

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



**ITEM: 3.78
(ID # 28030)**

MEETING DATE:
Tuesday, June 24, 2025

FROM : TLMA-TRANSPORTATION

SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCY/ TRANSPORTATION:
Approval of the Indemnification Agreement between the County of Riverside and the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency for the Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Project. District 2. [\$0 Total Cost]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve the Indemnification Agreement between the County of Riverside and the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency for the Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Project (Project) as portions of Project are within the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve under the jurisdiction of the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency; and
2. Authorize the Chairman of the Board to execute the same.


ACTION:Policy


Dennis Acuna, Director of Transportation 6/17/2025

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Spiegel, seconded by Supervisor Medina and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Medina, Spiegel, Washington, Perez and Gutierrez
Nays: None
Absent: None
Date: June 24, 2025
xc: TLMA-Transp.

Kimberly A. Rector
Clerk of the Board
By: 
Deputy

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

FINANCIAL DATA	Current Fiscal Year:	Next Fiscal Year:	Total Cost:	Ongoing Cost
COST	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
NET COUNTY COST	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A.			Budget Adjustment: No	
			For Fiscal Year: 2024/2025	

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: Approve

BACKGROUND:

Summary

The County of Riverside (County), in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is proposing the Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project (Project). The Project proposes to widen approximately 15.7 miles of Cajalco Road from two to four lanes between Temescal Canyon Bridge and Harvill Avenue, from four to six lanes between Temescal Canyon Road and Temescal Canyon Bridge and between Harvill Avenue and the I-215 southbound ramps.

The County as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency, in cooperation with Caltrans, as the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) delegated lead agency, is in the process of producing a joint Final Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement with Section 4(f) (FEIR/EIS/4(f)) for the Project. The Draft EIR/EIS/Section 4(f) for the Project was circulated for a 90-day review period from December 3, 2021, to March 3, 2022. Based on the analysis in the Draft EIR/EIS/4(f), comments received from individuals, agencies, and stakeholder groups, and comparison of project alternatives using forty-seven (47) evaluation criteria, the County and Caltrans identified Build Alternative 1 (Cajalco Alignment) as the Preferred Alternative. Responsibility for compliance with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 has been assigned to Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 326 and 327, including determinations and approval of Section 4(f) evaluations, as well as coordination with agencies that have jurisdiction over a Section 4(f) resource that may be affected by a project action.

Section 4(f) specifies that "the Secretary of Transportation may approve a transportation program or project requiring the use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, State, or local significance, or land of an historic site of national, State, or local significance (as determined by the Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park, area, refuge, or site) only if:

1. There is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that land; and
2. The program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use."

Portions of the proposed Project occur within the boundaries of the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve (Reserve) which is under the jurisdiction of the Riverside County

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Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA) and is considered a Section 4(f) resource. Environmental analysis of the Project and consultation with RCHCA has been conducted by the County and Caltrans. Between 2011 and 2021, the County and Caltrans met with RCHCA in person and via Zoom meetings to discuss and coordinate the development of project alternatives, analysis of Stephens' kangaroo rat (SKR), Reserve management, project design, and mitigation. The results of this coordination and subsequent analysis of the potential impacts to SKR and the Reserve, and Section 4(f) use, were included in the circulated Draft EIR/EIS/4(f).

A Section 4(f) de minimis impact finding for the Reserve including all possible planning and measures to minimize harm to the Reserve was presented to RCHCA via a letter issued by Caltrans as the NEPA lead responsible for Section 4(f) compliance on July 28, 2023. Consultation followed with RCHCA to address questions and provide additional information regarding the Section 4(f) de minimis impact finding. On December 12, 2024, the Project team presented to the RCHCA Board of Directors and RCHCA Chair signed the Section 4(f) de minimis impact finding letter. An action item from the December 2024 meeting was for RCHCA to work with Caltrans and the County on preparing an indemnification agreement to indemnify the RCHCA of any legal and/or financial responsibility in the event of litigation arising from any future alterations to the Reserve as a result of the Project.

The County and RCHCA are attempting to work together in good faith to address the transfer of portions of the Reserve land to County for public right-of-way and dedication of portions of the Reserve land as easement, and the consequences thereto, including but not limited to the use of the newly created public right-of-way and easements for the Project. The County will be responsible for cost and expenses of any and all claims, actions and proceedings brought against RCHCA related to the transfer of portions of the Reserve to public right-of-way and dedication of portions of the Reserve land as easements, as well as the responsibility and liability for the maintenance of the newly created public right-of-way and easement.

RCHCA staff presented the indemnification agreement to RCHCA Board of Directors on May 8, 2025 and the indemnification agreement was signed by RCHCA Chair on May 13, 2025. The County is now taking the final step to fully execute the indemnification agreement.

County Counsel has approved the agreement as to form.

Impact on Residents and Businesses

Approval of this Indemnification Agreement, and/or future transfer of portions of the Reserve land to County for public right-of-way and dedication of portions of the Reserve land as easement as a result of the Project, are not anticipated to impact residents or businesses as the alterations to the Reserve would occur within the Reserve boundary. Impacts to residents or businesses as a result of the proposed Section 4(f) use of the Reserve are also not anticipated as related impacts would be limited to the Reserve and include all possible planning to minimize harm.

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Impacts to residents and businesses as a result of the overall Project have been analyzed, and the results of the analysis and public input disclosed in the circulated Draft EIR/EIS/4(f). Additional feedback received at community workshops held following circulation of the Draft EIR/EIS/4(f) has been considered and will be included in the Final EIR/EIS/4(f).

Additional Fiscal Information

N/A

Contract History and Price Reasonableness

N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

Indemnification Agreement



Jason Farin, Principal Policy Analyst 6/19/2025



Aaron Gettis, Chief of Deputy County Counsel 6/17/2025

INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT

This INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT (“Agreement”) is made by and between the COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, a political subdivision of the State of California, (“COUNTY”) and the RIVERSIDE COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION AGENCY, a Joint Powers Authority, (“RCHCA”) relating to the COUNTY’S indemnification of the RCHCA under the terms set forth herein:

RECITALS

WHEREAS, the COUNTY, in cooperation with California Department of Transportation (“CALTRANS”) is proposing to widen Cajalco Road from two to four lanes between Temescal Canyon Bridge and Harvill Avenue, and from four to six lanes between Temescal Canyon Road and Temescal Canyon Bridge, and between Harvill Avenue and the I-215 southbound ramps; and,

WHEREAS, portions of the proposed Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project (“PROJECT”) occur within the boundaries of the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve (“RESERVE”), as shown in Exhibit “A”; and,

WHEREAS, environmental analysis of the PROJECT, and public agency consultations, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, the California Environmental Quality Act, and other regulations and laws, including Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, has been conducted by the COUNTY and CALTRANS, and said environmental analysis has been circulated for review by the public, agencies, and environmental stakeholders; and,

