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October 26, 2026

Jason Roberts, Regional Manager
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
601 Locust Street
Redding, CA 96001

SUBJECT: Scott River Bridge Project (Project) Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/PMND) and Proposed Section 4(f) de Minimis Determination, State Clearinghouse Number 2026090391

Dear Jason Roberts,

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) would like to thank you for participating in the project delivery process for the Scott River Bridge Project by providing written comments. Your comments are important to us because they help inform the project team, refine the project scope, and reveal and highlight aspects of special concern. Your comment and Caltrans' response are below.

Comment 1: Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement
The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) requires a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Notification (Fish and Game Code Section 1600) for project activities affecting river, lakes, or streams and associated riparian habitat. CDFW may not execute a final LSA Agreement until it has considered the final Mitigated Negative Declaration and complies with its responsibilities as a responsible agency under CEQA.

Response 1: Caltrans will obtain a CDFW Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement prior to construction for work within and adjacent to the Scott River.

Comment 2: California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA)
"Take" of plants or animals listed under CESA or the NPPA during construction or over the life of the Project without authorization from CDFW would be a violation of Fish and Game Code section 2080. If the Project has the potential to impact CESA or NPPA listed species, early consultation with CDFW is highly encouraged, as modification to the Project may be required to minimize and fully mitigate impacts of the project. Issuance of an incidental take permit is subject to CEQA documentation; the CEQA document must specify impacts, mitigation measures, and a mitigation monitoring and reporting program. CEQA requires a Mandatory Finding of Significance if a Project is likely to substantially impact threatened or endangered species.

Response 2: As discussed in Section 2.4, Biological Resources, of the Initial Study, the project may result in "take" of SONCC coho salmon, a state threatened species. Per CESA, impacts to SONCC coho salmon were analyzed within the CEQA document and Caltrans found that the project would not have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on SONCC coho salmon or any other threatened or endangered species and impacts would be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation. A mitigation, monitoring, and reporting program was prepared.

As outlined in Chapter 3, Agency and Public Coordination, Caltrans consulted with Dr. Rich Lis, a CDFW Biologist, regarding the project and species observed. Consultation with CDFW will continue to address the potential take of coho salmon.

Comment 3: Fully Protected Species
Specified types of infrastructure projects may be eligible for an incidental take permit for unavoidable impacts to fully protected species if certain conditions are met. Project proponents should consult with CDFW early in the project planning process.

Response 3: As discussed in Section 2.4, Biological Resources, it is anticipated that the project would have no take of CDFW fully protected species. As outlined in Chapter 3, Agency and Public Coordination, Caltrans consulted with Dr. Rich Lis, a CDFW Biologist, regarding the project and species observed. Consultation with CDFW will continue to address impacts to species with the potential to occur on site.

Comment 4: Biological Resources - CESA Listed Candidate Bumble Bees
Surveys prior to Project approval are particularly important for CESA-listed species like the Western bumble bee and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee as these species have the potential to occur in the Project area during all life-cycle phases/year-round. Impacts to a CESA-listed species may trigger a mandatory finding of significance.

CDFW acknowledges that pre-project surveys have been completed for bumble bees; however, bumble bees are transient and CDFW recommends that surveys be conducted for the three candidate species (Franklin's bumble bee, Western bumble bee, and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee) in the year prior to construction beginning and in the spring prior to ground disturbing activities to verify that no colonies have established within the planned construction area.

Response 4: As discussed in Section 2.4, Biological Resources, visual surveys for bumble bees, potential nesting habitat, and active nests were conducted in the summer throughout the Environmental Study Limits (ESL). Franklin's bumble bee, Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee, and Western bumble bee were not observed. No rodent burrows or other potential nesting areas were observed in the ground disturbance footprint. Furthermore, it is not anticipated that bumble bee queens would hibernate in the ESL, as the majority of the area has flowing water and associated floodplains which are not considered suitable habitat for bumble bees.

Caltrans will continue to conduct visual surveys for potential bumblebee nests prior to construction. If any potential suitable habitat for bumblebee nests is observed, a pre-construction bumblebee nest survey would be conducted in the spring prior to ground disturbance by a contractor supplied biologist.

Comment 5: Biological Resources - CESA Listed and Special Status Salmonids
Proposed mitigation measures outlined in the document are adequate for the purposes of CEQA analysis and CDFW understands that these will be supplemented through federal Endangered Species Act consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and with further coordination with CDFW during CESA permitting.

Response 5: Comment noted. Consultation with CDFW and NMFS will continue during CESA permitting.

Comment 6: Biological Resources - Birds and Bats Exclusion and Mitigation
The plans to develop bird and bat exclusion plans, as outlined in Mitigation Measure BR-1, B (Birds) and BR-1, D (Bats) are adequate and CDFW will request to review these plans as part of a Lake and Stream Alteration Notification that will be prepared and submitted by the Project proponent to CDFW. The Project proponent's plan to install a total of eight concrete Oregon wedge bat boxes and wood bat boxes on the new Scott River Bridge is an excellent proposal to continue the established use of bats on the current bridge into the future. CDFW will be coordinating with the Project proponent to review future details of these plans as they are developed.

Response 6: Comment noted. Caltrans will continue consultation with CDFW during permitting.

Comment 7: Biological Resources - Aquatic Species Relocation Plan
The proposal to develop an Aquatic Species Relocation Plan is recommended by CDFW and should be included as a proposed condition of a Lake and Streambed Alteration Notification for the Project.

Response 7: Comment noted. Caltrans will provide an Aquatic Species Relocation Plan (for salmonids, amphibians, and mollusks) to CDFW prior to in-stream work.

Comment 8: Biological Resources - Wildlife Crossing Coordination
CDFW has been working with the Project proponent on proposed design elements to ensure that the new bridge facilitates the movement of wildlife under the bridge and along the Scott River. CDFW appreciates the excellent coordination with the Project proponent to date and looks forward to continued coordination on this project.

Response 8: Comment noted. Caltrans will continue consultation with CDFW during permitting.

Comment 9: Environmental Data
Please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to CNDDB.

Response 9: Comment noted. Caltrans will report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to CNDDB.

Comment 10: Environmental Document Filing Fees

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of environmental document filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW.

Response 10: Comment noted. Caltrans will pay the document filing fee upon filing the Notice of Determination.

If you need additional information, please contact me at (530) 941-3340 or keith.pelfrey@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Keith Pelfrey

Keith Pelfrey
Environmental Branch Chief
Caltrans North Region Environmental

02_0H730 CDFW Response Letter 102626

Final Audit Report 2026-10-27

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