



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION  
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 05/2020)**

**Project Information**

**Project Name (if applicable):**

**DIST-CO-RTE:** 05-MON-1

**PM/PM:** 60.0

**EA:** 05-1S160 and 1S040 **Federal-Aid Project Number:** 0524000176 and 0524000162

**Project Description:** On March 30, at post mile 60.0 on Highway 1 south of Rocky Creek Bridge, a slip out of material supporting the roadway occurred resulting in the undermining of the southbound lane. Emergency temporary stabilization was achieved by the installation of horizontal and vertical rock dowels with mesh reinforced shotcrete applied on the vertical face. One way traffic control was established using temporary railing and an automated traffic signal and will continue through permanent construction. The emergency project will continue with construction of a permanent structure consisting of a viaduct to restore the southbound lane and support the roadway with one lane of traffic in each direction. The emergency project will also include repairs to the concrete seawall at the base of the cliff to protect the southern abutment of the existing historic Rocky Creek Bridge and northern abutment of the future viaduct. See *continuation page for more Project Description.*

**Caltrans CEQA Determination** (Check one)

☐ **Not Applicable** – Caltrans is not the CEQA Lead Agency

☐ **Not Applicable** – Caltrans has prepared an IS or EIR under CEQA

Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, the project is:

☒ **X Exempt by Statute.** (PRC 21080[b]; 14 CCR 15260 et seq.)

☐ **Categorically Exempt. Class** Enter class. (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)

☐ No exceptions apply that would bar the use of a categorical exemption (PRC 21084 and 14 CCR 15300.2). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.

☐ **Covered by the Common Sense Exemption.** This project does not fall within an exempt class, but it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR 15061[b][3].)

**Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief**

Sunny McBride

Print Name

*Sunny McBride*

Signature

8/14/2024

Date

**Project Manager**

Chad Stoehr

Print Name

*Chad Stoehr*

Signature

8.14.2024

Date



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### **Caltrans NEPA Determination** (Check one)

Caltrans has determined that this project has no significant impacts on the environment as defined by NEPA, and that there are no unusual circumstances as described in 23 CFR 771.117(b). See [SER Chapter 30](#) for unusual circumstances. As such, the project is categorically excluded from the requirements to prepare an EA or EIS under NEPA and is included under the following:

X **23 USC 326:** Caltrans has been assigned, and hereby certifies that it has carried out the responsibility to make this determination pursuant to 23 USC 326 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated April 18, 2019, executed between FHWA and Caltrans. Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under:

☒ **23 CFR 771.117(c): activity (c)(9i)**

☐ **23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)(Enter activity number)**

☐ **Activity Enter activity number listed in Appendix A of the MOU between FHWA and Caltrans**

☐ **23 USC 327:** Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under 23 USC 327. The environmental review, consultation, and any other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 327 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated December 23, 2016 and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

### **Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief**

Sunny McBride

Print Name

*Sunny McBride*

Signature

8/14/2024

Date

### **Project Manager/ DLA Engineer**

Chad Stoehr

Print Name

*Chad Stoehr*

Signature

8.14.2024

Date



## CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION FORM

### **Continuation sheet:**

#### **Project Description** continued from page 1:

The emergency project will construct a permanent structure consisting of a full width, approximate 200-foot long, 3-span viaduct to support the roadway with one lane of traffic in each direction. The viaduct will be supported by two (2) abutments and two (2) bents, with cast-in-drilled-hole (CIDH) pile foundations and varying width soldier pile and lagging cutoff walls on the east side of the roadway. Current Caltrans standard ST-75 bridge railing will be installed on the ocean side of the viaduct.

#### **Avoidance and Minimization Measures**

##### **Cultural Measures:**

Because the project is located in the Carmel-San Simeon Highway Historic District, all work will need to take place in compliance with the Secretary of the Interiors Standards (SOIS) for the Treatment of Historic Properties Plan for the project.

##### **Biological Measures:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -Avoidance and Minimization Measures, and Mitigation for Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*):

1. Caltrans will avoid damage or removal of the Smith's blue butterfly host plants seacliff buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*) and coast buckwheat (*Eriogonum latifolium*), which are essential components of Smith's blue butterfly habitat and lifecycle.
2. Caltrans will avoid work between June 1 and September 15, when Smith's blue butterfly adults, eggs, and larvae may be present. Pupae may be present throughout the year, but are immobile and unlikely to be present far from their host plants.
3. Caltrans will ensure that only Service-approved biologists will participate in capture, handling, and monitoring of the Smith's blue butterfly, in all of its life stages, and the handling of host plants.
4. Caltrans will ensure that ground disturbance for maintenance or project activities will not begin within stands of host plants until a Service-approved biologist is on site.
5. For maintenance work or project activity within stands of buckwheat host plants, a Service-approved biologist will survey the work site no more than 30 days before the onset of ground disturbance. If any life stage of the Smith's blue butterfly or its host plants is found and is likely to be killed or injured by work activities, the approved biologist will be allowed sufficient time to relocate the buckwheat host plants, duff, and/or soil, from the site before work activities begin. The buckwheat host plants, duff, and/or soil will be hand removed and placed as close as possible to, but not on, living host plants. The Service-approved biologist will relocate the buckwheat host



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plants, duff, and/or soil the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and will not be affected by activities associated with the proposed project. The Service-approved biologist will maintain detailed records of the number and species of buckwheat host plants that are moved.