WHEREAS, a Section 4(f) de minimis impact finding for the RESERVE including all possible planning and measures to minimize harm to RESERVE is presented in Exhibit “B”. As the official with jurisdiction over the RESERVE, RCHCA concurrence with the finding in no way serves as approval or endorsement of the PROJECT by RCHCA, and nothing herein shall be construed as RCHCA approval or endorsement of the PROJECT; and,

WHEREAS, the transfer of portions of RESERVE land to COUNTY and its use as a public right of way (“PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY”), and the dedication of portions of RESERVE land as an easement (“EASEMENT”) for use by the COUNTY for maintenance and access, exposes RCHCA and the COUNTY to potentially costly and time consuming claims, actions and proceedings and calls into question who is responsible and liable for the maintenance of the newly created PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT; and,

WHEREAS, RCHCA and COUNTY are attempting to work together in good faith to address the transfer of portions of RESERVE land to COUNTY for PUBLIC

RIGHT OF WAY and dedication of portions of RESERVE land as EASEMENT, and the consequences thereto, including but not limited to the use of the newly created PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT, by means of COUNTY bearing the cost and expense of any and all claims, actions and proceedings brought against RCHCA related to the transfer of portions of RESERVE to PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and dedication of portions of RESERVE land as EASEMENT, as well as the responsibility and liability for the maintenance of the newly created PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT; and,

WHEREAS, this Agreement is entered into by the COUNTY and RCHCA to establish specific terms concerning COUNTY'S indemnification obligation and maintenance obligation for the newly created PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT including, but not limited to, the use and maintenance of the newly created PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is mutually agreed between COUNTY and RCHCA as follows:

1. **Recitals.** The foregoing recitals are true and correct and are incorporated herein by reference.

2. **Indemnification.** COUNTY agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the RCHCA and their constituent public agency members, officers, employees, attorneys, agents and representatives (individually and collectively hereinafter referred to as "INDEMNITEES") from and against any and all actions, damages, claims, losses, expenses, costs, obligations and liabilities whatsoever, based or asserted upon or in any way arising out of or relating to, in whole or in part, the COUNTY PROJECT, including but not limited to the use of portions of the RESERVE as a PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT, the maintenance of the newly created PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT, including but not limited to property damage, bodily injury or death or any other element of any kind or nature (including without limitation any associated costs, damages, and expenses and an award of attorneys' fees and costs incurred or arising out of the above-referenced claim, action or proceeding brought against the RCHCA). COUNTY shall defend the INDEMNITEES at its sole expense and bear all related costs and fees (including, but not limited to, attorney fees, cost of investigation, defense and settlements or awards), in any claim, action or proceeding brought against the INDEMNITEES.

3. **Defense Cooperation and Costs.** RCHCA and the COUNTY shall cooperate in all aspects of any claim, action or proceeding subject to this Agreement. Nothing contained in this Agreement, however, shall be construed to limit the discretion of COUNTY, in the interest of the public welfare, to settle, defend, appeal or to decline to settle or to terminate or forego defense or appeal of any claim, action or proceeding. RCHCA shall have the right of first refusal for any settlement offer that is deemed not in the best interest of RCHCA. It is also understood and agreed

that all litigation pleadings are subject to review by COUNTY's Office of County Counsel and RCHCA's general counsel.

4. **Representation and Payment for Legal Services Rendered.** RCHCA shall have the right to approve or disapprove the counsel retained by COUNTY to defend INDEMNITEES as required herein. COUNTY shall pay the attorneys' fees and costs of the legal firm retained by RCHCA to represent the INDEMNITEES as required herein. Failure by COUNTY to pay such attorneys' fees and costs may be treated by RCHCA as a default of COUNTY's obligations under this Agreement.

5. **Payment for RCHCA Costs.** Payment for RCHCA's costs related to any claim, action or proceeding shall be made on a reimbursable basis. Costs include without limitation any associated costs, fees, damages, and expenses incurred by the RCHCA, including but not limited to, associated with the claim, action or proceeding. RCHCA shall be paid in accordance with an invoice submitted by RCHCA to COUNTY on a monthly basis. COUNTY shall pay the invoice within thirty (30) days from the date of receipt of the invoice.

6. **Notices.** For all purposes herein, notices shall be effective when personally delivered, delivered by commercial overnight delivery service, or sent by certified or registered mail, return receipt requested, to the appropriate address set forth below:

COUNTY:
County of Riverside
Attn: Dennis Acuna,
Director of Transportation
4080 Lemon Street, 8th Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

RCHCA:
Riverside County Habitat Conservation
Authority
Attn: RCHCA Director
1955 Chicago Avenue
Riverside, CA 92507

7. **Default and Termination.** This Agreement is not subject to termination, except by mutual agreement or as otherwise provided herein. In the event of a default of COUNTY's obligations under this Agreement, COUNTY shall provide written notification to RCHCA of such alleged default specifically describing the alleged default and COUNTY shall have thirty (30) days (ten (10) days for monetary defaults) after receipt of written notification to cure any such alleged default or such longer period of time if a non-monetary default is not capable of being cured within thirty (30) days provided that it is diligently cured thereafter. If COUNTY fails to cure such alleged default within the specified time period or otherwise reach agreement with the RCHCA on a resolution of the alleged default, RCHCA may, in its sole discretion, take any action it deems necessary, including without limitation, settle the claim, action or proceeding at COUNTY's sole expense.

In the event of a default of this Agreement, COUNTY shall remain responsible for any costs and attorney's fees awarded by the Court or as a result of settlement and

other expenses incurred by the RCHCA related to the claim, action, proceeding or settlement.

8. **Maintenance.** COUNTY shall be responsible and liable for the maintenance of the newly created PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT, including all costs and expense thereof. COUNTY will coordinate the maintenance of culverts and bridges with adjacent jurisdictional agencies and utilities, including RCHCA, as appropriate. COUNTY may fulfill its maintenance obligations hereunder where appropriate by engaging contractors or arranging for private developers to perform such duties; however, COUNTY shall be liable for the acts or omissions of any said contractors or private developers. COUNTY shall require any such contractor or private developer to make written application to RCHCA for an encroachment permit prior to performing any work. With the exception of culverts and bridges that function as wildlife crossings, both RCHCA and COUNTY agree, RCHCA shall have no liability, responsibility, or obligation whatsoever for the newly created PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT.

9. **Complete Agreement/Governing Law.** This Agreement represents the complete understanding between the parties with respect to matters set forth herein. This Agreement shall be construed in accordance with the laws of the State of California.

10. **Successors and Assigns.** The obligations specific herein shall be made and are binding on the successors in interest of the RCHCA, whether the succession is by agreement, by operation of law or by any other means.

11. **Amendment and Waiver.** No modification, waiver, amendment, or discharge of this Agreement shall be valid unless the same is in writing and signed by all parties.

