



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 06/2022)**

Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): Gray Creek Deck Replacement Project– Geotechnical Activities

DIST-CO-RTE: 02-TRI-299

PM/PM: 6.26-6.5

EA: 02-2J7630

Federal-Aid Project Number: 0221000119

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) plans to conduct a geotechnical investigation on State Route (SR) 299 in Trinity County between postmiles 6.26 and 6.50.

See Continuation Sheet.

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:

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

☒ **Categorically Exempt. §15306 Class 6 (Information Collection).** (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

Julie McFall

Julie McFall

06/11/2026

Print Name

Signature

Date

Project Manager

Alyson Sinclair

Alyson Sinclair
Alyson Sinclair (Jun 12, 2026 09:12:26 PDT)

06/12/2026

Print Name

Signature

Date

Caltrans NEPA Determination (Check one)

☒ **Not Applicable**



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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:

☐ **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, 2022, executed between FHWA and Caltrans. Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under:

☐ **23 CFR 771.117(c): activity (c)**

☐ **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 May 27, 2022, and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

N/A

Print Name

N/A

Signature

N/A

Date

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

N/A

Print Name

N/A

Signature

N/A

Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): N/A

Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 06/10/26

Briefly list environmental commitments on continuation sheet if needed (i.e., not necessary if included on an attached ECR). Reference additional information, as appropriate (e.g., additional studies and design conditions).



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Continuation sheet:

The proposed geotechnical site investigation includes the use of hollow stem auger and mud rotary borings, borehole geophysics, and seismic refraction lines. Twelve borings are planned to be drilled during the site investigation. Three of the boreholes will have piezometers installed to monitor groundwater levels over an extended period of time. Borehole geophysics will be performed in select borings, including Acoustic Televiewer, P-S Suspension Logging, and P-Wave Sonic if necessary. However, if difficult drilling conditions occur (such as loss of borehole fluid or caving), borehole geophysics may be infeasible. Five seismic refraction lines will be performed, two of which are anticipated to include Multichannel Analysis of Surface Waves (MASW) and/or S-Wave Refraction.

Purpose

The purpose of the geotechnical investigation is to collect data on subsurface conditions at this location.

Need

The geotechnical investigation is needed to investigate subgrade conditions for design and construction purposes.

Soil and Rock Sampling Methods

The borings will be drilled using hollow stem auger, mud rotary, and diamond core drilling methods.

Drilling Operation

Caltrans Drilling Services and/or consultant contract drill crews will drill the borings. A combination of truck-mounted and track-mounted all-terrain drill rigs will be utilized for the geotechnical drilling on the roadway. Support equipment for on-roadway drilling operations includes water trucks (one to three anticipated), a crew-cab and trailer for the drilling crew, and one to three vehicles for the geologists/engineers. Borehole geophysics operations will also require one to two vehicles when being performed. A track-mounted all-terrain drill rig will be utilized for the geotechnical drilling off the roadway. In addition to equipment that is used for on-roadway drilling, off-roadway drilling operations may also include other miscellaneous equipment (e.g., water totes, pallets of tools, bags of cement and bentonite). Some equipment will likely be staged in a lane closure during off-road operations.

Drilling Methods

Hollow stem auger and mud rotary drilling methods will be used to drill the borings. A hollow stem auger will be used at select borings, which advances cuttings to the surface along reverse auger flights without the use of drilling fluid.



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The cuttings are then placed into 55-gallon drums by drilling personnel. The lack of drilling fluid allows for more accurate assessment of when groundwater is encountered in the boring (when compared to mud rotary drilling methods). When groundwater or bedrock is encountered, the drilling method will be switched to mud rotary. Mud rotary drilling methods include the use of conventional uncased, self-cased wireline or rotary coring systems, all with the use of water-based drilling fluid (typically a bentonite, polymer, or combination of bentonite and polymer slurry). Drilling fluid is contained and recirculated through a closed system utilizing drill rods and a mud tank. The mud tank will be positioned on the ground surface and serves as a settlement tank for the soil cuttings, which are periodically removed and placed in 55-gallon steel drums. Once the desired boring depth has been reached, the borings will be tremie grouted from bottom up to displace the drilling fluid back into the mud tank. The drilling fluid and water will then be pumped from the mud tank into 55-gallon steel drums. The drums will be disposed of offsite per local and state regulations.

