



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mother Lode Field Office
5152 Hillside Circle
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762-5713
www.ca.blm.gov/motherlode

Bull Creek Road/SR 140 retaining wall repairs (CA-180-14-01) Finding of No Significant Impact November 2013

It is my determination that this decision will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Anticipated impacts are within the range of impacts addressed by the Sierra Resource Management Plan (RMP). Thus, the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not necessary and will not be prepared. This conclusion is based on my consideration of CEQ's following criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), regarding the context and intensity of the impacts described in the EA and based on my understanding of the project:

- 1) *Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.* Potential impacts include temporary traffic control as well as noise and dust.
- 2) *The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* No aspects of the proposed action have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety. In fact, the project is designed to keep State Route 140 functioning and safe for the public.
- 3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area.* The project area is located within the Merced Wild and Scenic River. The project would not negatively affect the wild and scenic outstandingly remarkable values or classifications.
- 4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial effects.* No anticipated effects have been identified that are scientifically controversial. As a factor for determining within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27(b)(4) whether or not to prepare a detailed environmental impact statement, "controversy" is not equated with "the existence of opposition to a use." *Northwest Environmental Defense Center v. Bonneville Power Administration*, 117 F.3d 1520, 1536 (9th Cir. 1997). "The term 'highly controversial' refers to instances in which 'a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature, or effect of the major federal action rather than the mere existence of opposition to a use.'" *Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. Jacoby*, 9 F.Supp.2d 1216, 1242 (D. Or. 1998).
- 5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* The analysis does not show that the proposed action would involve any unique or unknown risks.
- 6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* The proposed action is not precedent setting.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* No significant site specific or cumulative impacts have been identified. The proposed action is consistent with the Sierra RMP.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* The proposed action would not adversely affect properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* No ESA listed species (or their habitat) are known to occur in the area potentially affected by the proposed action.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.* There is no indication that the proposed action will result in actions that will threaten such a violation.

William S. Haigh
Field Manager,
Mother Lode Field Office

Date



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mother Lode Field Office
5152 Hillsdale Circle
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762-5713
www.ca.blm.gov/motherlode

EA Number: CA-180-14-01

Proposed Action: Bull Creek Road/SR 140 retaining wall repair

Location

The project area is located within MDMD, T 4 S, R 18 E, Section 10, on State Route 140, north of the town of Mariposa, in Mariposa County, CA. The retaining wall is located along Bear Creek, approximately 0.2 mile from its confluence with the Merced River. The land is administered by the Bureau of Land Management's Mother Lode Field Office (BLM). See attached location and vicinity maps.

1.0 Purpose of and Need for Action

The purpose of the project is to:

- Repair a 250-foot section of the undermined retaining wall that supports State Route 140 on the east bound side slope.
- Prevent future scour.

The waters of Bear Creek have infiltrated and undermined the base of the retaining wall that supports the state highway above (scour) creating a risk of failure of the roadway, shoulder, and side slope. The project is needed to keep the State Route 140 functioning and safe for the public.

1.2 Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plans

The proposed action is consistent with the Sierra Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (ROD), approved in February 2008. Section 2.15 on page 26 of the Record of Decision, states that a goal to maintain access to outdoor recreational opportunities while protecting other resources and uses. Section 2.16, Transportation and Access states a goal of providing an appropriate level of motorized and other uses that match and complement each other and protect the resources in the area. State Highway 140 has existed for many years and provides local residents, tourists and commercial vehicles access to and through the Merced River corridor and ultimately to Yosemite Valley.

2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Proposed Action

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to restore the footing of a retaining wall (constructed in 1965) that supports a section of State Route 140 at post mile 33.8. The footing of the wall has been scoured by Bear Creek to a depth of up to seven feet and for a length of approximately 250 feet. Caltrans proposes to repair the undermined retaining wall by filling the gap with concrete and subsequently placing rock protection to prevent future scour (see design plans appended to form).