12. **Severability.** If any term, provision, covenant, or condition of this Agreement is held to be invalid, void or otherwise unenforceable, to any extent, by any court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Agreement shall not be affected thereby, and each term, provision, covenant, or condition of this Agreement shall be valid and enforceable to the fullest extent permitted by law.

13. **Interpretation.** The parties have been advised by their respective attorneys, or if not represented by an attorney, represent that they had an opportunity to be so represented in the review of this Agreement. Any rule of construction to the effect that ambiguities are to be resolved against the drafting party shall not be applied in interpreting this Agreement.

14. **Captions and Headings.** The captions and section headings used in this Agreement are inserted for convenience of reference only and are not intended to

define, limit, or affect the construction or interpretation of any term or provision hereof.

15. ***Jurisdiction and Venue.*** Any action at law or in equity arising under this Agreement or brought by a party hereto for the purpose of enforcing, construing, or determining the validity of any provision of this Agreement shall be filed in the Courts of Riverside County, State of California, and the parties hereto waive all provisions of law providing for the filing, removal or change of venue to any other court or jurisdiction.

16. ***Counterparts; Electronic Execution.*** This Agreement may be executed in any number of counterparts, each of which will be an original, but all of which together will constitute one instrument. Each party to this Agreement agrees to the use of electronic signatures, such as digital signatures that meet the requirements of the California Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (“CUETA”) Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1633.1 to 1633.17), for executing this Agreement. The parties further agree that the electronic signatures of the parties included in this Agreement are intended to authenticate this writing and to have the same force and effect as manual signatures. Electronic signature means an electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to or logically associated with an electronic record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the electronic record pursuant to the CUETA as amended from time to time. The CUETA authorizes use of an electronic signature for transactions and contracts among parties in California, including a government agency. Digital signature means an electronic identifier, created by computer, intended by the party using it to have the same force and effect as the use of a manual signature, and shall be reasonably relied upon by the parties. For purposes of this section, a digital signature is a type of "electronic signature" as defined in subdivision (i) of Section 1633.2 of the Civil Code.


17. ***Effective Date.*** The effective date of this Agreement is the date the parties sign the Agreement. If the parties sign the Agreement on more than one date, then the last date the Agreement is signed by a party shall be the effective date.

[Signature Page Follows]

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have duly caused this Agreement to be executed by their authorized representatives as of the date written.

COUNTY:
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, a political subdivision of the State of California

RCHCA:
RIVERSIDE COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION AGENCY, County of Riverside, a Joint Powers Authority

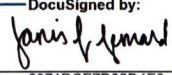
By: 
V. Manuel Perez
Chair, Board of Supervisors


Signed by: 
By: 03665EA0AB3F4F7...
Joseph Morabito
RCHCA Chair

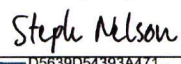
Dated: JUN 24 2025


Dated: 5/13/2025

ATTEST:
Kimberly A. Rector
Clerk of the Board
By: 
Deputy

ATTEST: Janis Leonard
Name Administrative Services Manager
Title
By: DocuSigned by: 
6371DCE7B02D4E3...

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, a political subdivision of the State of California
By: 
Dennis Acuna, P.E., T.E., Director
Transportation Department

APPROVED AS TO FORM
RCHCA General Counsel
By: DocuSigned by: 
D5639D54393A471...
Stephanie Nelson

APPROVED AS TO FORM
Minh C. Tran
County Counsel
By: 
Aaron C. Gettis
Chief Deputy County Counsel

EXHIBITS "A" AND "B"

The following exhibits are attached behind this page:

- Exhibit A – Depicts the proposed Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project (“PROJECT”) within the boundaries of the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve (“RESERVE”).
- Exhibit B - Summary of the Reserve impacts, design feature and mitigation measures.

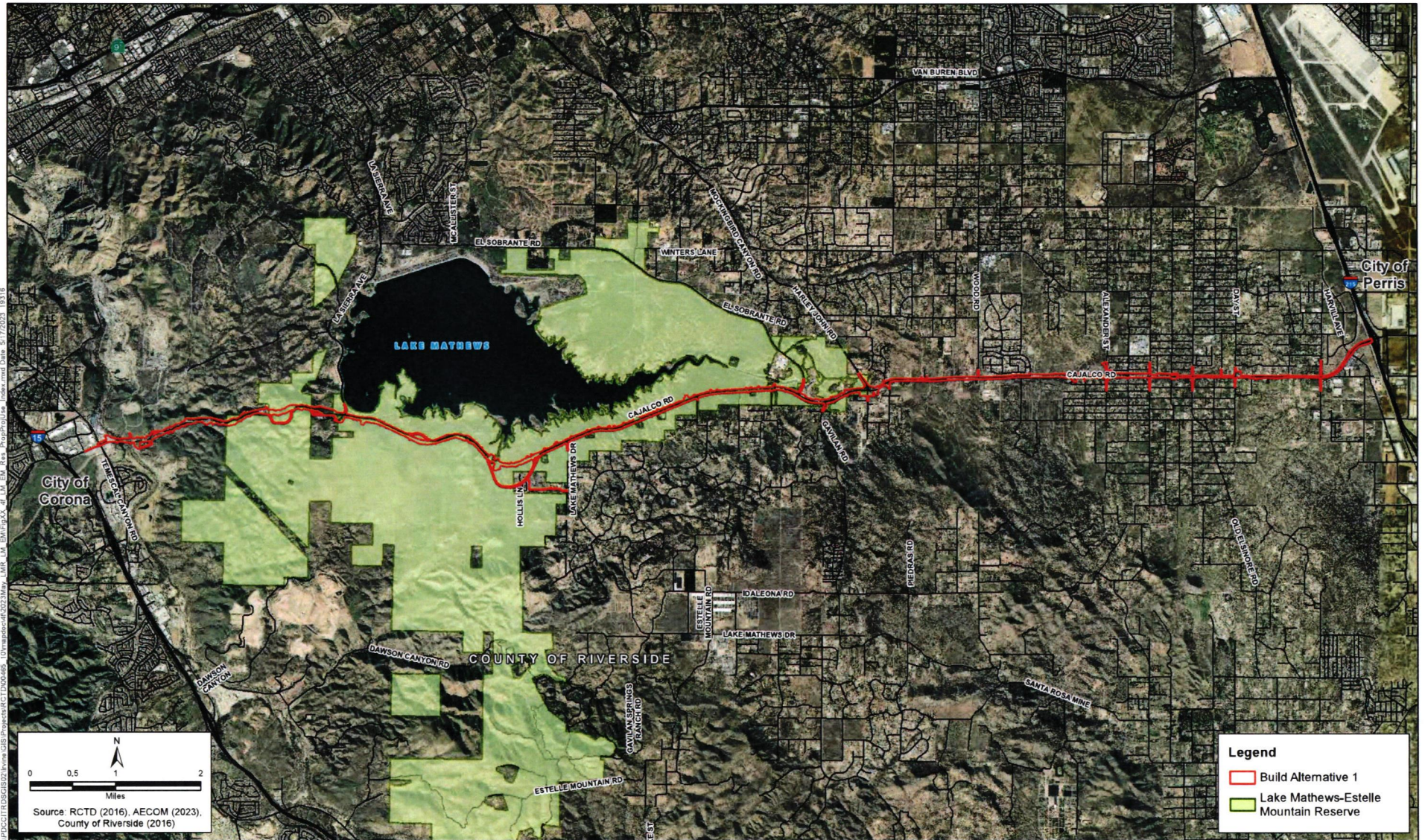


Exhibit A
Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve - Proposed Project
Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project