Borings requiring borehole geophysics will be flushed with clean water and maintained in an open state until geophysics operations have been completed, which is necessary to place the P-S Suspension Logging, P-Wave Sonic, and Acoustic Televiewer instruments into the borehole. Piezometers will be installed at on-and off-road boring locations per local enforcing agency (LEA), Trinity County Environmental Health Division, and state regulations. The piezometers will be periodically accessed by Caltrans personnel (on the order of monthly) to obtain groundwater data. Once data is acquired, drilling equipment similar to that used to initially drill the borings will be remobilized to these locations to destroy the piezometers, which will be done per LEA and state regulations. This work is currently anticipated to occur during the summer of 2028.

Upon completion of each borehole, the holes will be tremie backfilled with cement grout, bentonite, or a combination of the two per LEA and state regulations.

Drilling Equipment Access

The borings will be drilled at locations that are on and off the SR-299 roadway surface. Borings drilled off the roadway will be accessed by either constructing an earthen ramp or placing a timber mat ramp at the base of the SPGA wall adjacent to the western end of the bridge. The guardrail and chain link fence between SR-299 and the retaining wall will be temporarily removed over a length of approximately 30 feet, which will be closed off by k-rail and corresponding crash cushions while not protected by a lane closure. Minor grading may be necessary at boring locations to allow for safe operation of the drilling equipment. A work areas will be cleared of all brush for safety. The equipment anticipated to be used will consist of a skid steer or mini excavator with a masticator attachment.



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Seismic Refraction Lines

Seismic Refraction Lines (SRLs) are performed by placing geophones and seismographs at regular intervals along a line, which then measure seismic waves that are created from an impact source. The impact source may be a sledgehammer, shotgun shells, or small explosive charges (depending on site conditions).

Seismic Refraction Line Access

The SRLs will be performed at locations that are on and off the SR-299 roadway surface.

Select SRLs performed off the roadway will be accessed via rope access techniques, by personnel who are certified Caltrans climbers. Vegetation trimming and duff clearing will be required to layout the seismic refraction lines and place geophones onto bare soil for a zone of approximately 5 feet wide and 1 ft by 1 ft areas, respectively. Vegetation trimming will be limited to only that which is necessary to place the seismic refraction lines. A masticator will grind the vegetation into mulch that will remain on site. Hand trimmed vegetation will either be mulched and left onsite or removed from the site if required. Vehicle access is not necessary to perform this work.

Working Hours and Days

All work is expected to occur during daytime hours (approximately 8:00 am to 6:00 pm). Due to the remoteness of the site, work will likely be performed on weekends as well as weekdays, to increase the efficiency of the site investigation work and reduce time lost from travel to and from the project site. Typical work period for these operations are approximately 10 days on, 4 days off, and subject to change based on operational needs.

Depending on the availability of drilling equipment and personnel, the drilling operations are expected to occur over 6 to 12 weeks. Up to three drill rigs may be used during drilling operations (anticipated two on the roadway, one off the roadway concurrently). The seismic refraction lines are expected to take 2 to 3 weeks to complete, which will be performed during a separate operation from the drilling work.

Destruction of the piezometers is anticipated to take 3 weeks to complete, which is expected to be performed in the summer of 2028. In the event the project is shelved, the piezometers will be destroyed at the time the project is shelved to ensure compliance with LEA and state regulations.



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Right of Way

No R/W will be acquired for the purpose of Geotechnical surveys. Boring will take place in Caltrans R/W and Seismic Refraction Lines will take place in Caltrans R/W and on private property. A temporary construction easement will be needed for work on private property.

Permits

A boring permit(s) will be obtained from the LEA, Trinity County Environmental Health Division. All borings will be backfilled per the LEA permit requirements and state regulations.

Traffic Control

Traffic control will consist of a lane closure with a pilot car.

Staging/Stockpiling

Equipment and vehicles will be staged just off the roadway. Trimmed vegetation will be ground into mulch that will remain on site.

Coordination/Consultation

To identify potential cultural and biological resources, Caltrans staff conducted a review of internal and external agency resource records and databases.

Utilities

All utility conversations will be coordinated with Caltrans Right of Way.

Disposal/Borrow Sites

No spoils are generated by this work. All materials brought on site are removed when work is completed. The geotechnical investigation does not require the use of a borrow site.

02-2J630 Geotech CE-CE 061026

Final Audit Report

2026-06-12

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