6. Before any maintenance or project activity work begins within stands of buckwheat host plants, a Service-approved biologist will provide training to all field personnel. At a minimum, the training will include a description of the Smith's blue butterfly and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the Smith's blue butterfly, and boundaries within which the project may be accomplished. Brochures, books, and briefings may be used in the training session, provided that a qualified person is on hand to answer any questions.
7. A Service-approved biologist will be present at the work site for maintenance or project activities within stands of buckwheat host plants until all Smith's blue butterflies and the host plants that are at risk due to project activities have been removed, workers have been instructed, and disturbance to habitat has been completed. After this time, the Service-approved biologist can designate a project activity monitor to ensure on-site compliance with all minimization measures. The Service-approved biologist will ensure that this monitor receives the training outlined in measure 6 and in the identification of the Smith's blue butterfly and its buckwheat host plants. If the monitor or the Service-approved biologist recommends that work be stopped because the Smith's blue butterfly or buckwheat host plants would be affected to a degree that exceeds the levels anticipated by the Service during review of the proposed action, they will notify the resident engineer (the engineer that is directly overseeing and in command of construction activities) immediately. The resident engineer will either resolve the situation by eliminating the unanticipated effect(s) immediately, or require that all actions causing these effects to be halted. If work is stopped, the Service will be notified as soon as is reasonably possible.
8. The seed or plant mix for revegetation efforts will include the appropriate Smith's blue butterfly host plant species. For revegetation, only seed collected from within the associated metapopulation of the Smith's blue butterfly and as close to the project site as possible shall be used for seeding or propagating container stock.
9. An assemblage of native species will be used for revegetation of project sites. Buckwheat host plants or seed will only be placed outside areas where ongoing vegetation management will occur. The spread of invasive weeds during revegetation efforts will be controlled according to the Vegetation Management Guidelines (California Department of Transportation 2002) developed as part of the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (California Department of Transportation 2004).
10. If herbicide is used, Smith's blue butterfly host plants will be protected with an overspray shield and a 10-foot no-spray buffer will be established around host plants.



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11. The number of access routes, size of staging areas, and the total area of the activity will be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project goal.  
Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be established to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction, and minimize the impact to Smith's blue butterfly and buckwheat host plants.
12. Caltrans will ensure that best management practices are implemented according to the most current approved guidelines to control erosion and sedimentation during and after project implementation. Under the California Interagency Noxious Weed Free Forage and Mulch Program (<http://pi.cdfa.gov/weed/wff>), California is taking steps to make noxious weed-free hay and straw widely available. Under this program, weed-free hay and straw bales would be used for erosion control measures when they become available.

### Mitigation for Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*):

Caltrans will provide compensation that meets the intent of the Service's mitigation policies (Service 2023a; Service 2023b). Caltrans will work with the Service through technical assistance to ensure that compensation proposed by Caltrans is consistent with Service policy. Special circumstances where alternate ratios may be required to meet the intent of the Service's mitigation policies include any impacts to suitable habitat for the Smith's blue butterfly regardless of the duration it takes to restore the habitat. Therefore, if Caltrans will impact Smith's blue butterfly or its host plants, Caltrans will coordinate with the Service's Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office for technical assistance (3:1 compensation ratio for host plants that are lost or degraded with at least 5 years of monitoring of restored habitat and adaptive management to ensure the success of restoration).

### **Visual Measures:**

#### Recommended Project Features

Implementation of the following project features would ensure that the project's visual effects are minimized and consistent with local, state, and national scenic values regarding Highway 1 along the Big Sur coast:

1. Preserve as much existing vegetation as possible. Prescriptive clearing and grubbing and grading techniques which save the most existing vegetation possible should be employed.
2. Revegetate all areas disturbed by the project including but not limited to temporary access roads, staging, and other areas with permanent erosion control using native plant species appropriate to each specific work location to be determined by District 5 Landscape Architecture and Caltrans Biology.