EXHIBIT B

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AGENCY

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

464 WEST FOURTH STREET, MS 1222

SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92401-1400

MAIN (909) 383-4561

DIRECT (909) 388-7725

FAX (909) 388-7048

TTY 711

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October 9, 2024

Brian Shomo, Director
Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency
3390 University Avenue, Suite 200
Riverside, CA 92501

Dear Mr. Shomo:

Re: Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project Section 4(f) Proposed De Minimis Use for Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as the NEPA-delegated lead agency, in cooperation with the County of Riverside (County), is in the process of producing a joint Final Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement with Section 4(f) (FEIR/EIS/4(f)) for the Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project (Project) extending from approximately 950 feet west of Temescal Canyon Road in the City of Corona at to the southbound ramps of Interstate 215 in unincorporated Riverside County.

The Draft EIR/EIS for the Project was circulated for a 90-day review period from December 3, 2021, to March 3, 2022. Based on the data presented in the Draft EIR/EIS/4(f), and comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS/4(f) from individuals, agencies, and stakeholder groups, Caltrans has identified Build Alternative 1 (Cajalco Alignment) as the Preferred Alternative.

Responsibility for compliance with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 has been assigned to Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 326 and 327, including determinations and approval of Section 4(f) evaluations, as well as coordination with those agencies that have jurisdiction over a Section 4(f) resource that may be affected by a project action.

Section 4(f) specifies that "the Secretary of Transportation may approve a transportation program or project requiring the use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, State, or local significance, or land of an historic site of national, State, or local significance (as determined by the Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park, area, refuge, or site) only if:

1. There is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that land; and
2. the program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use."

"Caltrans improves mobility across California"

Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency

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The portion of the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve (LM-EM Reserve) within the Project area is under the jurisdiction of Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA), and is considered a Section 4(f) resource:

Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve is a 11,243-acre habitat reserve and public wildlife refuge managed under the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR HCP), a component of the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan for the Stephens' kangaroo rat. The primary purpose of the LM-EM Reserve is to provide habitat for, and protect, SKR. The protected activities, features, and attributes of the LM-EM Reserve are composed of reserve management, and the features and attributes that support and protect SKR habitat within the reserve. Reserve management activities and features include monitoring species and habitat, vegetation and landscape maintenance to support biological health of the reserve, and security monitoring and barrier (fencing) maintenance to protect the reserve. Features and attributes that support and protect SKR habitat within the reserve include suitable vegetation communities, soils, space for burrows and foraging, and physical protective barriers (fencing).

Direct Use

The Project will require approximately 127.16 acres of the LM-EM Reserve, which represents approximately 1 percent of the LM-EM Reserve's current acreage. This acquisition would be necessary to widen Cajalco Road, implement intersection improvements and minor realignments of Cajalco Road, construct detention basins, allow for maintenance access, and accommodate wildlife crossings. The direct use area would be acquired for project right of way and would be converted to transportation uses. This 127.16-acre area currently contains 112.81 acres of SKR habitat.

A small portion of the existing roadbed within the Reserve would be removed during project construction and returned to natural topographic contours, decompacted to allow for plant establishment, and revegetated with natural vegetation. This is considered a beneficial impact and would create 0.61 acre of suitable habitat for SKR. The additional 0.61 acre of SKR habitat would partially offset the loss of 112.81 acres of SKR habitat, resulting in an impact on 112.2 acres of SKR habitat. The Project would also provide for increased opportunity for safe wildlife passage north and south of Cajalco Road by adding approximately 73 wildlife crossings with fencing to deter wildlife from entering the roadway and guide wildlife to crossing locations. Fifty-five of the crossings would connect LM-EM Reserve areas bisected by Cajalco Road, and 53 crossings would also occur between the existing State Ecological Reserve and Mitigation Bank areas of the Lake Mathews Multiple Species Reserve, allowing for greater wildlife access opportunity between these areas.

With the implementation of the measures listed below, the activities, features, and attributes, that qualify the LM-EM Reserve for protection would not be adversely affected to the extent that would prevent continued function of the LM-EM Reserve. The Project would mitigate for impacts on suitable SKR habitat within the LM-EM Reserve, compensate for the loss of Reserve lands, and provide for greater opportunity of safe wildlife access north and south of Cajalco Road.

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The measures listed in Table 1 below would avoid, minimize, rectify, and compensate for impacts on natural and suitable habitats, and LM-EM Reserve management and maintenance activities. For a full description of each measure, please refer to their corresponding measure number, listed in Appendix A of the EIR/EIS (Section 4(f)).

Table 1. Measures to Minimize Harm to LM-EM Reserve

Measure	Summary of Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measure
BIO-1	Seasonal Vegetation Clearing Restrictions
BIO-2	Watering for dust control
BIO-3	Use of appropriate firefighting equipment for construction-caused wildfires; educate personnel on fire hazards and fire risk
BIO-4	Biological resource training for construction personnel
BIO-5	Biological construction monitoring
BIO-6	Environmentally sensitive area fencing and avoid environmentally sensitive areas
BIO-7	Removal of vegetation and exotic species during construction
BIO-8	Reduce spread of noxious weeds
BIO-9	Hydroseeding bare ground and onsite revegetation after construction is completed
BIO-10	Water pollution and erosion control plans
BIO-11	Defining the Limits of Disturbance for jurisdictional areas and riparian habitat avoidance
BIO-12	Placement of Construction Equipment
BIO-13	Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation
BIO-14	Replacement of Riparian/Riverine Resources
BIO-15	Restoration of temporarily affected Lake Mathews MSHCP lands and Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
BIO-16	Lighting Restrictions
BIO-17	Replacement lands for permanent impacts to Lake Mathews MSHCP lands
BIO-18	Noise Reduction for Equipment
BIO-19	Wildlife Fencing Plan
BIO-20	Preconstruction reptile and amphibian clearance survey; environmentally sensitive area fencing
BIO-21	Public/Quasi-Public lands Compensation
BIO-22	Collection of paniculate tarplant and milkweed seeds and revegetation
BIO-23	Minimum Lighting Standards
BIO-24	Removal of trash and debris
BIO-25	Post-Construction Best Management Practices
BIO-26	Air Pollution Control
BIO-27	Fugitive Dust Rule 403
BIO-28	Handling, Transport, and Disposal of Wastes
BIO-29	No pets will be allowed in, or adjacent to, conserved lands
BIO-30	Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Management Plan
BIO-31	Sensitive Wildlife Preconstruction Clearance Surveys
BIO-32	Lake Mathews Reserve Biological Equivalency to compensate for the loss of natural lands

Final selection of mitigation would be contingent upon approval by RCHCA.

