



Project Name: Albion River Bridge Project
DIST-CO-RTE-PM: 01-MEN-1-PM 43.3/44.2
EA: 01-40110
EFIS ID: 0100000154

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FINDINGS**

FOR

**THE ALBION RIVER BRIDGE PROJECT THAT WOULD REPLACE THE ALBION
RIVER BRIDGE ON STATE ROUTE 1 BETWEEN POST MILES 43.3 AND 44.2
IN MENDOCINO COUNTY**

The following information is presented to comply with State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15091) and the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations (Title 21, California Code of Regulations, Division 2, Chapter 11, Section 1501 et seq.). Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

The following effects have been identified in the EIR as resulting from the project. Effects found not to be significant have not been included.

Aesthetics

Adverse Environmental Effects:

The Albion River Bridge is considered a scenic resource in views from the surrounding areas, which would be significantly affected by its removal.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

The project would significantly affect aesthetics due to removal of the Albion River Bridge. All project build alternatives identified in the EIR would replace the bridge, and

the no-build alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the project; there were no feasible alternatives to avoid aesthetic impacts. The arch design of the preferred alternative (Design Option 2B) provides architectural interest, forms a gateway between Albion Cove and Albion Flat, and fits into the natural setting by mimicking the curve of adjacent hills. However, the new bridge would not replace the aesthetic qualities of the existing bridge, even with the inclusion of mitigation measures AMM-AR-1 through AMM-AR-6 (described below). Therefore, though mitigation measures have been incorporated, impacts to aesthetics would remain significant and unavoidable. See the Statement of Overriding Considerations prepared for the project for the specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, and other benefits of the project that outweigh this significant and unavoidable impact.

- **AMM-AR-1:** The potential for glare would be avoided or minimized through the selection of materials and finishes used for bridge construction.
- **AMM-AR-2:** Aesthetic treatment, such as color and pedestrian railing design, would be applied to the bridge railing to increase its visual compatibility.
- **AMM-AR-3:** Bridge structures, such as retaining walls and wing walls, would be aesthetically treated with color, texture, and/or patterns to increase the project's visual compatibility with the surrounding environment.
- **AMM-AR-4:** All disturbed soil areas that were previously vegetated, including temporary access roads, construction easements, and staging areas, would be restored to a natural contour. Disturbed slopes 2:1 and flatter would be planted and seeded with regionally appropriate California native species plants. Steeper disturbed slopes would be seeded with regionally appropriate California native species plants. No native plantings at their mature height may block existing views.
- **AMM-AR-5:** Albion Campground facilities, such as but not limited to, grass, gravel, and hookups, would be restored, or replaced to their original condition if disturbed by construction activities.
- **AMM-AR-6:** Caltrans would work with community members to offset the project's effects on scenic views, through the incorporation of community input into the identification and design of landscape amenities to enhance views and provide opportunities for passive recreation.

Biological Resources: Special-Status Animal Species

Adverse Environmental Effects:

A variety of special status animal species may be in the project area and could be directly and/or indirectly impacted by the project, resulting in potentially significant impacts. Species include marine mammals protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, (non-listed gray whale [*Eschrichtius robustus*], harbor porpoise

[*Phocoena phocoena*], common bottlenose dolphin [*Tursiops truncatus*], northern elephant seal [*Mirounga angustirostris*], and California sea lion [*Zalophus californianus*] as well as federally endangered humpback whale [*Megaptera novaeangliae*] and southern resident killer whale [*Orcinus orca*] and killer whale critical habitat), federally endangered leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), federally threatened and state endangered marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), federally threatened California Coastal (CC) Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) of Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), federally and state endangered Central California Coast (CCC) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), federally threatened Southern DPS of green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*), and federally threatened Northern California (NC) DPS of steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*).

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

The project may significantly affect the species above. To lessen and avoid potential impacts on marine mammals, leatherback sea turtle, and marbled murrelet, which would primarily be through hydroacoustic sound, AMM-BR-6 would be implemented. To reduce impacts to fish species, AMM-BR-10 would be implemented to pursue offsite mitigation to offset impacts to fish. With the implementation of these measures, impacts to these species would be reduced to a less than significant level.

- **AMM-BR-6:** A Marine Animal Monitoring Plan (MAMP) would be developed and implemented for marbled murrelets, sea turtles and marine mammals other than Pacific harbor seal. A biological monitor would be present to monitor for these species during all construction activities that have the potential to produce impulsive hammering sounds within the Albion River channel or Albion Cove, including any vibratory or percussive pile installation, hoe-ramming, or jackhammering. The MAMP would be prepared prior to construction and would include adaptive measures, such as defining a safety zone around in-river activities specific to species or hearing groups. To minimize exposure to marine animals and possible harm from construction activities, no impact pile driving would be initiated when marine animals are detected within their respective safety zone. In addition, during impact driving, when a marine mammal is detected through on-site monitoring within an identified safety zone, or is about to enter its respective safety zone, pile driving or demolition work would be halted and not resumed until the animal was seen to leave the safety zone on its own, or 30 minutes had elapsed since the animal was last seen.

