



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Highway  
Administration**

# Memorandum

Central Federal Lands Highway Division

Subject: INFORMATION: Categorical Exclusion  
CA FH 112, South Fork Smith River Road  
Del Norte County, CA

Date: FEB 20 2008

From: Dave Zanetell, P.E. (HFL-16)  
Director of Project Delivery  
Lakewood, CO

In Reply Refer To:  
HFPM-16

To: CFLHD Central File – CA FH 112

Thru: Richard J. Cushing, P.E. *RJC 2/20/08*  
Environmental Planning Engineer

T. Samuel Holder, P.E. *TS 2/20/08*  
Project Development Engineer

Gary Strike, P.E. *GS 2/20/08*  
Project Manager

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Six Rivers National Forest (SRNF) and Del Norte County is proposing improvements and road repairs to CA FH 112, also known as the South Fork Smith River Road and County Road 427 and County Road 405, located in Del Norte County, California (Figure 1). The proposed project begins approximately 3.5 miles south of Hiouchi, California, and involves seven areas from milepost (MP) 3.5 to MP 15.0 (see attached Figure 1). Specifically, the proposed action involves replacing the bridges over Rock Creek, Boulder Creek, and the South Fork of the Smith River (Stevens Memorial Bridge); and widening four single lane portions of the roadway to two lanes. CA FH 112 provides access within the Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) of the Six Rivers National Forest in the extreme northwest corner of northern California. The purpose of the project is to improve safety along CA FH 112 by widening the three single-lane bridges and four other single-lane portions of the road.

The 305,337-acre Smith River NRA was established in 1990 to protect the area's special scenic value, natural diversity, cultural and historical attributes, wilderness, wildlife, fisheries, and the Smith River watershed with its clean waters.

The Smith River NRA is the heart of one of the largest wild and scenic river systems (315 miles) in the United States. The Smith River watershed exhibits a rich ecological diversity. Over 176 miles of anadromous fish habitat, over 300 species of wildlife, and seven distinct plant communities contribute to the lush natural environment of the Smith River NRA.

The namesake of the NRA, the river, was Jedediah Smith, the famous mountain man who crossed this area in 1828. However, long before the arrival of early European explorers, the shores of the Smith River were home to the Tolowa Indians. In the 1930s the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) resulted in many facilities being built which added to this area's cultural history. Mining and timber harvesting has also played an important role in the development of Del Norte County over the last 100 years.

Within the borders of the Smith River NRA, a variety of recreational opportunities exist. White water rafting, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, bird watching, nature study, world-class steelhead fishing, hunting, camping, and touring the Smith River Scenic Byway are a few of the many recreational adventures available.

## **Proposed Project**

The reconstructed portions of the roadway will have eleven-foot lanes and one-foot shoulders, for a total width of twenty-four feet. The design speed is 35 miles per hour.

To widen the roadway in the steep terrain both cut walls and fill walls will be used on this project. Cut walls (on the uphill side of the roadway) are anticipated to be soil nail walls. Fill walls (downhill from the roadway) will be soldier pile walls and/or mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) walls. Final wall types will be determined during final design. Facing for each type of wall will be coordinated with the Forest Service and Del Norte County, and will be designed to blend with the surrounding environment.

Road closures during construction will be required at all locations. The standard road closure for the contract will be four-hour closures, with traffic allowed through the worksites before 8:00 am, from 12:00 pm to 12:30 pm, and after 4:30 pm. Due to the extreme narrowness of the roadways and steepness of the adjacent slopes, an extended road closure of up to two months may be required at Site C.

Detailed locations and descriptions of proposed bridge replacements and site repairs are given below.

### **MP 3.6-4.0 – Site A**

Site A will be widened to two-lanes using a cut wall and fill wall combination due to steep terrain adjacent to the roadway. On the cutslope side of the road the soil nail wall will be located where the slope has previously failed, which is located in the middle of the site. On both sides of the slope failure the roadway will be widened by excavating the existing rock. The fill wall will be MSE wall or soldier pile wall.

### **MP 7.7 Rock Creek Bridge**

The existing one-lane bridge will be replaced with a two-lane bridge. The proposed bridge is 115 feet long by 35 feet 4 inches wide (includes curve widening and offset to, and width for, barrier rail). It will be a simple span using California bulb “T” prestressed concrete girders and drilled shaft foundations at both abutments.