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Temporary Use

The Project will require a 21.77-acre temporary construction easement (TCE) within LM-EM Reserve to allow for temporary storage and staging locations for construction equipment, and access for construction vehicles and equipment, during construction of the Project. This 21.77-acre area currently contains 15.68 acres of SKR suitable habitat.

Although this TCE would temporarily reduce the overall LM-EM Reserve area during construction, the 21.77 acres temporarily occupied during construction would not interfere with the continued primary purpose and functions of the LM-EM Reserve, nor interfere with adjacent LM-EM Reserve functions. The temporarily occupied area would be restored to pre-project conditions with the implementation of the measures listed in Table 1, above.

De Minimis Impact Finding Determination

Since 2011, Caltrans and the County have consulted with Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) and RCHCA regarding the proposed project, including confirmation of the primary purpose of the LM-EM Reserve, LM-EM Reserve resources, and LM-EM Reserve management and operations. RCHCA input on project alternatives and project design modifications to avoid or otherwise minimize impacts to the LM-EM Reserve, has also been considered and incorporated into the Project.

Requests for concurrence on the de minimis use impact finding for the LM-EM Reserve were presented to RCHCA and Metropolitan by Caltrans in letters dated July 28, 2023. Metropolitan responded in a letter dated October 17, 2023, stating, "Metropolitan does not own land in or have a role managing the LM-EM Reserve. Therefore, it is not appropriate for Metropolitan to evaluate and provide concurrence, as requested, as to whether the Project would have a de minimis finding on the reserve." RCHCA responded in a letter dated October 24, 2023, requesting additional details regarding the de minimis use finding. Responses to the inquiry were provided to RCHCA on June 20, 2024.

A virtual meeting regarding the proposed de minimis use finding was held between RCHCA representatives, Caltrans, the County, and consultants, on September 19, 2024. During the meeting, requests for additional details concerning proposed wildlife crossings and screened mitigation lands were presented by RCHCA, and provided following the meeting. A request for indemnification of RCHCA from liability and association with project endorsement or approvals, was also presented during the meeting. The County and Caltrans are currently coordinating the preparation of an agreement that would indemnify RCHCA of liability; and, language has been added to the De Minimis Signature attachment to this letter, noting RCHCA's lack of involvement in project endorsement or approval.

It is expected that the project would result in de minimis impacts to LM-EM Reserve under Section 4(f) because the activities, features and attributes of these resources would not be adversely affected to the extent that would prevent continued function of the LM-EM Reserve. The Project would mitigate for impacts on suitable SKR habitat within the LM-EM Reserve, compensate for the loss of LM-EM

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Reserve lands, and provide for greater opportunity of safe wildlife access between areas north and south of Cajalco Road.

Therefore, Caltrans is requesting concurrence from RCHCA with this de minimis impact finding determination, as required under Section 4(f) in 23 CFR 774. For your convenience, signature blocks are provided as an attachment to this letter. Your concurrence is needed to maintain the schedule of the project. Please provide concurrence on or before December 13, 2024.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail please contact Aaron Burton at Caltrans District 8 (909) 383-2841 or email at aaron.burton@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Aaron Burton

AARON BURTON
Senior Environmental Planner
Local Assistance – Environmental Support

Enclosure:
De Minimis Signature Block Attachment
Lake Mathews – Estelle Mountain Core Reserve Section 4(f) Summary
Project Map

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The Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency understands that California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 8 and County of Riverside (County) are proposing to improve the existing Cajalco Road with the Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project.

Caltrans determines that the de minimis finding is appropriate and would be maintained with regards to the potential impacts to Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve on the activities, features, and attributes that qualify LM-EM Reserve eligible for protection under Section 4(f).

My signature below represents written concurrence on the de minimis finding that with consideration of all possible planning to minimize harm, the Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project would not adversely affect the activities, features, and attributes that qualify Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve for protection under Section 4(f) to the extent that would prevent continued function of the LM-EM Reserve. This concurrence is only related to the Section 4(f) de minimis finding and in no way serves as approval or endorsement of the Project by RCHCA. The public has been afforded an opportunity to review and comment on the effects of the Project on the protected activities, features, and attributes of the Section 4(f) resource.

DocuSigned by:



9029014F9387495...
Mr. Steve Manos, Chair
Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency
3390 University Avenue, Suite 200
Riverside, CA 92501

12/12/2024

Date

**Cajalco Road Widening and Safety Enhancement Project
Federal Project No. STPL 5956 (195)**

Lake Mathews - Estelle Mountain Core Reserve – Section 4(f) Summary

Functions, Activities, Features & Attributes	Impacts	Design Features and Measures
Primary Function: Provide habitat for and protect Stephen's Kangaroo Rat (SKR)		
<p><u>Provide SKR Habitat</u></p> <p>According to the RCHCA Habitat Conservation Plan for the Stephen's Kangaroo Rat in Western Riverside County¹, suitable habitat for SKR typically occurs in transition areas, consisting of open grasslands/sparse shrublands where perennial vegetation covers less than 50% of the ground. SKR are usually found in relatively level or gently sloping areas; prefer areas of 7 to 10% slope, but have been observed on slopes of up to 50%.¹ May be found on steeper slopes at trace densities and may only use these areas for foraging.</p> <p>Suitable vegetation communities identified within the LM-EM Reserve that support SKR are nonnative grassland (NNG), Riversidian sage scrub (RSS), disturbed RSS, and RSS/NNG vegetation communities. Soils within occupied habitat tend to be sandy and sandy loam soils with low clay to gravel content (for ease of burrowing). SKR tends to avoid rocky soils. Specifically, soils not considered suitable for SKR include, heavily alkaline or clay soils; high rocky soils; shallow soils less than 50 centimeters deep; soils in areas exceeding 25% slope, and soils above approximately 3,000 feet in elevation.¹</p> <p>11,243-acre LM-EM Reserve includes 4,264 acres that meet all above habitat criteria and are identified as SKR Habitat in the SKR HCP.</p>	<p>Permanent use of 112.81 acres of SKR habitat, including areas conserved for the benefit of SKR and areas described for conservation for the benefit of SKR.</p> <p>Temporary use of 15.69 acres of SKR habitat.</p>	<p>Any loss of SKR Core Reserve would require the preparation and submittal of a Core Reserve Land Disturbance Report to the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA). This report would document the impacts on SKR and the compensatory mitigation. Measures BIO-14, compensation for loss of riparian/riverine resources (including RSS); BIO-17, compensation for permanent loss of habitat overlapping LM-EM Reserve with the purchase of land with equivalent or greater habitat value, BIO-21, compensation for PQP conserved lands; and BIO-32, compensation for natural lands, would compensate for the permanent loss of reserve lands supporting SKR. Measure BIO-30, Stephen's Kangaroo Rat Management Plan, would also be developed to minimize direct impacts on SKR and protect the species.</p> <p>Construction activities within and adjacent to LM-EM Reserve lands would be restricted to occur only during non-breeding seasons.</p> <p>Rehabilitation of habitat temporarily impacted as a result of construction: BIO-9, onsite revegetation of disturbed areas with native seed mix; BIO-15, onsite restoration due to temporary impacts; and BIO-22, collection of seeds and revegetation.</p>
<p><u>Protect SKR</u></p> <p>Protection of SKR includes the prevention of direct loss or take of individuals of the species, as well as loss of existing habitat, restoring suitable habitat, and maintaining ecosystem to prevent the loss of SKR.</p> <p>Direct threat management is a primary tool used to protect individual SKR and SKR populations, as well as to protect from threats to habitat quality and habitat management. There should be few if any direct threats to individual SKR, and none to any local population as a whole.</p> <p>Desired conditions for the protection of SKR and habitat from direct threats, as described in the 2021 <i>Rangewide SKR MMP</i></p>	<p>Project would not prevent or interfere with desired conditions for protecting SKR. There is potential for the Project to increase mortality of SKR through vehicle strikes of individuals attempting to cross the wider roadway. However, the Project would include wildlife fencing designed to orient wildlife towards newly introduced wildlife crossings.</p>	<p>Project design includes approximately 73 wildlife crossings and fencing throughout areas of the LM-EM Reserve within the project limits.</p> <p>Wildlife crossings and fencing that would support the facilitation of wildlife use of the crossings and deter surface roadway crossings, would be designed to meet or exceed WRC MSHCP guidelines. Small and medium crossings have been designed to have crossing widths that are twice the WRC MSHCP required height to increase openness and better facilitate small animal movement. The crossing structures would meet or exceed placement criteria outlined in the WRC MSHCP guidelines and would facilitate movement for species of various</p>