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3. Following construction, re-grade and re-contour any new construction access roads, staging areas and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding natural topography along Highway 1, avoid unnatural-appearing remnant landforms.
4. All visible concrete drainage elements including but not limited to headwalls, drain inlet aprons, etc. should be colored to blend with the surroundings and reduce reflectivity. The specific colors of these concrete elements shall be determined by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.
5. All visible metal components related to down drains and inlets, including but not limited to flared end sections (FES), connectors, anchorage systems, safety cable systems, etc. should be darkened or colored to blend with the surrounds and reduce reflectivity. The specific color shall be determined by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.
6. All visible rock slope protection (RSP) should be selected or stained to blend into the general color of the surrounding geology.
7. Repairs to the seawall should utilize materials that blend into the color of the surrounding geology as feasible.
8. The ST-75 bridge rail and related components shall be colored and/or darkened to blend with the natural setting. The specific color shall be determined by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.
9. The concrete wingwalls, end blocks, and curbs associated with the viaduct shall be colored with integral color. The specific color shall be determined by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture in coordination with Structures.
10. All metal roadside elements including but not limited to guardrail, guardrail transitions, and end treatments should be stained or darkened to be visually compatible with the rural setting. The color shall be determined and approved by District 5 Landscape Architecture.
11. The vertical wall piles should be colored and/or darkened to be visually compatible with the rural setting. The specific color shall be determined by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture in coordination with Structures.
12. If timber lagging is not used, then concrete lagging should be colored and/or darkened to blend with the surrounding hillside. The specific color shall be determined by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.
13. If overhead utility lines are affected by the project, then they shall be placed underground as required by the California Public Utilities Commission requirement under Public Utilities Code 320.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Ventura Field Office**  
**Avoidance and Minimization Measures, and Mitigation**  
**for**  
**Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*)**

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

1. Caltrans will avoid damage or removal of the Smith's blue butterfly host plants seac cliff buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*) and coast buckwheat (*Eriogonum latifolium*), which are essential components of Smith's blue butterfly habitat and lifecycle.
2. Caltrans will avoid work between June 1 and September 15, when Smith's blue butterfly adults, eggs, and larvae may be present. Pupae may be present throughout the year, but are immobile and unlikely to be present far from their host plants.
3. Caltrans will ensure that only Service-approved biologists will participate in capture, handling, and monitoring of the Smith's blue butterfly, in all of its life stages, and the handling of host plants.
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6. Before any maintenance or project activity work begins within stands of buckwheat host plants, a Service-approved biologist will provide training to all field personnel. At a minimum, the training will include a description of the Smith's blue butterfly and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the Smith's blue butterfly, and boundaries within which the project may be accomplished. Brochures, books, and briefings may be used in the training session, provided that a qualified person is on hand to answer any questions.
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instructed, and disturbance to habitat has been completed. After this time, the Service-approved biologist can designate a project activity monitor to ensure on-site compliance with all minimization measures. The Service-approved biologist will ensure that this monitor receives the training outlined in measure 6 and in the identification of the Smith's blue butterfly and its buckwheat host plants. If the monitor or the Service-approved biologist recommends that work be stopped because the Smith's blue butterfly or buckwheat host plants would be affected to a degree that exceeds the levels anticipated by the Service during review of the proposed action, they will notify the resident engineer (the engineer that is directly overseeing and in command of construction activities) immediately. The resident engineer will either resolve the situation by eliminating the unanticipated effect(s) immediately, or require that all actions causing these effects to be halted. If work is stopped, the Service will be notified as soon as is reasonably possible.

8. The seed or plant mix for revegetation efforts will include the appropriate Smith's blue butterfly host plant species. For revegetation, only seed collected from within the associated metapopulation of the Smith's blue butterfly and as close to the project site as possible shall be used for seeding or propagating container stock.
9. An assemblage of native species will be used for revegetation of project sites. Buckwheat host plants or seed will only be placed outside areas where ongoing vegetation management will occur. The spread of invasive weeds during revegetation efforts will be controlled according to the Vegetation Management Guidelines (California Department of Transportation 2002) developed as part of the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (California Department of Transportation 2004).
10. If herbicide is used, Smith's blue butterfly host plants will be protected with an overspray shield and a 10-foot no-spray buffer will be established around host plants.
11. The number of access routes, size of staging areas, and the total area of the activity will be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project goal. Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be established to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction, and minimize the impact to Smith's blue butterfly and buckwheat host plants.
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## Mitigation

Caltrans will provide compensation that meets the intent of the Service's mitigation policies (Service 2023a; Service 2023b). Caltrans will work with the Service through technical assistance to ensure that compensation proposed by Caltrans is consistent with Service policy.

Special circumstances where alternate ratios may be required to meet the intent of the Service's mitigation policies include any impacts to suitable habitat for the Smith's blue butterfly regardless of the duration it takes to restore the habitat. Therefore, if Caltrans will impact Smith's blue butterfly or its host plants, Caltrans will coordinate with the Service's Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office for technical assistance (3:1 compensation ratio for host plants that are lost or degraded with at least 5 years of monitoring of restored habitat and adaptive management to ensure the success of restoration).