Staged construction will be required at the Rock Creek Bridge. During stage construction, one lane of the new bridge will be constructed adjacent to the existing bridge, traffic will be moved to the new lane, the existing bridge will be removed, and then the second lane of the new bridge will be constructed. The proposed new alignment will shift to the upstream side of the existing structure. Right of way (ROW) acquisition will be required at this location.

The Rock Creek Bridge does meet the 100-year and 50-year hydraulic criteria for all conditions on Rock Creek itself. Due to the proximity of Rock Creek's confluence with the South Fork Smith River, when a hydrologic event with a 50-year recurrence interval, or greater, occurs in the South Fork Smith River it creates a tailwater condition at the Rock Creek Bridge. The hydraulic results demonstrate that the bridge has sufficient capacity to pass the 100-year flow, without overtopping the bridge, as long as the peak flow in the South Fork Smith River is approximately equal to or less than a 50-year event when the peak flow occurs on Rock Creek. The Rock Creek Bridge could not be elevated to obtain adequate freeboard due to the terrain and nearby driveway access points. Because the condition is a tailwater condition, the flow velocities are low and therefore potential for erosion of the embankments or damage to the structure is also low. In addition, because Rock Creek and South Fork Smith River drain different drainage areas, it is not likely that a 50-year event or greater would occur in both at the same time.

#### **MP 7.8-8.6 Site B**

This site is being widened using a fill wall due to the existing tall rock cutslope and the presence of *Darlingtonia* plants on the cutslope. The fill wall will be either a soldier pile wall or a MSE Wall. ROW acquisition is anticipated at this location.

#### **MP 8.8 Boulder Creek Bridge**

The existing one-lane bridge will be replaced with a two-lane bridge. The proposed structure will be 105 feet long by 35 feet 4 inches wide (includes curve widening and offset to, and width for, barrier rail). The proposed structure will be a simple span using California bulb "T" prestressed concrete girders and a drilled shaft foundation at each abutment.

Staged construction will be required at this location. The new alignment will shift to the upstream side of the existing structure. ROW acquisition will be required at this location.

The Boulder Creek Bridge meets the 100-year hydraulic criteria for all conditions. Interaction with the South Fork Smith River flood events is not an issue due to Boulder Creek's steep gradient to its confluence with South Fork Smith River.

Due to a bend in the channel, the bank near one of the abutments of the existing bridge is eroding. Rock bank/abutment protection, consisting of riprap, will be placed in this area to prevent further erosion. The area of the rock bank/abutment protection is approximately 110 ft long x 15 ft high, with a 2H:1V bank slope. About one third of the height will be below the ordinary high water mark (OHWM). The work will take place during the portion of the dry season when Boulder Creek runs below the surface of the boulders in its bed, so all work will be out of the effective flow. The work will be done from the top of the bank (no equipment will be operated in the channel). This is the only location where there will be work below the OHWM.

#### **MP 10.5-11.2 Site C**

Site C is the longest one-lane portion of the road. The first third of the site will be widened using fill wall due to the presence of an existing rock buttress that can't be disturbed on the outside. In the center portion of the site there is an extremely narrow area that will be a cut wall and fill wall combination due to the steep terrain immediately adjacent. Both proposed walls will be 20 feet to 30 feet tall. The cut wall will be a soil nail wall. The fill wall could be either an MSE wall or a soldier pile wall. On the last one-third of the site the roadway will be widened using a fill wall. At the narrow area in the middle of the site, it may not be possible to keep the road open to traffic. If that is the case, the road may be closed for up to two months.

### **MP 12.7 South Fork (Stevens Memorial) Bridge**

The existing single-lane bridge will be replaced by a two-lane bridge that will be 369 feet long by 31 feet 4 inches wide (includes offset to, and width for, barrier rail; no curve widening required). The proposed bridge will have three spans, with steel girders and drilled shaft foundations on all of the piers and abutments. Piers will be socketed into rock.

The proposed new alignment will shift to the downstream side of the existing bridge and was able to be shifted far enough to construct the bridge using full width construction, i.e. no stage construction will be required.