Functions, Activities, Features & Attributes	Impacts	Design Features and Measures
<p>are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be few to no <i>exotic predators</i> (e.g., house cats) in reserves, and nonnative predation should be extremely rare to nonexistent. • <i>Pesticide</i> exposure (especially rodenticides) should be nonexistent on reserves, except for limited herbicide use according to approved applications as needed to control invasive plants. • <i>Flooding or soil saturation</i> from extreme, prolonged rainfall or especially due to unnatural ground or surface water inputs (e.g., urban runoff or excess irrigation from adjacent lands) should be rare to nonexistent within potential SKR habitat. • Discing or other <i>mechanical treatments</i> that disturb subsurface soil or collapse rodent burrows (e.g., for weed abatement or pasture improvement) should be prohibited in potential SKR habitat except as part of a comprehensive habitat restoration effort, and then usually only when SKR are confirmed to be absent, such as to prepare habitat before an SKR reintroduction attempt. • <i>Wildfire</i> regimes should be within the natural range of variation expected for the region and vegetation communities on a reserve in terms of fire frequency, intensity, and seasonality, unless deviations from the natural regime are specifically intended to help achieve desired SKR habitat conditions. • Severe and prolonged <i>drought</i> should not reduce SKR food sources to the degree the population is threatened with extirpation or severe inbreeding depression. <p>Potential activities for the protection of SKR and habitat from direct threats, as described in the 2021 <i>Rangewide SKR MMP</i> are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Light Pollution</i>: Minimize or eliminate artificial light sources at reserve facilities. Work with other entities to reduce offsite light inputs into habitat by eliminating unnecessary light sources, lowering light intensity, reducing duration of night lighting, screening lamps to focus light where it is needed but not into wild habitats, and switching to light sources low in blue, violet, and ultraviolet wavelengths. • Implement a <i>fire management plan</i> that specifies how both wildfire and prescribed fire will be managed for resource values, including SKR habitat values. The plan should clearly map and describe where fire control measures are advised or prohibited, such as not bulldozing fire lines through occupied SKR habitat. 		<p>sizes.</p> <p>Wildlife fencing and escape opportunities would decrease wildlife vehicle collisions. Openings in concrete k-rail barriers would be installed at regular intervals to allow small wildlife to cross or escape roadways. For small animals, fencing would include exclusion materials (e.g. solid opaque small animal exclusion material or small mesh fencing) along lower 2 feet of fencing. The smaller material would be buried at least 6-to-10 inches below existing grade and have 0.25-to 0.5-inch mesh size (if used) with an overhanging 90-degree lip/overhang (min. 6 inches) to prevent climbing. Seams would overlap by at least 6 inches. Implementation of measure BIO-19, Wildlife Fencing Plan, would ensure the viability of the crossings.</p> <p>In addition, the following measures would contribute to the protection of SKR: BIO-2, dust control to minimize impacts on vegetation; BIO-3, for protection against fires; BIO-4, biological training for construction personnel; BIO-5, biological monitoring and reporting; BIO-6, establishment of construction limits and the installation of environmentally sensitive (ESA) fencing; BIO-12, avoidance of habitat occupied by MSHCP covered species; and BIO-31, preconstruction surveys for sensitive wildlife species.</p> <p>The following avoidance and minimization measures would ensure that indirect impacts to SKR are greatly reduced or eliminated: BIO-1, seasonal vegetation clearing restrictions; BIO-10, water pollution and erosion control plans; BIO-16, night lighting management during construction; BIO-18, noise reduction during construction; BIO-23, minimum lighting standards in lighting design; BIO-24, waste management; BIO-25 Post-construction best management practices (BMPs); BIO-26, air pollution control; BIO-27, Fugitive Dust Rule 403; BIO-28, handling, transport, and disposal of wastes; and BIO-29, pet restrictions in construction areas.</p>