The entire project would be constructed in approximately five working days. The closure of the east bound lane of State Route 140, accompanied by one-way traffic control in the west bound lane would be necessary during most of construction. Sand bags would be lowered from a crane sitting on the highway and placed in the creek bed approximately six inches from the base of the retaining wall. Depending on the amount of flow, a water pump may be required to keep the small work area dry. Concrete forms would be placed along the face of the sandbags. The concrete pump truck parked on the highway would pump concrete through an arm-like “boom” into the scoured area. The concrete would be allowed to cure for one day. Then the sandbags and concrete forms would be dismantled and removed via the crane to the elevation of the highway. Up to fifteen cubic yards (approximately two dump truck loads) of rock protection would be placed along the 250-foot area.

2.2 Project Design Feature

Construction best management practices for this project would be defined and communicated to all staff before they set foot on the job site. Only necessary workers and monitors will be given access to the river’s edge and the footing of the retaining wall that is being repaired. Access to the work site for these construction personnel and monitors would be via hiking in from a downstream day use recreation area, using great care to avoid damaging any special status plants or animals. Other staff will be required to remain on the paved or otherwise already disturbed area on and adjacent to State Highway 140 and its shoulder.

The project would be constructed when flows in Bear Creek are minimal or consist only of small pools. As 2012 was a dry year, the level of Bear Creek is even lower than is usual at this time of year. This would likely prevent any turbid water from reaching the Merced River downstream. This construction work window would be established through a construction contract special provision and through regulatory agency permitting. A Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will not be necessary because this project would fall under Caltrans’ maintenance exemption. A Section 401 water quality certification and waste discharge permit has been obtained from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (see attachments).

- Limestone salamanders. Due to the limestone salamanders fully protected status with the state, the downhill slope identified as habitat must be completely protected from ground disturbance. This slope would be identified as an environmentally sensitive area on the final project design maps and in the construction contract insuring that all construction-related activities completely avoid limestone salamander and its habitat. A Caltrans biologist would be present on site daily to monitor all construction activities. The project would be constructed during early November, which is often a dry time in this area, but can also bring the beginning of the rainy season. Significant rain events cause salamanders to become active. Should there be a rain event during the estimated five-day construction window, work on the project would stop for the duration and would not recommence until the biological monitor is satisfied that the potential for causing harm to salamanders has dissipated.
- Foothill yellow-legged frogs. Although it is not expected that foothill yellow-legged frogs would be present, a Caltrans biologist would conduct pre-construction survey for this species and would be on-site to monitor all construction activities.

- Migratory birds. To avoid direct or indirect impacts to nesting birds, all construction activities would occur in November avoiding the nesting season.
- Permanent and temporary best management practices (BMP) would be selected and implemented in accordance with the Storm Water Departments Project Planning and Design Guide. The construction contractor would address all potential water quality impacts that could occur through Caltrans Standard Specification Section 13.1 “Water Pollution Control”. This specification requires the contractor to prepare and submit to Caltrans for approval a Water Pollution Control Program.

2.3 No Action

The no-build alternative does not repair the undermined retaining wall. The existing scour damage would remain and would continue to worsen. The slope supporting State Route 140 and the highway itself would eventually fail. Such a failure would likely dump soil, including soil potentially contaminated with petro-chemicals and aerially-deposited lead, and possibly paving materials and other detritus into Bear Creek, which is a nearby tributary to the Wild and Scenic Merced River.

2.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

There were three alternatives considered but eliminated from further discussion. One alternative included the construction of a secant or tangent wall behind the existing retaining wall. A second alternative included the installation of micro piles through and beneath the scoured footing by drilling from a bench below the roadway. These two alternatives were dropped from consideration because they would each have disturbance to the slope on the eastbound side, creating significant impacts to a biological resource. A third was the construction of a “cutoff wall” at the base of the retaining wall footing that would be buried 4 feet below the creek. The cutoff wall would dissipate energy and prevent future scour. This alternative would require extensive subsurface investigation to determine the depth of bedrock. It would also require the removal of riparian trees and the use of heavy equipment in Bear Creek, both of which are more significant environmental impacts than those caused by the proposed build alternative.