The road construction will affect a small retention pond adjacent to the roadway which is used as a source of water for fire trucks. A new pond will be constructed to replace the existing pond.

Also as part of the project, an existing closed two-track road will be converted to a pedestrian path for use as access to the river for rafters.

### **MP 13.3-13.6 Site D**

The roadway will be widened at this site using a fill wall due to the presence of the existing tall rock cutslope. The wall may be an MSE Wall or a soldier pile wall.

## **Effects Analysis**

This project has no known involvement with the following issues:

1. Section 6(f) lands
2. Farmland
3. Coastal Areas
4. Environmental Justice

The proposed project will have negligible, minimal, or no effects with the following issues:

### Visual Quality:

With respect to the bridge structures, only the driving surface is generally visible to the public. The new bridge surface will be wider post-construction. The bridges are also visible from the South Fork Smith River and any recreationist using the river. Rock Creek and Boulder Creek bridges are visible only from very short stretches of the river, and the changes to the appearance of the bridges would not affect the quality of the recreation experience. Steven Memorial Bridge crosses the South Fork Smith River. Although the new bridge will be wider than the existing bridge, due to the height of the bridge above the river, the visual change would be negligible and would not affect the quality of the recreation experience. Construction of the new bridges should have only temporary visual impacts during construction.

The cut wall at Sites A and C will be visible to the travelling public. In some locations at each of the Sites (A, B, C, and D), the fill walls will be visible to people recreating on the South Fork of the Smith River. Facing for each type of wall will be coordinated with the Forest Service and Del Norte County, and will be designed to blend with the surrounding environment.

### Social and Economic Impacts:

Moderate impacts will result from short term and long term road closures, particularly to residents and visitors to the Smith River NRA. Daily road closures during construction will be required at all the Sites (A, B, C, and D) and at all bridge locations. The standard road closure

for the contract (for weekdays and weekends), unless modified during final design, will be as follows: traffic will be allowed through the worksites before 8:00 am, between 12:00 and 12:30 pm, and after 4:30 pm. At all other times there will be up to 30 minute delays. Due to the extreme narrowness of the roadways and steepness of the adjacent slopes, more extended closures of up to two months may be required at Site C. There are alternate routes out of the area, resulting in out-of-direction travel of approximately 32 miles depending on destination. The public will be notified of all road closures at least two weeks in advance. At all times during daily road closures access for emergency vehicles will be maintained.

#### Recreation:

The project is within the Smith River NRA managed by the SRNF. Although there are other ways to access this part of the Recreation Area, CA 112 functions as the primary access. Closures on the road will impact access to recreation during construction. These impacts have been coordinated with the Recreation Manager and District Ranger of the NRA. After construction, the road will provide safer access to the area. In addition, a new raft put-in area near Steven's Memorial Bridge will be developed as part of the project, improving access to the river.

#### Noise:

There will be noise associated with the construction. There are residences adjacent to the construction area at Rock and Boulder Creeks. The project engineer will coordinate with the residents to let them know the schedule for the construction and when high noise producing construction activities are scheduled.

Blasting could take place at Sites A, B, C, and D. Although blasting creates a noise that is very noticeable, it is also very short in duration. There are no residents near any of these sites. The blasting at Site A will have an adverse affect to marbled murrelets, see Threatened and Endangered Species below for more information.

#### Air Quality:

This project is not in an Environmental Protection Agency designated non-attainment area and will have minimal effect on air quality. Traffic volume will not change as a result of this project, and no change in air quality is expected. Some dust will exist during construction. Dust control measures will be included in the contract and will be implemented on-site during construction to reduce airborne dust.

#### Utilities:

Some minor utility relocation may be needed during bridge construction. The FHWA will coordinate with utility companies regarding any necessary relocation of utilities.

#### Land Use:

The project will not increase traffic, induce growth, or change existing land uses.

#### Right-of-way:

There will be some ROW acquisition required adjacent to the existing bridges and at Site B. All acquisitions will abide with the Uniform Act.

### Wetlands and other Waters of the U.S.:

The FHWA conducted a survey and delineation of all wetlands and waters of the U.S. A total of 0.05 acres of wetlands will be impacted by the project. A 404 permit will be obtained by the FHWA from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, if necessary.