Functions, Activities, Features & Attributes	Impacts	Design Features and Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate weather cycles and their potential effects on SKR and consider contingency plans in the event that severe, prolonged droughts or intense, prolonged rainfall threatens to extirpate or greatly reduce local populations. Contingencies could potentially include translocation into better but unoccupied habitat areas or temporarily removing animals into captivity until a threat has subsided. • Conduct occasional daytime <i>roadkill</i> surveys and nighttime road surveys (e.g. driving slowly on nights without moonlight using headlights and spotlights to spot kangaroo rats) to identify where there are significant problems with roadkill or barrier effects. If particular crossing points are identified, consider structural modifications that could deflect SKR away from crossing above ground and funnel them to existing or new undercrossing structures, such as broad culverts. • Attempting mitigation due to <i>predation by free-ranging domestic animals</i>, is likely to be highly controversial with local citizens. Considered a special topic. • <i>Excess predation by native predators</i> is an unlikely problem except during the initial period following translocation. Implementing measures to minimize predation, such as using SKR enclosures that protect them from predators, and other techniques such as adding mountain lion urine to the area or using great horned owl decoys could deter predators. <p>Rangewide SKR MMP, 2021.</p>		
<p>Reserve Management: Species & Habitat Monitoring; Vegetation & Landscape Maintenance to Support Biological Health of Reserve; Security Monitoring & Barrier (Fencing) Maintenance to Protect Reserve</p>		
<p><u>Species & Habitat Monitoring</u></p> <p>The SKR Rangewide Monitoring Strategy integrates habitat, population, and genetic monitoring to understand SKR status and trends, responses to threats and disturbances, and effectiveness of management actions.</p> <p>The monitoring strategy employs a habitat model which provides a spatial foundation for quantifying habitat quality, quantity, and distribution. The model correlates field estimates of SKR occupancy and density with habitat quality to track range wide patterns of SKR.</p> <p>Habitat monitoring is performed by 1) using the SKR habitat model to estimate the rangewide distribution and abundance of suitable habitat, and 2) collecting standardized field metrics of habitat quality based on vegetation and soil conditions.</p> <p>Rangewide SKR MMP, 2021.</p>	<p>Project would not prevent or interfere with the SKR Rangewide Monitoring Strategy and would benefit the LM-EM Reserve by supporting enhanced management through the project features and measures described under Design Features and Measures.</p>	<p>A Habitat Mitigation Monitoring Plan (HMMP) that details the success criteria; seed and/or plant numbers, planting location, and species; earthwork (if necessary); quantitative and qualitative monitoring activities (e.g., locations, techniques, scheduling); monitoring duration; maintenance operations including watering methods and schedules; and solutions for potential issues would be implemented with approval by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), RCHCA and other managing parties.</p> <p>Funding would be provided to be used toward Reserve management. The County of Riverside will develop the funding mechanism with input from MWD and the Lake Mathews Reserve Management Committee (LMRMC) that will be used to support management of new reserve lands acquired and any existing reserve lands, along with</p>

Functions, Activities, Features & Attributes	Impacts	Design Features and Measures
		<p>shared maintenance and security costs.</p> <p>A Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (DBESP) report (BIO-13) that analyzes the impacts, measures, and functions and values of affected resources will be reviewed and approved by resource agencies prior to finalization of the environmental document.</p> <p>A Stephen's Kangaroo Rat Management Plan (BIO-30) would be developed prior to construction of the Project to minimize direct impacts on SKR within the Reserve. The SKR management plan would be consistent with existing reserve management guidelines that will be coordinated with RCHCA.</p> <p>Measures BIO-5, biological monitoring; BIO-11, defining the Limits of Disturbance (LOD) for jurisdictional areas and riparian habitat avoidance; BIO-20, Preconstruction reptile and amphibian clearance surveys, environmentally sensitive area fencing; would also be employed to avoid incidental disturbance of habitat and species during construction.</p>
<p>Vegetation and Landscape Maintenance to Support Biological Health of the Reserve</p> <p>Potential vegetation and landscape-related activities for habitat management and managing certain direct threats provided in the <i>Rangewide SKR MMP</i> are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock grazing, especially by sheep or cattle, is a favored SKR vegetation management tool. The RCHCA manages sheep grazing by shifting sheep to a new area once grazing reduces vegetation cover to a 50% bare ground status. • Implement a <i>fire management plan</i> that specifies how both wildfire and prescribed fire will be managed for resource values, including SKR habitat values. The plan should clearly map and describe where fire control measures are advised or prohibited, such as not bulldozing fire lines through occupied SKR habitat. • Herbicides can be used to control non-natives and other invasive plants. In SKR reserves, herbicides are used mainly in limited, targeted applications rather than over large areas. Use of herbicides should be planned, documented, and then followed up with monitoring. Mapping invasive plant populations is critical for strategic management and monitoring and essential for effective early detection. • Mechanical habitat treatments include mowing, discing, scraping, raking, pruning, or other methods of altering vegetation composition and structure by machine or by hand. Mechanical treatments, possibly in concert with herbicide 	<p>Project would not prevent or interfere with the SKR Rangewide Monitoring Strategy for vegetation and landscape maintenance. Maintenance activities along the roadway right of way are not expected to appreciably differ from existing operating conditions under the Project. The existing roadway would continue to produce noise, dust, air pollution, and fire risk.</p>	<p>The potential effects from operation and maintenance of the Project would be minimized by project design, with widened, paved roadway shoulders that would minimize dust and provide greater distance between traffic and adjacent sensitive, vegetated habitat areas.</p> <p>To ensure Project maintenance activities would not result in an impact on the LM-EM Reserve, a maintenance plan identifying vegetation control, removal of obstructions, structural repairs, and other techniques to maintain the desired operation of the crossings, as well as management responsibility and access permissions, will be coordinated between the County, MWD, RCHCA, and other agencies involved in the management of preserve areas and would be consistent with Standard Project Measures PF WQ-3 and BIO-19 (Wildlife Fencing Plan).</p> <p>The following measures would be consistent with the habitat management activities set forth in the Rangewide SKR MMP: Avoidance and minimization measures BIO-3, fire prevention; BIO-7, exotic species removal and prevention; and BIO-8, Equipment cleaning to reduce spread of invasive species would minimize the spread of invasive species and the risk of fires. Measure BIO-9, would minimize and mitigate impacts to soils by returning disturbed areas remaining as bare ground to natural contour grades, decompaction to eliminate compressed soils and allowing for plant establishment, and hydro-</p>

Functions, Activities, Features & Attributes	Impacts	Design Features and Measures
<p>use, can be used to reduce invasive vegetation and thatch. Mechanical treatments like mowing and raking can also be alternated with prescribed fire or herbicide use where allowed, which can increase the effectiveness of these alternative tools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil compaction, if extensive, can be detrimental to SKR habitat condition by creating large areas devoid of vegetation or by making soils too hard for burrowing. In such cases, methods for decompacting soils may be applied, generally as part of a comprehensive ecological restoration plan and only in areas currently not occupied by SKR, to avoid potential direct harm to SKR. The goal should be to improve soil friability and porosity to encourage favorable vegetation growth and burrowing potential. • Increased runoff or other changes to natural hydrological conditions due to human land uses may result in flooding or soil saturation in potential SKR habitat. Where excess runoff from adjacent land uses and other hydrological impacts may dampen soil in SKR habitat, various flood control or drainage improvements, such as dirt berms, diversion ditches, or French drains, may be recommended with input from a hydrological engineer. This is likely to be necessary in rare situations where SKR habitat directly abuts urban areas, irrigated lands, or other sources of excess runoff. • Anticipate weather cycles and their potential effects on SKR and consider contingency plans in the event that severe, prolonged droughts or intense, prolonged rainfall threatens to extirpate or greatly reduce local populations. Contingencies could potentially include translocation into better but unoccupied habitat areas or temporarily removing animals into captivity until a threat has subsided. • Any attempt at restoration should be planned by experts in ecological restoration according to well-researched restoration guides. Restoration would best be applied where SKR are currently absent, such as prior to a reintroduction effort, to avoid direct harm to individuals or their burrows and seed stores. Restoration of unoccupied areas adjacent to occupied areas can also facilitate natural population expansions. Restoration efforts will likely require repeated treatments of various types and careful monitoring of results, with adjustments over time. Guidance on reducing nonnative species and thatch and for appropriate native seed mixes are available. 		<p>seeding with a County of Riverside–approved native plant seed mix not containing any species listed on the California Integrated Pest Council Inventory. Measure BIO-15 would restore LM MSHCP areas temporarily affected by the Project through the implementation of an HMMP.</p>
<p>Security Monitoring & Barrier (Fencing) Maintenance to Protect Reserve</p> <p>Access to areas within the LM-EM Reserve for management is</p>	<p>Project would not prevent or interfere with continued security and maintenance. Portions of existing roadway right of way located outside of the realigned Cajalco</p>	<p>Partially removed access roads would be partially or fully graded, and/or contoured, and replaced with an approximately 20-foot-wide dirt, gravel, or partially paved access road. Existing access gates and fencing would be</p>