3.0 Affected Environment

The project area is located along Bear Creek, approximately 0.2 miles south of the confluence with the Merced River, which is designated as a Wild and Scenic River under the recreational classification.

The Merced River originates in the high Sierra of Yosemite National Park. The river collects its water from Mount Hoffman, Mount Raymond, Tenaya Lake, and the Cathedral Range and flows freely into Yosemite Valley. The Merced River creates deep canyons as it continues through the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. The river eventually makes its way down into the San Joaquin Valley.

A Natural Environmental Study/Minimal Impacts report was completed for this project in September 2012. The vegetation along the downhill easterly slope consists of scattered stands of canyon live oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*) and foothill pine (*Pinus sabiniana*) forest. The shrub layer consists of sparse cover of poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos viscida*), and buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*). Other species found with minor cover in this association include toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), interior live oak (*Quercus wislizeni*), California buckeye (*Aesculus*

californica), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), rat-tail fescue (*Vulpia myuros*), lupine (*Lupinus* sp.), and moss.

The riparian vegetation surrounding the project site along Bear Creek is dominated by white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), with a shrubby deciduous understory consisting of dogwood (*Cornus* sp.), Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), and willow (*Salix* sp.). Torrent sedge (*Carex nudata*) is the dominant herb along the water margin. California wild grape (*Vitis californica*) forms large colonies on the creek bed and extends on the upward slope near the highway. Additional plant species present in the riparian understory include redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), and mint (*Mentha* sp.). Riparian vegetation is provided some protection through California Fish and Game Code and the Native Plant Protection Act.

There are two BLM sensitive plant species that were determined to have potential habitat in the vicinity of the project area. These species are Mariposa clarkia (*Clarkia biloba* ssp. *australis*) and beaked clarkia (*Clarkia rostrata*).

Limestone salamanders live in crevices of cliffs and ledges and under the canopy of foothill-oak woodland, especially where the rocks are overgrown with moss. They are active during the fall, winter, and spring rains, and become inactive during the dry, hot months sheltering in cracks, crevices, or dense leaf litter. The limestone salamander only occurs along some segments of the Merced River drainage, all of which are along an approximate ten mile corridor. After discussions with the Bureau of Land Management, it was determined that focused surveys would not be necessary and that limestone salamanders could be assumed to be present on site. This is because suitable habitat is present on the downward slope from the highway and there are multiple known occurrences in the vicinity of the project area. Limestone salamanders are considered a sensitive species by the BLM and threatened and fully protected by the California Department of Fish and Game. The fully protected status means that a permit cannot be issued for any impact to this species nor can any impact be mitigated for.

Foothill yellow-legged frog is considered a sensitive species by the BLM and a species of special concern by the California Department of Fish and Game. It typically inhabits partially shaded, small rocky streams at low to moderate elevations, in areas of chaparral, open woodland, and forest. It seeks cover at the bottom of a pool when startled.

The foothill yellow-legged frog is known to be present in the vicinity of the project site and Bear Creek appears to offer suitable habitat, however during one field survey dozens of bullfrog tadpoles were observed in Bear Creek at the project site. It is unlikely that foothill yellow-legged frog would be found under such conditions, as the larvae of yellow-legged frog are an ideal food source for bullfrog and bullfrog tadpoles.

The tree and shrub coverage along the downhill slope from the highway as well as the trees and shrubs in Bear Creek provide suitable nesting habitat for migratory birds. Migratory birds are protected during their nesting season which is recognized as February 15 through September 1.

The Bureau of Land Management-Mother Lode Field Office (BLM) is responsible for the administration of the recreationally classified segment of the Merced River downstream from the project site. The recreational classification is due to the presence of the highway and Incline Road (former rail line turned dirt road along north side of Merced River), which provides access to the recreational activities on the river.

