



Appendix F

**Wetland Only Practicable
Alternative Finding**

Wetlands Only Practicable Alternative Findings

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Executive Order 11990, dated May 24, 1977, "Protection of Wetland," which established a national policy "to avoid to the extent possible long and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative," the following Wetlands Assessment has been prepared.

ALTERNATIVES

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to upgrade a 5.6-km (3.6-mi) segment of State Route (SR) 70 from expressway to four-lane freeway. The proposed project would be constructed in three phases: Safety, Phase 1, and Phase 2 (Ultimate). Project construction would begin 1.6 km (1 mi) north of Palermo Road and terminate at a point 0.5 km (0.3 mi) south of the SR 162 junction, where the freeway currently begins. The Draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Assessment (DEIR/DEA) discussed three alternatives: the "no-project" alternative, Alternative D (Middle Interchange), and Alternative E (North Interchange).

Both the build alternatives would include the following improvements:

- Relocation of the SR 70/Ophir Road intersection and 4-way stop signal.
- Construction of an interchange at Ophir Road and an overcrossing at Georgia Pacific Way.
- Construction of two additional 3.6-m (12-ft) lanes with a 22-m to 6.7-m (72-ft to 22-ft) median, 3-m (10-ft) outside shoulders, and 1.5-m (5-ft) median shoulders.
- Rehabilitation of the existing SR 70 roadway.
- Realignment of the frontage road system to accommodate the proposed interchange and overcrossing.
- Elimination of driveway access points.

Alternative D (Middle Interchange)

Alternative D proposes construction of the Ophir Road interchange overcrossing within approximately 75 m (250 ft) of the Ophir Road at-grade intersection. Interchange ramp construction and ramp/local road at-grade intersection spacing requirements would necessitate relocation of the Pacific Heights Road and Feather River Boulevard frontage roads. Approximately 690 m (2260 ft) of Ophir Road from east of its intersection with Feather River Boulevard to the new overcrossing would need to be realigned.

Alternative E (North Interchange)

Alternative E proposes construction of the Ophir Road interchange overcrossing about 830 m (2720 ft) north of the Ophir Road at-grade intersection. This northern location limit is controlled by the mandatory minimum rural interchange spacing of 3 km (1.86 mi) to the existing SR 70/162 interchange on the

northern limits of this project. Interchange ramp construction and ramp/local road at-grade intersection spacing requirements would necessitate relocation of the Pacific Heights Road and Feather River Boulevard frontage roads. Approximately 700 m (2300 ft) of Ophir Road from the Baggett/Marysville Road intersection to the new overcrossing would need to be realigned.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Assessment (DEIR/DEA) discussed three alternatives: the "no-project" alternative, Alternative D (Middle Interchange), and Alternative E (North Interchange). Without the consideration of natural resources, the SR 70 Freeway Extension/Ophir Road Interchange project have comparable environmental impacts. Impacts would result in nearly the same number of business and housing displacements. Impacts to socioeconomic, noise, farmland, air quality, cultural resources are essentially identical. It is the impacts to wetlands/waters of U.S. and giant garter snake habitat which sets the two build alternatives apart. Alternative E (North Interchange) would impact 1.52 ha (3.75 ac) of wetlands and waters of the U.S., while alternative D (Middle Interchange) would only affect 0.75 ha (1.85 ac). In addition, alternative E (North Interchange) would affect 7.40 ha (18.29 ac) of giant garter snake habitat, while alternative D (Middle Interchange) would only affect 0.75 ha (1.85 ac). The Alternative D (Middle Interchange) would have the least impacts on wetland/waters of the U.S. and giant garter snake and, as such, would be preferable from a biological standpoint. Therefore, the Alternative D (Middle Interchange) was identified as the Preferred Alternative and the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA).

MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM

The following measures have been developed to minimize the environmental impacts to wetlands along the State Route 70:

1. Compensation for impacts will include the following:
 - Preservation and/or creation of habitat at a ratio and location (mitigation bank) approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineer. and/or
 - Restoration of habitat onsite or another agency approved site.
2. Erosion control measures will be performed during and after construction of the project.

FINDINGS

Based upon the above considerations, it is determined that there is no practicable alternative to the proposed new construction in wetlands and proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use.