## **Literature Cited**

California Department of Transportation. 2002. Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan Site Restoration Guidelines: Highway 1 in Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties. 11 pp. and appendices.

California Department of Transportation. 2004. Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan Guidelines for Vegetation Management. 43 pp. and appendices.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2023a. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Mitigation Policy Appendix 1, 501 FW 2. May 2023. Available:  
<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/policy/pdfs/FWS-Mitigation-Policy.pdf>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2023b. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Act Compensatory Mitigation Policy Appendix 1, 501 FW 3. May 2023. Available:  
<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/policy/pdfs/FWS-ESA-Compensatory-Mitigation-Policy.pdf>

## **APPENDIX B**

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### ***Smith's Blue Butterfly Protocols for Buckwheat Seed Collection, Seed Inspection, and Larva/Pupa Salvage***

## **Smith's Blue Butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*) Protocols for Buckwheat Seed Collection, Seed Inspection, and Larva/Pupa Salvage**

*The following protocols were designed to minimize the potential for collecting Smith's Blue Butterfly (SBB) larvae or pupae during the process of Eriogonum seed collection, and to identify best practices for salvaging any incidentally collected larvae or pupae, to avoid take of SBB in the process of dune restoration activities. Methods were detailed and employed in formal trainings and communications (June-August 2018) conducted by Dr. Richard (Dick) Arnold, permitted entomologist, for ecologist Thor Anderson. Upon the successful approval from USFWS for Thor Anderson to be authorized under Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office (VFWO) SBB Recovery Subpermit (TE-108507), all buckwheat seed collection will be conducted by Thor Anderson or by a qualified biologist under the supervision and oversight of Thor Anderson.*

### **Seed Collection Field Methods**

- Collection shall not begin until the SBB flight season ends and no adults are present. This is determined not by date, but repeated site surveys at the tail end of the SBB flight season (~ late August)
- The following materials shall be brought to the collection site (\*required):
  - \*cooler with ice pack
  - \*paper bags (small and large)
  - hand trowels
  - sieves
  - pruners
  - hand lens
  - white sheet
- Feet and knees shall remain outside of the dripline of *Eriogonum* individuals/stands during scouting and collection to avoid crushing pupae or fallen larvae
- Collection shall occur from plants with brown, dried seed heads or from sand dimples outside of the dripline of the plant (Flower heads containing white or pink flowers intact are more likely to contain SBB larvae. Piles of seed and debris within the plant canopy are more likely to contain SBB pupae and fallen larvae.)
- When collecting directly from the plant, the stem is held between fingers of the opposite hand so that the collecting hand can remove the seed head without damaging the plant
- When collecting from sand dimples, a hand trowel is lightly scraped over the sand as to avoid collecting any potentially buried pupae
- All collected materials shall be stored in paper bags, marked by area of the site for salvage identification, and kept in a cooler to prevent overheating of any incidentally collected larvae or pupae
- Materials collected in the field shall be transported to the nursery in a cooler or other temperature-controlled environment and inspected on the day of collection

### **Seed Inspection Protocol**

- All collected materials transported to the nursery from field collection shall be inspected on the day of collection to ensure that any incidentally collected SBB larvae or pupae are properly identified and stored for salvage in ventilated collection jars
- A couple of seed heads shall be preserved for the duration of the inspection for the purpose of storage of any pupae or larvae found
- Materials collected directly from plants shall be spread thinly in seed drying bins lined with white card stock for thorough inspection
- Materials collected from the soil may be run through sieves to separate sand from plant materials prior to inspection
- Seed heads that remain intact shall be carefully broken apart, starting at the base and pulling outward from the stem to avoid crushing the seed head and any potential pupae or larvae inside
- In the event that any Lycaenid pupae or larvae are found in the inspection, they shall be considered SBB, photographed and documented, placed on a temporarily preserved seed head or retained in the seed head they were found inside of, placed in a ventilated collection jar, and marked with the area of collection

### **Salvaged Pupa and/or Larva Return**

- Within 24 hours of incidental SBB larva or pupa collection, the specimens shall be returned to the noted collection area of the restoration site
- Ventilating collection jars shall be stored overnight in a temperature-controlled area with pupae or larvae sustained in appropriate cover
- At the time specimens are returned to the restoration site for salvage, care shall be taken to find a plant or stand that has sufficient cover – for larvae, a dense flower head with food available is necessary, and for pupae, abundant foliage at the base of the plant is ideal
- Larvae shall be placed gently on a flower head in such a way that it is capable of grasping on to steady itself, this may mean parting the flower head open to assist the caterpillar grasp flowers
- Pupae shall be buried about one inch under the soil, near lower foliage of plants, within the dripline