Following is a discussion of the current status of each outstandingly remarkable value (ORV), as identified by the BLM, in the Merced River 0.2 mile downstream from the project area:

- Free Flowing Condition and Water Quality. The Merced River is free flowing and traces a relatively straight path from Yosemite Valley to the San Joaquin Valley. The water quality at the project area is good to excellent.
- Archeology. The Merced River contains sites where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. The sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory. The Merced River has a known historic association with the Southern Sierra Miwok. River-related resources such as plants and animals are important to them. The American Indian Council of Mariposa has shown interest in the resources of the river, especially the use of plants for medicine, food, and basket weaving.
- Cultural and historical resources may include historic properties or sites of national importance. Cultural resources may also protected under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties – those cultural resources eligible for and included in the National Register of Historic Places. Cultural and historical resources specifically called out as an outstandingly remarkable value of the Merced Wild and Scenic River would also receive special consideration during project review.

Geology. The Merced River Canyon is a steep inner gorge with highly fractured rocks that formed as a result of tectonic uplifting and the cutting of the Merced River. Exposure of the rocks within the canyon has provided an opportunity for understanding the geologic history of the area. Glaciations left their imprint on this part of the Merced River Canyon as glacial outwash deposits. Between El Portal and Briceburg, the river valley cuts through rocks that are geologically significant. An interpretive sign along State Route 140 approximately 5 miles east of Briceburg describes the rocks within the canyon as very old metamorphic rocks (changed in a pronounced way by the application of pressure, heat or water). The bedrock in the Merced Canyon near the Ferguson Rockslide consists of these types of rocks, primarily the Phyllite and Chert of Hite's Cove. The bedrock also contains limestone lenses or beds (small, localized areas of limestone) with an extensive limestone bed on the west side of the horseshoe bend. This limestone bed is important because it yielded early important Triassic fossils. A Preliminary Geotechnical Recommendations memo was prepared for this project on August 29, 2008. Based on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) map of the Felician Mountain Quadrangle and a field site investigation, the project lies in an area of steep topographic relief with elevations ranging from 1200 to more than 2550 feet in the immediate area of the proposed project. According to the Geologic Map of California the bedrock is considered to be Paleozoic marine sedimentary rocks composed of limestone and dolomite although a more current USGS map refers to the site as Tertiary Phyllite of Briceburg. The rock type observed during the site investigation was consistent with a

metasedimentary rock similar to the phyllite observed on the USGS map. The nearest five active fault zones are to the southwest and northeast of the project area twelve to forty-five miles away. There are no known active faults within the project area.

- Limestone salamander/wildlife. The limestone salamander (*Hydromantes brunus*) is listed as a sensitive species by the BLM and is designated as threatened and fully protected by the State of California. The threatened designation by the State of California indicates that the species is at a high risk of extinction due to restricted range and few populations. Threats to this species include gold mining operations, highway construction, water development, and quarrying for limestone.
- Botanical. The Merced River Canyon is renowned nationally and internationally for the spectacular display of wildflowers that may be seen in a good rain year. People are especially attracted to the South Fork Trail that leads to Hite's Cove, but the entire river corridor is an attraction because of the flowers' visual appeal. Between El Portal and Briceburg, there are five US Forest Service sensitive plants growing adjacent to the Merced River. These are Yosemite onion (*Allium yosemitense*), Tompkins' sedge (*Carex tompkinsii*), Merced clarkia (*Clarkia lingulata*), Congdon's woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum congdonii*), and Congdon's lewisia (*Lewisia congdonii*). Just south of Briceburg, there are numerous populations of the BLM sensitive plant, Mariposa clarkia (*Clarkia biloba* ssp. *australis*), located along the south-facing slopes of the Merced River. These special status plants are not known to be present at the project site in Bear Creek or adjacent to the highway.
- Recreation. The recreational outstandingly remarkable value consists of three primary recreational activities: whitewater boating, camping, and hiking. Whitewater boating is the most popular activity on the Merced River downstream from the project area and has been occurring on the river since the 1970s, averaging 8,000 to 10,000 boaters annually. The whitewater boating season typically begins in March and ends in June or July depending on the snow pack.
- Camping is not common in the area because of the steep canyon walls found along the Merced River and in the project area. More suitable camping opportunities can be found in the flat open terrain in the Bureau of Land Management's Merced River Recreation Area at Briceburg. Incline Road (along the north side of the river) provides opportunities for hiking and biking and is occasionally used by equestrians.

