downstream of the project area, the stream widens into a floodplain. Most of the upland portions of the project area are converted wet meadows and grasslands that are now maintained for pasture or agriculture.

Land use in the surrounding area is predominantly agriculture, rural residential development, and mountainous open space. The open grassland areas along Quincy Junction Road are actively managed pastures for grazing horses. The culvert that will be left in place at station 144+40 (Figure 2) flows into a manufactured stock pond to serve the pasturelands in the area. The U.S. Forest Service's Plumas National Forest boundary is about 0.25 mile north of the project area.

FINDINGS AND DETERMINATION

Plumas County conducted an Initial Study (attached) that determined that the proposed project could have significant environmental effects on biological resources. Implementation of specific mitigation measures identified below will avoid or mitigate the potentially significant environmental effects identified, and the preparation of an environmental impact report will not be required. If there are substantial changes that alter the character or impacts of the proposed project, another environmental impact determination will be necessary.

Prior to approval of the project, the lead agency may conclude, at a public hearing, that certain mitigation measures identified in the Mitigated Negative Declaration are infeasible or undesirable. In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15074.1, the lead agency may delete those mitigation measures and substitute other measures that it determines are equivalent or more effective. The lead agency would adopt written findings that the new measure(s) is(are) equivalent or more effective in mitigating or avoiding potential significant effects and that it would not cause any potentially significant effect on the environment.

- 1) Based on the whole record (including the Initial Study and any supporting documentation) and the mitigation measures incorporated into the project, Plumas County has determined that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.
- 2) The Mitigated Negative Declaration, with its supporting documentation, reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the lead agency, which is Plumas County.

DOCUMENTATION

The attached Initial Study documents the reasons to support the above determination.

MITIGATION MEASURES

The following mitigation measures (i.e., environmental commitments) will be incorporated into the project to minimize potential effects on biological resources.

EC-1: Environmentally sensitive area fencing. All environmentally sensitive areas to be avoided during project activities will be temporarily fenced off, as close to construction limits as possible. Fencing or flagging shall be high-visibility and left in place for the duration of the project. Environmentally sensitive areas include aquatic resources, riparian areas, or special-status species habitat. Exclusion fencing may serve two functions, exclusion of special-status species, and visual marker of the construction limits if it is high-visibility.

EC-2: Worker environmental awareness training. Prior to the start of any ground disturbance, a qualified biologist will conduct mandatory worker environmental awareness training for construction personnel to inform them of sensitive biological resources and site-specific protective measures required during construction activities. The training will be provided to all new construction personnel added to the project prior to starting work.

The training will include information on the special-status species with potential to occur in the project area, including species identification, life history and habitat requirements, regulatory status, and clear instructions on proper implementation of protection measures and the protocol to follow if a special-status species is found within the work area.

EC-3: Construction timing. The following operational limitations will apply to the project:

- Night lighting will not be used in the project area. All project activity will terminate 30 minutes before sunset and will not resume until 30 minutes after sunrise.
- Work in aquatic habitats will occur in the low flow season between July 15 and October 31.

EC-4: Aquatic species surveys and monitoring. A qualified biologist will conduct preconstruction surveys for NWPT and FYLF no more than two days prior to the start of ground-disturbing activities where suitable habitat exists. The biologist will survey the aquatic and riparian habitat within the project area, extending 500 feet upstream and downstream of the construction area as well as within an 80-foot buffer of each aquatic feature.

- If FYLF or NWPT (or their nests) are observed during preconstruction surveys or dewatering, a qualified biologist will be on-site to monitor construction in suitable habitat.
- If a NWPT or FYLF is observed within the designated work area, construction activities will cease until the animal leaves of its own volition. Under no circumstance will a NWPT or FYLF be harassed, captured, or relocated.
- If NWPT nests are identified in the work area during preconstruction surveys, a no-disturbance buffer will be established between the nest and any areas of potential disturbance. Buffers will be clearly marked with temporary fencing. Buffer size will be determined at the biologist's discretion. Construction will not be allowed to commence in the exclusion area until hatchlings have emerged from the nest, or the nest is deemed inactive by a qualified biologist.

EC-5: Exclusion fencing. Prior to commencement of project activities, exclusion fencing will be installed between the disturbance footprint and FYLF and NWPT suitable habitats. The exclusion fencing will be visibly different from construction fencing to denote the presence of sensitive habitats. In areas where appropriate, the environmentally sensitive area fencing may serve as wildlife exclusion fencing. When this is done, the fencing will be marked to show a difference in function. The exclusion fencing will be inspected daily during active work and after storm events to ensure that it is functional and without defects. The exclusion fencing will have the following properties:

- Opaque, non-climbable, and buried at least 6 inches deep.
- Properly installed, both trenched in and vertically stout, and regularly maintained to be effective.
- At least 3 feet in height.
- The top few inches of the exclusion fencing must be folded over and away from the construction area.
- Refuge opportunities in the form of fallen logs, leaf litter, or artificial cover boards should be placed along or near the outside of the exclusion fence.

EC-6: Entanglement/entrapment prevention.

- Plastic mono-filament netting or similar material will not be used.
- At the end of each working day, all excavated, steep-walled holes or trenches more than 1-foot-deep will be covered with plywood or similar material, or escape ramps (made from earthen fill or wood planks) will be installed.