- **AMM-BR-10:** Caltrans would pursue feasible mitigation opportunities to offset impacts to federally and state listed fish species at mitigation ratios to be identified in applicable permit(s). Potential options include funding of habitat complexity improvements or salmonid recovery projects within the area.

Improving habitat complexity would involve working with potential partners to improve portions of the Albion River within the project area. This could include adding large woody debris upstream to increase in-stream complexity and cover for migrating fish and/or rearing juveniles (depending on location) and potentially bioengineering the rock wall within portions of the Albion Campground. It could also include removal of the southern pier that falls within the Albion River for the current bridge, which would add available streambed area within the channel.

Alternatively, impacts could be addressed by partially funding an important salmonid recovery project within the Albion basin or the surrounding HUC 10 watershed.

Potential partners for fish mitigation projects (fish passage and/or habitat restoration/enhancements) in the Albion River or nearby systems (e.g., Navarro River) include, but may not be limited to: The Nature Conservancy, Mendocino Redwood Company, Trout Unlimited, Inc., and The Conservation Fund.

Biological Resources: Natural Communities

Adverse Environmental Effects:

Sensitive Natural Communities (SNCs), wetlands, and eelgrass Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) (which are also SNCs), are in the project area and would be directly and/or indirectly impacted by project activities, resulting in potentially significant impacts.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

The project has the potential for significant impacts to SNCs, wetlands, and HAPC. To avoid and/or reduce impacts to these resources, measures AMM-BR-1, AMM-BR-2, AMM-BR-3, AMM-BR-4, AMM-BR-9 would be implemented. With the incorporation of these measures (described below), impacts to SNCs, wetlands, and HAPC would be reduced to a less than significant level.

- **AMM-BR-1:** Caltrans proposes to compensate for permanent impacts to sensitive natural communities by purchasing credits from the Mendocino Coast Mitigation Bank and/or participating in off-site mitigation. The appropriate credit ratios would be identified and coordinated through the CCC, USACE, NCRWQCB, CDFW, and any other administering agencies during the permitting phase of the project. Caltrans anticipates mitigation credits to be available prior to project impacts; therefore, a mitigation ratio of approximately 1:1 to 2:1 is expected. Alternatively, a minimum ratio of 3:1 would be proposed for restoration and/or preservation at an off-site location.
- **AMM-BR-2:** Soil (sand) protection timber crane mats would be deployed when working adjacent to the channel or below high tide line at low tide, and temporary trestle piles and permanent bridge foundations would be placed outside of eelgrass habitat, where feasible.
- **AMM-BR-3:** When feasible, temporary trestle piles would be installed and removed during outgoing tides to deflect turbidity away from upstream eelgrass beds.
- **AMM-BR-4:** Wetlands and other waters temporarily disturbed would be restored to their natural contours for revegetation.
- **AMM-BR-8:** To ensure “no net loss” of seagrass (surfgrass and eelgrass), all necessary standards outlined in the California Eelgrass Mitigation Policy (CEMP) would be followed. This includes the development of a comprehensive mitigation and monitoring plan and associated pre- and post-construction surveys.

If temporarily impacted areas of seagrass do not restore naturally within an agreed-upon timeframe (to be determined during permitting), then adaptive mitigation measures may be implemented. Restoration efforts would likely take the form of infilling gaps within remaining eelgrass patches. If an impact is determined to have occurred as a result of project construction, any gaps that have developed between the pre- and post-construction surveys that are greater than 1 meter across would be planted. If determined necessary, Caltrans would pursue on-site mitigation with a final minimum restoration ratio of 1.2:1. If there are permanent impacts, then Caltrans would mitigate with a final restoration ratio achieving a minimum of 2:1. Restoration options to offset permanent impacts would be developed in coordination with CDFW and NMFS and could include funding of in-stream efforts within the project area or upstream that increase potential habitat area by removing existing structures currently shading or occupying potential habitat areas (e.g., old wood and concrete piers and/or docks).

- **AMM-BR-9:** Caltrans proposes to compensate for permanent impacts to aquatic resources by purchasing credits from the Mendocino Coast Mitigation Bank and/or participating in off-site mitigation. The appropriate credit ratios would be identified and coordinated through consultation with regulatory agencies during the permitting phase of the project. Caltrans anticipates mitigation credits to be available prior to project impacts; therefore, a mitigation ratio of approximately

1:1 to 2:1 is expected. Alternatively, a minimum ratio of 3:1 would be proposed for restoration and/or preservation of aquatic resources at an off-site location.