4.0 Environmental Effects

The following critical elements have been considered for this environmental assessment, and unless specifically mentioned later in this EA, have been determined to be unaffected by the proposal: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, prime/unique farmlands, floodplains, water quality, threatened or endangered species, hazardous waste, wetlands and riparian zones, wilderness, invasive nonnative weeds, and environmental justice.

4.1 Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

Geology/seismic/soils: There are no known active faults within the project area. The project would not affect the sensitive geology and soils in the area (Preliminary Geotechnical Recommendations memo, August 2008).

Hydrology: Short-term impacts to water quality could occur during construction of the proposed project, primarily from exposure of loose soil during excavation, grading and filling activities. Suspended solids, dissolved solids, and potential organic pollutants (erosion, accidental spills of hazardous material, disruption of natural drainage patterns) in surface water runoff could increase when nearby soils are disturbed and dust is generated. These potential short-term impacts are expected to be minor and would not threaten beneficial uses of Bear Creek. Bear Creek is not a regulated floodplain and the project would not affect the flow patterns of the creek (Hydraulics memo, February 2011 and updated Hydraulics memo, November 2012).

Wetlands and other waters: Bear Creek would be directly affected. The minimal vegetation disturbance would result in some amount of temporary turbidity in the water. The temporary disturbance would consist of construction personnel foot traffic and minor hand excavation tools for the placement of concrete forms and sand bags. There would be approximately 60 cubic yards of concrete pumped into the scoured area under the retaining wall, for a total of 60 cubic yards of permanent fill into the jurisdictional waters of the U.S. There would be no permanent impacts to the Merced River. The temporary disturbance activities in Bear Creek could result in minimal amounts of turbid water flowing downstream into the Merced River. The project would not affect any jurisdictional wetlands.

Botanical resources: There would be some vegetation disturbance or removal at the base of the retaining wall in Bear Creek. The disturbance would consist of construction personnel foot traffic and minor hand excavation tools for the placement of concrete forms and sand bags. There would be some vegetation disturbance on the SR 140 shoulder consisting of foot traffic and the use of construction vehicles and equipment. It should be noted that the special status plants listed above would most likely to be found on the downward slope area of the project and not in Bear Creek or on the highway shoulder. It is the slope that provides the most suitable habitat.

The downward slope from SR 140 toward the creek (most suitable habitat for special-status plants) would be designated an environmentally sensitive area on the project design plans. Preconstruction surveys for special status plants would be conducted in the appropriate bloom period prior to construction. If any special status plants are observed in any part of the project area, the Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Game would be contacted for informal consultation regarding how to appropriately protect the plants. If the plants could not be protected by an environmentally sensitive area, minimization measures could include tasks such as seed collection or transplantation.

Wildlife: A Natural Environment Study/Minimal Impacts Report was prepared for this project in September 2012. There are no federally listed species, their habitat, or critical habitat found in the project area. However, there is the potential for state threatened (and BLM sensitive) species within the project area.

- Limestone salamanders. Limestone salamanders are assumed to be present within the project area. Any ground disturbance to the downhill slope from SR 140 to Bear Creek could result in harm to this species and its habitat.