Location	Wetland Impact (acres)
Boulder Creek Bridge	0.02
Site C	0.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.05</b>

### Water Quality:

An erosion control plan will be implemented during construction to reduce the potential for impacts to water quality. If, upon final design, disturbance within any drainage area is expected to exceed one acre, an NPDES (storm water) permit will be obtained by FHWA prior to construction. The Contractor and the FHWA are responsible for ensuring that permit measures are met during construction and Del Norte County accepts responsibility for the permit after construction, until adequate vegetation is established and the Notice of Termination can be filed and is accepted.

In order to reduce the potential for erosion during the rainy season, all major ground disturbing activities will take place in the non-rainy season (May 1 to October 31 each year), with the option to continue work past October 31 based on a forecast of dry weather. Other activities that have minimal or no potential to generate sediment (e.g. road paving, concrete placement, retaining wall construction with crushed rock) may occur during the rainy season if compliance with the erosion control plan can be maintained.

Short-term sediment pulses or plumes in certain stream reaches may occur because of heavy equipment use and disturbance of soils. Any visible plume of sediment is expected to dissipate within 200 yards downstream and to last up to 30 minutes. If a visible plume of sediment emanates from the project limits and persists more than 200 yards downstream or lasts more than 30 minutes, the construction from which the plume emanates will be halted with the exception of work to repair or install additional erosion control measures or other methods of correcting the situation.

Near Boulder Creek Bridge, the bank near one the abutments of the existing bridge is eroding due to a bend in the channel. Rock bank/abutment protection, consisting of riprap, will be placed in this area to prevent further erosion. The area of the rock bank/abutment protection is approximately 110 ft long x 15 ft high, with a 2H:1V bank slope. About one third of the height will be below OHWM. The work will take place during the portion of the dry season when Boulder Creek runs below the surface of the boulders in its bed, so all work will be out of the effective flow. The work will be done from the top of the bank (no equipment will be operated in the channel). This is the only location where there will be work below the OHWM. Providing the rock bank/abutment protection will improve future water quality by reducing the amount of sediment entering the South Fork Smith River system.

### Floodplains:

No FEMA-designated floodplains exist in the project area. All bridge abutments will be outside the ordinary high water (OHW). At Boulder Creek, the bridge is located at a bend in the creek, and in order to reduce the potential for bank erosion and to protect the bridge abutment, riprap

will need to be placed within the OHW. At the South Fork Smith River crossing (Stevens Memorial Bridge), although the bridge piers will be outside the OHW, the riprap at one of the piers will be within the OHW, but will be 10 feet further from the center of the river than the riprap for the current bridge pier. Riprap will be placed during periods of low flow, to avoid placing material in actively flowing water. Overall, the project will have negligible effects on the upstream flood elevation.

Wild and Scenic Rivers:

The South Fork of the Smith River and Rock Creek are listed as recreational rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. There will not be any work within the OHW of Rock Creek. At the South Fork Smith River crossing (Stevens Memorial Bridge), although the bridge piers will be outside the OHW, the riprap at one of the piers will be within the OHW, but will be 10 feet further from the center of the river than the riprap for the current bridge pier. Riprap will be placed during periods of low flow, so as not to be placing material in actively flowing water. The manager of the Smith River Recreation Area has determined that the project meets the Six Rivers Land Management Plan Standards and Guidelines for recreation portions of the Wild and Scenic River section along the south Fork Smith River (see attached).

Threatened and Endangered Species:

The FHWA prepared a Biological Assessment evaluating the potential impacts from the proposed action on federally threatened, endangered, and candidate species and associated critical habitat that occur in the project area. The table below summarizes the findings.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status <sup>1</sup>	Critical Habitat <sup>2</sup>	Finding <sup>3</sup>	Finding with Mitigation
<b>Plants</b>					
<i>Arabis macdonaldiana</i>	McDonald's rockcress	E	N	NE	NA
<b>Fish</b>					
<i>Eucyclogobius newberryi</i>	Tidewater goby	E	Y	Species: NE Critical Habitat: NE	Species: NA Critical Habitat: NA
<i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i>	Southern Oregon/ Northern California coho salmon	T	Y	Species: NLAA Critical Habitat: NLAA	Species: NLAA Critical Habitat: NLAA
<b>Birds</b>					
<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>	Marbled murrelet	T	Y	Species: AE Critical Habitat: NE	Species: NA Critical Habitat: NA
<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Western yellow-billed cuckoo	C	N	NE	NA
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald eagle	T <sup>4</sup>	N	NE	NA
<i>Strix occidentalis caurina</i>	Northern spotted owl	T	Y	Species: NE Critical Habitat: NE	Species: NA Critical Habitat: NA
<b>Mammals</b>					
<i>Martes pennanti pacifica</i>	Pacific fisher	C	N	NLAA	NLAA