Cultural Resources: Albion River Bridge

Adverse Environmental Effects:

The Albion River Bridge, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Resources, would be removed by the project, which results in a Finding of Adverse Effect under 36 CFR Section 800.5(a)(1) and represents a significant impact.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

The project would have a significant impact on the Albion River Bridge due to its removal. All project build alternatives identified in the EIR would replace the bridge, and the no build alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the project; therefore, there were no feasible alternatives that would avoid effects to the bridge. AMM-CR-3 (described below) would be implemented to address the adverse effects to the bridge. However, even with implementation of mitigation, the effects would remain significant and unavoidable. See the Statement of Overriding Considerations prepared for the project for the specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, and other benefits of the project that outweigh this significant and unavoidable impact.

- **AMM-CR-3:** To address adverse effects to the historic bridge, Caltrans would initiate historic bridge recordation using Level I or II Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation, with copies held at local historical repositories and made available to the public. The HAER documentation would follow National Park Service guidelines for formal archival documentation, which consists of measured and interpretive drawings, historical reports, and large-format photographs.

Additional treatment measures to address adverse effects include:

1. An interpretive exhibit near or on the new bridge. The exhibit would include interpretive panels and one model to scale of the Albion River Bridge. The interpretive panels would focus on the history of the Albion River Bridge.
2. A short documentary film that would document the evolution and construction of the Albion River Bridge and the greater Albion community.

The film would be available for viewing on a Caltrans supported website and be made available for educational and interpretive purposes by the public.

3. A model to scale of the existing Albion River Bridge would be developed; the three-dimensional model shall be used to develop the physical model to scale of the Albion River Bridge that will be included with the interpretive panels as part of the exhibit. Additionally, the digital model shall be provided to the public on a Caltrans supported website.

Following public input and consultation with State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and consulting parties, treatment measures were finalized and documented in the Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP).

Cultural Resources: Archaeological Resources

Adverse Environmental Effects:

There are portions of three unevaluated archaeological sites within the project area that may be affected by the project. A phased approach would be taken for identification, evaluation, and application of the Criteria of Adverse Effect consistent with Stipulation XII.A of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement due to restricted access in the project area.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

The project has the potential to have significant impacts to archaeological resources. To avoid and/or reduce impacts to these resources, measures AMM-CR-1, AMM-CR-2, and AMM-CR-4 would be implemented (described below). A project-specific phased Programmatic Agreement with attached Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) and Archaeological Monitoring Plan have been prepared and would be followed. With the implementation of the measures, impacts to archeological resources would be reduced to a less than significant level.

- **AMM-CR-1:** Known cultural resources, not located in the area of direct impact (ADI) of the proposed project, will be protected by temporary high visibility fencing (THVF) and marked as an environmentally sensitive area (ESA). The ESA would also be included on the construction plans. Protocols for the establishment of ESAs and procedures in the event of an inadvertent breach of

an ESA have been documented in the Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP), developed in consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and attached to the Phased Programmatic Agreement (PA) (see AMM-CR-2).

- **AMM-CR-2:** Caltrans will implement the CRMP, which is an attachment to the Phased PA, once access to the resources is obtained. The CRMP guides the further evaluation of CA-MEN-3652H [P-23-005516]), historic-era refuse deposits (CA-MEN-3653H), and a prehistoric site (CA-MEN-3645 [P-23-005484]) which will be completed prior to construction in these areas. The CRMP outlines a Phased Identification approach and process through which a Finding of Effect for these sites will be determined in consultation with the SHPO and other consulting parties. The procedures for addressing an inadvertent discovery are also included in the CRMP.
- **AMM-CR-4:** In consultation with SHPO, Caltrans has prepared an Archaeological Monitoring Plan, which is included in the CRMP and attached to the Phased PA. The Archaeological Monitoring Plan will be implemented during any ground disturbing activities and during construction. This plan includes establishing Resource Monitoring Areas (RMAs) and having an archaeologist and Tribal representative monitor job site activities within the RMAs to identify any undiscovered resources, unanticipated effects, and to inform tribal communities that cultural resources being protected by ESAs remain effective. No work can be conducted within the RMAs unless archeological and Tribal monitors are both present. The Archaeological Monitoring Plan will be updated following further investigation and evaluation of CA-MEN-3652H [P-23-005516]), historic-era refuse deposits (CA-MEN-3653H), and prehistoric site (CA-MEN-3645 [P-23-00584]) as agreed upon in the PA if needed, guided by the CRMP.

CONCLUSION

Pursuant to Section 15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines, decision-makers are required to balance the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental risks in determining whether to approve a project. If the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the adverse environmental effects may be considered “acceptable.” As the project would have impacts that are significant and unavoidable, a Statement of Overriding Considerations has been prepared.

For those measures described above that serve to avoid or lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the FEIR, an Environmental Commitments Record (ECR) has been prepared for the project. The ECR will guide implementation of CEQA project mitigation measures by assigning implementation, monitoring, and reporting responsibilities and specifying timelines.

Caltrans is the custodian of the documents and other materials that constitute the record of proceedings upon which the findings are based; the documents and other materials are contained at the Caltrans District 1 Office at 1656 Union Street, Eureka, CA 95501.

Tom Fitzgerald for Matt Brady
District Director (or designee)


Signature

8/15/2025
Date