- Foothill yellow-legged frogs. Due to the significant population of bullfrogs in Bear Creek, foothill yellow-legged frogs are not expected to be present.
- Migratory birds. At this time, it is not expected that any trees, shrubs or other nesting habitat would be removed for this project although some branches may need to be trimmed. Construction activities adjacent to or even several hundred feet away from an active nest could have indirect effects to the birds or their young through noise, vibration, or inadvertent threats. There would be no impacts to the slope downhill of the eastbound lane of SR 140, with its oak-pine woodland natural community. This portion of the project area is a steep, slippery slope and would not be attractive to construction personnel as a short cut because of that. Nevertheless, it would also be designated an environmentally sensitive area. The riparian community would be affected minimally. No trees are expected to be removed, however some ground vegetation may be disturbed. Disturbance would consist of construction personnel foot traffic and minor hand excavation tools for the placement of concrete forms and sand bags. The threat presented by foot traffic would be avoided and minimized to the greatest possible degree by identifying and enforcing best management practices at the project site, in particular limiting the number of staff and monitors with foot access to the site. Essential staff would be lowered to the construction site from the boom truck situated in the eastbound traffic lane of State Route 140.

Cultural resources: This project falls under *Stipulation VII of the Programmatic Agreement among the Federal Highway Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the California State Historic Preservation Officer, and the California Department of Transportation Regarding Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as it Pertains to the Administration of the Federal-Aid Highway Program in California* and is exempt from further review or consultation under Section 106 (Cultural Resources memo, May 2011).

Recreation/visual resources: The project lies along the scenic entrance to Yosemite National Park in the Merced River Canyon which is dominated by an oak-woodland landscape. There will be no trees or vegetation removed and no noticeable changes to the environment (Preliminary Scenic Resource Evaluation/Visual Impact Assessment, February 2011).

Fire/fuels: This project will not introduce new sources of fuel to the area. No heavy construction or other equipment would be introduced into any off-road or undisturbed area, and the duration of work is brief.

Socio-economic issues: There is no development associated with this project. Increased traffic volumes are not expected as a result of the project. The project is consistent with the general plans and management plans in the vicinity of the project.

Wild and Scenic River: The outstandingly remarkable values of the Merced Wild and Scenic River and its tributary Bear Creek would not be substantially or permanently affected as detailed below.

- Free flowing condition and water quality. There would be no permanent structures placed in the Merced River; there would be no construction activities conducted in the Merced River. Therefore, the free flowing condition of the Merced River would not be affected. The free flowing condition of lower Bear Creek would be affected; however these effects are not anticipated to be adverse. The retaining wall existed in this area prior to the designation of the Merced Wild and Scenic River. The undermined retaining wall would be repaired without any new impediments to free flowing conditions on Bear Creek.

Minor ground disturbance could potentially occur during construction. This ground disturbance could create temporary discharges of sediment into Bear Creek if water is present during construction, which could send sediment downstream into the Merced River. The project is planned for the driest time of year (late fall), when flows on Bear Creek are typically at their lowest levels. This timing would help prevent discharges of sediment into the creek and, hence, into the Merced River.

- Archeology/cultural/historical resources. The resources are all located along the Merced River, the nearest being at Briceburg downstream from the project area. There would be no construction activities in the Merced River and therefore not affect prehistoric sites or other cultural resources considered to be an outstandingly remarkable value of the Merced Wild and Scenic River.
- Geology. The important geologic formations are along the Merced River Canyon walls. There would be no construction activities in the canyon and therefore no effect to these formations. Construction activities would be confined to the SR 140 highway, shoulder, and the base of the failing retaining wall, along Bear Creek.
- Limestone salamander/wildlife. Limestone salamanders are known to be present in the vicinity of the project area. There are known occurrences at Briceburg and the Limestone Salamander Ecological Reserve is within five miles of the project area. Although focused field surveys were not conducted, the slope above the retaining wall that supports SR 140 is potential habitat and limestone salamanders are likely to be present. The build alternative being proposed for this project completely avoids any impact to this fully protected species.
- Botanical. There are multiple special status plant species present throughout the Merced River Canyon but none were found within the project area. Aquatic plants downstream in the Merced River could be temporarily affected by construction-created sediment travelling downstream. Upland plants along the Merced River would not be affected. Plants at the base of the retaining wall in Bear Creek could be trampled or removed.

- Recreation. All construction activities would occur in Bear Creek 0.22 miles away from the Merced River and its recreation activities. The project would be under construction for approximately five days. There would be no effects to recreation activities.