EC-7: Dewatering. Culverts will be replaced in dry conditions. A qualified biologist will be onsite during active dewatering to ensure no FYLF or NWPT become stranded within the work area. If either species is encountered within the work area, it will be allowed to leave under its own power. If the individual does not leave the active work zone, USFWS will be contacted for guidance. Dewatering will proceed in the following manner:

- If the water depth in the channel is to the point where the bottom cannot be observed to visually exclude NWPT and FYLF confidently, the biologist will place a block net at the proposed location of one cofferdam and observe the area for 30 minutes. The block net will have a lead line that sinks completely to the bottom of the channel and will float to the top of the water column. After 30 minutes of allowing animals to disperse out of the area, placement of the cofferdams may continue. The block net will not be removed until both cofferdams are placed.
- Cofferdams will be constructed of a non-erodible material that does not contain soil or fine sediment. If imported fill must be used, only clean gravel is acceptable. The contractor will determine the final design of the cofferdams in accordance with the contract requirements.
- Cofferdams and stream diversions will remain in place and fully functional throughout the construction period. If the cofferdams are not functioning properly, they will be repaired immediately.
- Pumps used for dewatering will have appropriately sized screens to prevent the intake of aquatic species. Round openings in the screen will not exceed 3/32-inch diameter, square openings will not exceed 3/32-inch measured diagonally, and slotted openings will not exceed 0.069 inches in width. Approach velocity will not exceed 0.33 feet per second.

EC-8: Nesting bird and raptor surveys. If clearing and/or construction activities occur during the nesting season (February 1 to September 30), then preconstruction surveys to identify active bird nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 7 days prior to construction initiation, and for any lapse in project activities of 7 days or more in the nesting season. Surveys will determine the presence or absence of active nest sites within the following distances from the disturbance footprint:

- Passerines: Disturbance footprint only, or at the biologist's discretion
- Raptors: 500 feet, or within sight of the disturbance footprint, whichever is smaller
- Special-status Raptors: ½ mile, or within sight of the disturbance footprint, whichever is smaller.

If a lapse in project activities of 7 days or greater occurs for any reason during the bird nesting season, a qualified biologist will perform another survey for nesting birds prior to resuming project activities. If feasible, tree and vegetation clearing will be conducted outside the bird nesting season.

EC-9: Nest avoidance. If active nest sites are identified within the survey distances defined in the Nesting Bird and Raptor Surveys measure, a no-disturbance buffer shall be established for all active nest

sites prior to commencement of any project-related activities to avoid disturbances to nesting activities. A no-disturbance buffer constitutes a zone in which project-related activities such as vegetation removal, earth moving, and construction cannot occur. The size of no-disturbance buffers would be determined by a qualified biologist based on the species, activities in the vicinity of the nest, and topographic and other visual barriers.

EC-10: Bat clearance and avoidance. Prior to the start of construction activities, a qualified biologist will conduct a preconstruction survey for roosting bats at the existing culverts and around the Greenhorn Creek bridge, as well as a survey of large trees in the disturbance footprint that could provide suitable habitat for bats. The biologist will look for special-status bats and bat sign, including existing roost sites and bat guano deposits, and listen for roosting bats. If potential roosts are found, they will be fenced or flagged for avoidance. If roosts are found in areas that cannot be avoided, then these areas would be left unaffected until the individual(s) have left the area or until they can be relocated or excluded from the area by a qualified biologist in consultation with CDFW.

EC-11: Litter Prevention. All food-related trash items such as wrappers, cans, bottles, and food scraps will be disposed of in securely closed containers and removed at least once a week from the project area. On completion of construction activities, all temporary fill and construction refuse, including, but not limited to, broken equipment parts, wrapping material, cords, cables, wire, rope, strapping, twine, buckets, metal or plastic containers, and boxes, will be removed and appropriately disposed.

EC-12: Road closures. Coordinate with Plumas County on roadway closure and detour timing and provide notification to the public of expected roadway closures, delays, and detours.

EC-13: Northwestern pond turtle. Coordinate with the USFWS to monitor listing and conferencing status for the NWPT to ensure compliance coverage throughout project implementation.

PUBLIC REVIEW DISTRIBUTION

Draft copies or notice of this Mitigated Negative Declaration were distributed to:

- State Clearinghouse
- Plumas County Clerk
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife Region 2
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
- California Highway Patrol
- Native American Heritage Commission
- State Office of Historic Preservation
- All property owners within 300 feet of the project area boundary

PUBLIC REVIEW

- (X) Draft document referred for comments 8/4/25 – 9/5/25
Date
- () No comments were received during the public review period.
- () Comments were received but did not address the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration findings or the accuracy/completeness of the Initial Study. No response is necessary. The letters are attached.
- () Comments addressing the findings of the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration and/or accuracy or completeness of the Initial Study were received during the public review period. The letters and responses follow (see Attachment D, Response to Comments).

Copies of the Mitigated Negative Declaration, the Initial Study, documentation materials, and the Mitigation Monitoring Program may be obtained at the Department of Public Works, Plumas County, 1834 East Main Street, Quincy, CA 95971. Contact: Robert Thorman, Director, (530) 283-6268 or robthorman@countyofplumas.com

Date of Draft Report: _____ By: _____
 Name/Title: Robert Thorman, Director
 Plumas County Public Works Department

Date of Final Report: _____

Attachments:

- A. Project Location Map
- B. Initial Study
- C. Mitigation Monitoring and Environmental Commitment Program
- D. Comments and Response to Comments (if any)

ATTACHMENT A

Project Location Map

ATTACHMENT B

Initial Study

ATTACHMENT C

Mitigation Monitoring and Environmental Commitment Program

ATTACHMENT D

Comments and Response to Comments (if any)