Functions, Activities, Features & Attributes	Impacts	Design Features and Measures
<p>obtained via internal reserve access roads and security gates between the reserve and local County roadways.</p>	<p>Road, currently used for access by MWD and other agencies, would be partially removed.</p>	<p>retained, where feasible, and replaced at interface areas with the realigned Cajalco Road, within the project limits.</p> <p>Agency access for habitat management and security maintenance would be maintained during project construction and operation. All access roads within Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)– and other resource agency–managed areas would be retained, or alternate access would be provided in coordination with MWD and RCHCA.</p> <p>The installation of cameras to monitor wildlife usage at crossings and deter human trespass would also be implemented as mitigation for the loss of habitat.</p>
<p>Support & Protect SKR Habitat within Reserve: Suitable Vegetation Communities; Suitable Soils; Space for Burrows & Foraging; Physical Protective Barriers (Fencing)</p>		
<p><u>Suitable Vegetation Communities</u></p> <p>Suitable vegetation communities within the LM-EM Reserve that support SKR are nonnative grassland (NNG), Riversidian sage scrub (RSS), disturbed RSS, and RSS/NNG vegetation communities.</p> <p>4,264 acres of suitable vegetation occur within the LM-EM Reserve.</p>	<p>As discussed above, the Project would permanently impact SKR habitat within the LM-EM Reserve. However, it would not impede the protection or support of SKR and its habitat.</p>	<p>Measures BIO-14, BIO-17 and BIO-21 would compensate for the loss of reserve lands supporting SKR. Measure BIO-30, Stephen’s Kangaroo Rat Management Plan, would be developed to minimize direct impacts on SKR and protect the species.</p> <p>BIO-3, fire prevention; BIO-7, exotic species removal and prevention; and BIO-8, Equipment cleaning to reduce spread of invasive species would minimize the spread of invasive species and the risk of fires.</p> <p>Measures BIO-9, hydroseeding bare ground and onsite revegetation; and BIO-22, collection of seeds and revegetation would ensure suitable vegetation communities are preserved and restored.</p>
<p><u>Suitable Soils</u></p> <p>Suitable soils within SKR occupied habitat tend to be sandy and sandy loam clay soils with a low clay to gravel content, for ease of burrowing.</p>	<p>Construction and mechanical soil disturbance may adversely affect SKR habitat on site by altering friability or encouraging the spread of invasive plant species, which could indirectly result in loss of quality habitat and an increase in fire risk.</p>	<p>Avoidance and minimization measures BIO-2, dust control and BIO-27, Fugitive Dust Rule 403 would minimize impacts due to soil disturbance. Measure BIO-9, would minimize and mitigate impacts to soils by returning disturbed areas remaining as bare ground to natural contour grades, decompaction to eliminate compressed soils and allowing for plant establishment, and hydro-seeding with a County of Riverside–approved native plant seed mix not containing any species listed on the California Integrated Pest Council Inventory.</p>
<p><u>Space for Burrows and Foraging</u></p> <p>SKR are usually found in flatter areas (slopes less than 30 percent) but may be found on steeper slopes at trace densities</p>	<p>Lighted construction areas could affect nocturnal activities, including foraging, decreasing reproductive success or altering territories. In addition, artificial</p>	<p>The following avoidance and minimization measures would ensure these indirect impacts are greatly reduced or eliminated: BIO-16, night lighting management during construction; BIO-18, noise reduction during construction;</p>

Functions, Activities, Features & Attributes	Impacts	Design Features and Measures
<p>and may only use these areas for foraging. SKR habitat consists of open grasslands/sparse shrublands with 50 percent or less ground cover during summer. Suitable soils, as described above, are needed for ease of burrowing.</p>	<p>lighting at night may increase predation risk by allowing predators, such as owls, to hunt more efficiently. Project construction would result in an increase in human activity in the area, which could result in an increase in opportunistic predators that are attracted to litter.</p>	<p>BIO-23, minimum lighting standards in lighting design; BIO-24, waste management, BIO-26, air pollution control; BIO-28, handling, transport, and disposal of wastes; and BIO-29, pet restrictions in construction areas.</p>
<p>Physical Protective Barriers (Fencing)</p> <p>Security fencing currently exists along Cajalco Road, La Sierra Avenue, El Sobrante Road, and Harley John Road.</p>	<p>Existing security fencing along Cajalco Road south of Lake Mathews would be replaced with improved security/wildlife fencing and implementation of wildlife crossings.</p> <p>Opportunity to improve/create approximately 96,000 linear feet of fencing.</p>	<p>An approximately 10-foot-tall chain link fence with barbed wire rows at the top would be installed along Cajalco Road to provide security for the Reserve facilities, to protect sensitive resources, and deter access into preserve areas. The fencing would be powder-coated a darker color and buried with a small animal fencing feature along the bottom and escape ramps located as needed. At wildlife crossing locations, fencing would be designed to integrate with and support the crossings and facilitate the use of the crossings by wildlife. Fencing would be designed so as not to hinder or interfere with SKR movement or the function and value of SKR crossings, or hinder or interfere with the security of the Reserve.</p> <p>Fencing placement and design details will be included in a Wildlife Fencing Plan coordinated between the County, MWD, and agencies involved in management of preserve areas. Placement and design of the fencing will take into consideration the guidance provided in Section 7.5.2 of the WRC MSHCP, Guidelines for Construction of Wildlife Crossings, as well as the results of coordination for the accommodation of reserve management, maintenance, access, and security. Monitoring and maintenance of crossings and new fencing would be coordinated between the County and MWD.</p> <p>Security fencing 6 to 10 feet in height would also be installed within the right of way along Cajalco Road where detention basins are proposed.</p>

¹ RCHCA, 1996. HCP for SKR in Western Riverside County. Pages 30-31.