4.2 Impacts of the No Action Alternative

Soil resources/water quality/hydrology: Under the no action alternative, there would be no temporary construction impacts on water quality or hydrology. Should the wall fail and State Highway 140 collapse, soil and the ruins of the wall and roadway would likely enter Bear Creek, causing turbidity and possibly blocking the free-flowing character of the creek. Some of the detritus from the failure of the roadway could possibly be contaminated with petrochemicals and aeri-ally-deposited lead, leading to potential contamination of the wild and scenic Merced River.

Botanical resources: Under the no action alternative, no special status plants or their habitat would be affected.

Wildlife resources: Wildlife, including limestone salamanders, would not be subject to human incursion during construction. Should the wall fail and SR 140 collapse, soil and the ruins of the wall and roadway would likely enter Bear Creek, which could result in harm to wildlife, including the fully protected limestone salamander. Some of the detritus from the failure of the roadway could possibly be contaminated with petrochemicals and aeri-ally-deposited lead, leading to potential contamination of the Merced Wild and Scenic River, which could cause harm to river life.

Cultural resources: Under the no action alternative, no cultural resources eligible for, or listed on, the National Register of Historic Places would be affected.

Recreation/visual resources/Wild and Scenic River: Should the wall fail and SR 140 collapse, soil and the ruins of the wall and roadway would likely enter Bear Creek, causing turbidity and possibly blocking the free-flowing character of the creek. Some of the detritus from the failure of the roadway could possibly be contaminated with petrochemicals and aeri-ally-deposited lead, leading to potential contamination of the Merced Wild and Scenic River; thus degrading the river's water quality outstandingly remarkable value. These factors could create an undesirable management condition and potentially adversely impact the recreation, free-flowing, and water quality wild and scenic outstandingly remarkable values.

4.3 Cumulative Impacts

Given the very small scope of the proposed action, negative cumulative impacts (i.e., development within a wild and scenic corridor) are not anticipated. In fact, the proposed action would be beneficial to the long-term transportation and access through this corridor and would enhance the recreation outstandingly remarkable value. No effects on significant cultural resources, and special status species would occur; no permanent effects on water quality and the free-flowing character of the stream would occur. Temporary and minor effects on water quality and free-flowing character of Bear Creek would be minimized and avoided to the greatest degree possible, and would end with the conclusion of the three-day estimated duration of construction.

5.0 Agencies and Persons Consulted

Caltrans District 6, California State Fish and Wildlife, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and Army Corps of Engineers. This EA was prepared by Caltrans.

