



United States Department of the Interior



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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-2605
Sacramento, California 95825-1846

JUL 20 2017

Ms. Laura Loeffler
Chief, Environmental Management, M-1
California Department of Transportation, District 3
703 B Street
Marysville, California 95901

Subject: Informal Consultation on the Proposed Bridgeport Covered Bridge Rehabilitation Project, Nevada County, California

Dear Ms. Loeffler:

This letter is in response to your July 7, 2017, letter and supporting documentation to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) requesting our concurrence that the proposed Bridgeport Covered Bridge Rehabilitation Project (proposed project) may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect federally-listed species. Your letter was received on July 11, 2017. The proposed project is located in South Yuba River State Park, Nevada County, California and intends to perform necessary repairs to remove the temporary non-historic bridge stabilization features, to allow access to the public, and to preserve the bridge for the enjoyment of future generations. At issue are the proposed project's potential effects on the federally-threatened California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*, CRLF). There is no proposed or designated critical habitat in or adjacent to the proposed project area. Our primary concern and mandate is the protection of federally-listed species pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) (Act).

We have reviewed the proposed project, including: (1) the July 7, 2017, letter from California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to the Service requesting informal consultation; (2) the *Bridgeport Covered Bridge Rehabilitation Project Biological Assessment* (Biological Assessment) prepared by California State Parks (CSP) and dated April 2017; and (3) other information available to the Service.

The proposed project's action area encompasses the Bridgeport Covered Bridge (Bridge), a 100-foot radius surrounding the Bridge, and all access roads and staging areas. The Bridge crosses over the South Yuba River approximately one river-mile upstream from the upper extent of Englebright Reservoir. The action area is within a high use recreational area of South Yuba State Park. The Bridge is listed as a resource on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2014, it was determined that the Bridge was unstable and required immediate stabilization to prevent imminent collapse. At that time, emergency repairs were performed to temporarily stabilize the Bridge and public access was closed.

The proposed project includes removal of the existing, non-historical stabilization structures, addition of permanent stabilization measures replicated in-kind, and accessibility improvements. Pre-

construction site preparation will include minor vegetation trimming on a portion of the existing access road and installation of construction fencing along access roads. Vegetation removal is not proposed within the floodplain. Construction will be restricted to approximately June through November, when water levels will be at their lowest; no work is proposed within the low-flow channel. In order to rehabilitate the historic bridge and restore full public access, Caltrans, in conjunction with CSP, proposes the following actions:

- Bridge abutment modification;
- Install micropiles on the bridge abutments;
- Bridge rehabilitation work, in-kind to maintain historic fabric;
- Install accessible parking spaces in front of existing access to south side of bridge;
- Install an aggregate base to both north and south bridge entrances;
- Improve accessibility in the bridge by installing mobi-mat®;
- Reconstruct an already existing accessible path between accessible parking spaces and the bridge; the existing asphalt will be replaced with Portland concrete;
- Remove temporary bridge shoring structures and all temporary construction devices.

CSP staff conducted a survey on January 6, 2017 to evaluate the physical and biological habitat features of the action area. This survey was not a protocol CRLF survey. The general field survey revealed a lack of suitable CRLF breeding habitat within the action area. At the time of the survey, the floodplain was inundated with flowing water. The action area lacks pools, ponds, marshes or lagoons that CRLF tend to utilize for breeding. While CRLF can breed in stream-like habitats, it is likely that water flow during breeding season would be too fast to support CRLF breeding. This section of the South Yuba River generally lacks emergent or overhanging riparian vegetation that can either act as oviposition sites or refugia for tadpoles and adults. No CRLF have been recorded to occur within or near the action area. The nearest recorded CRLF observation is approximately 9.48 miles from the bridge and was recorded in 2003 (Little Oregon Creek, Plumas National Forest). Due to the lack of breeding habitat within the action area and the significant distance to other known CRLF populations, it is unlikely CRLF occur in the project area.

While it is unlikely that CRLF occur in the action area, Caltrans and CSP propose the following conservation measures to further reduce the likelihood of adversely affecting CRLF:

1. No water diversion is required during construction. Temporary shoring stabilization within the South Yuba River floodplain will be restricted to approximately June through November. Construction will not encroach into the low-flow channel of the river at any time.
2. CSP will cease all construction activities if measureable rain event with 20% or greater probability is predicted within 24 hours. CSP defines “measurable rain” as any rainfall that can be detected.
3. Best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented during construction to minimize the likelihood of impacts to aquatic habitat in the South Yuba River. These practices include sediment-control measures to minimize erosion, concrete-containment measures, fueling and maintenance of heavy machinery away from the river and sensitive habitats. Additional BMPs include sand-bag berms and installing straw-bale barriers and silt fences as necessary

to prevent runoff from entering the river. These sediment-control measures will be inspected at least daily during extended storm events and will remain in place until runoff, if present, from the work area is clear of sediment.

4. During construction operations, stockpiling of materials, portable equipment, vehicles, and supplies will be restricted to the designated construction staging areas and all operations will be confined to the minimal area necessary. Ground disturbance in the floodplain is limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project goal.
5. The floodplain will be restored to its original condition and configuration to the maximum extent feasible. The pea gravel – used during stabilization of the bridge support towers – will be removed prior to project completion.
6. A Final Construction Monitoring Report will be submitted to the Service one month after the project is complete.
7. A CPS Environmental Scientist or approved biologist will be present during drilling activities.
8. Access roads shall be clearly delineated with construction fencing such that construction personnel and equipment will not impact any resource outside of the action area.
9. Other measures as described in the Biological Assessment.

After reviewing all available information, the Service concurs with your determination that the proposed project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* the California red-legged frog. We came to this conclusion based on the following reasons: (1) the action area does not contain suitable CRLF breeding habitat due to high velocity water flow, lack of pools and ponds, and lack of emergent or overhanging vegetation; (2) the nearest known CRLF occurrence is over 9 miles from the action area; and (3) while it is unlikely that CRLF occur in the action area, the proposed conservation measures further reduce the risk of CRLF being adversely affected by the proposed actions. Therefore, unless new information reveals effects of the proposed action that may affect listed species in a manner or to an extent not considered, or a new species or critical habitat is designated that may be affected by the proposed action, no further action pursuant to the Act is necessary.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence for the proposed Bridgeport Covered Bridge Rehabilitation Project, please contact Ian Vogel, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, by email at ian_vogel@fws.gov or by phone at (916) 414-6444, or myself by email at richard_kuyper@fws.gov; by phone at (916) 414-6621; or at the letterhead address.

Sincerely,



Rick Kuyper
Chief, Sierra-Cascades Division