5.1 BLM Interdisciplinary Team

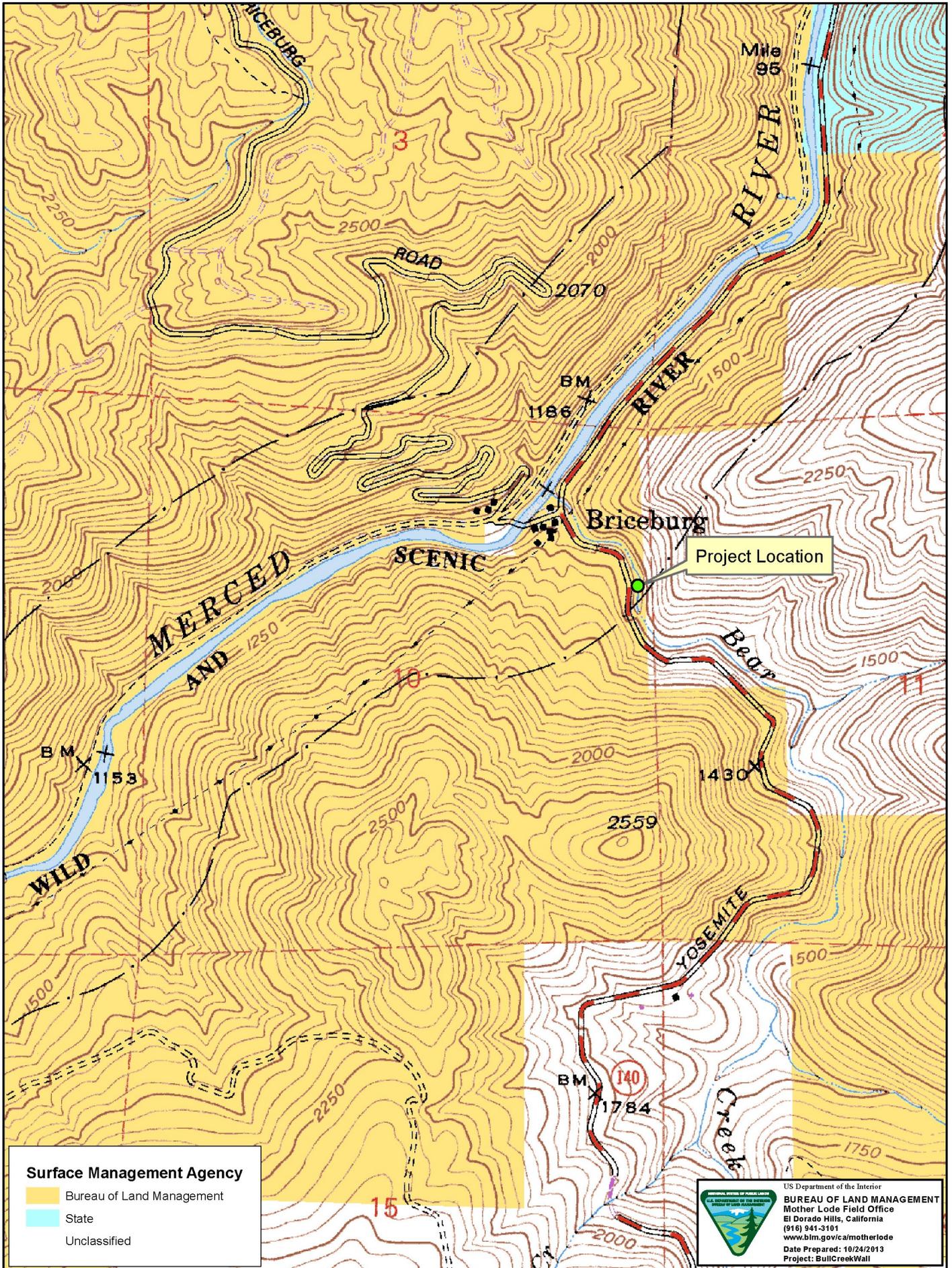
Reviewers:

<i>/s/ James Barnes</i>	<i>10/23/13</i>
<hr/>	
NEPA Coordinator/Cultural Resource Specialist	
<i>/s/ James M. Eicher</i>	<i>10/24/13</i>
<hr/>	
Wild and Scenic River Specialist	
<i>/s/ Beth S. Brenneman</i>	<i>10/22/13</i>
<hr/>	
Botanist	
<i>/s/ James M. Eicher</i>	<i>10/24/13</i>
<hr/>	
Outdoor Recreation Planner/VRM Specialist	
<i>/s/ Peggy Cranston</i>	<i>10/23/13</i>
<hr/>	
Wildlife Biologist	

5.2 Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

The project description was posted by Caltrans District 6 on the California State Clearinghouse webpage/CEQAnet, at www.ceqanet.ca.gov/ProjectList.asp. The project description was posted for 30 days in May and June 2013. No comments were received. This EA is available upon request. Comments should be sent to the Mother Lode Field Office, 5152 Hillside Circle, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 or emailed to us at jjbarnes@blm.gov.

Bull Creek Road Retaining Wall Project



T4S

T4S

R18E

Bull Creek Road Retaining Wall Project



T4S

T4S

BLM

PVT

Project Area

Mixed Wild & Scenic River Boundary

Surface Management Agency

-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Wild & Scenic River Boundary

 US Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Mother Lode Field Office
El Dorado Hills, California
(916) 941-3101
www.blm.gov/motherlode
Date Prepared: 10/24/2013
Project: BullCreekWall_aerial

R18E