<sup>1</sup> Status: E=endangered; T=threatened; C=candidate

<sup>2</sup> Critical Habitat: Y=yes, critical habitat is designated; N=no, critical habitat is not designated

<sup>3</sup> Finding: NE=No effect; NLAA=May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect; AE=Adverse effect, NA=Not applicable

<sup>4</sup>The bald eagle was de-listed in August 2007. Management of the bald eagle will continue under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Mitigation for the southern Oregon/northern California coho salmon includes the following:

- Major ground disturbing activities will take place in the non-rainy season (May 1 to October 31 each year), with the option to continue work past October 31 based on a forecast of dry weather. Other activities that have minimal or no potential to generate sediment (e.g. road paving, concrete placement, retaining wall construction with crushed rock) may occur during the rainy season if compliance with the erosion control plan can be maintained.
- A stormwater management plan and erosion control plan will be developed and implemented to prevent or minimize erosion and sedimentation into South Fork Smith River.
- If a visible plume of sediment emanates from the project limits and persists more than 200 yards downstream or lasts more than 30 minutes, the construction from which the plume emanates will be halted with the exception of work to repair or install additional erosion control measures or other methods of correcting the situation.
- All disturbed areas will be revegetated.

Mitigation for the marbled murrelet is the following:

- Blasting and rock drilling at Site A during the period March 24 through September 15 shall be limited to the daytime period between 2 hours after sunrise to 2 hours before sunset. There are no restrictions on either drilling or blasting at other location or after September 15 or before March 24 at Site A. If feasible within the scope of the work, blasting will be scheduled late in or following the marbled murrelet breeding season (March 24 through September 15).
- Within three months of completion of the project, FHWA will provide a monitoring report to the US Fish and Wildlife office in Arcata, CA. The report will describe the work completed, the measures FHWA considered to minimize adverse effects of sound levels from blasting at Site A, and the measures used by the contractor at the site to reduce noise. The report will also include the dates and precise times (including reference to Pacific Standard Time or Pacific Daylight Time) of all use of explosives at Site A.

#### Other Species:

Site B is immediately adjacent to a significant botanical site that includes one of the most significant *Darlingtonia californica* sites in California. *Darlingtonia californica* is also called the California Pitcher plant, Cobra Lily, or Cobra Plant. It is on the California Native Plant Society's List Four, Plants of Limited Distribution--A Watch List. The road will be widened entirely to the fill side at this location in order to avoid impacting the *Darlingtonia* site.

Port-Orford-cedar (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*; POC) is an ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially important tree species. POC can play an important role in riparian ecosystems. POC is affected by an exotic pathogen, *Phytophthora lateralis* (PL), which causes a root disease that kills POC. The PL is spread by the movement of spores in water (down slope) or in mud and organic matter from an infected site. Major spread of the disease has occurred during road construction, road maintenance, mining, logging and traffic flow on forest roads. Spread of PL occurs primarily in late fall through early spring, during wet soil conditions. Most of the known infected sites are

along streams and roads. Any activity that involves the use of Forest roads in drainages containing POC has the potential to spread PL to uninfected drainages

Mitigation to prevent the spread of PL in POC is as follows:

- The FHWA will coordinate with the SRNF to determine if there are infested areas within the project vicinity.
- Unless otherwise agreed, the Contractor shall clean all vehicles and equipment before entry into the district unless the cleaning requirement is waived in writing by the Forest Service. Thereafter, all vehicles and equipment that leave the district or enter infested portions of the district must be cleaned prior to their reentry, unless waived by the Forest Service. All cleaning of vehicles or equipment shall be done at sites agreed to by the Forest Service, FHWA, and the Contractor. The water used for washing will be from a source in a non-infested drainage. The Forest Service will have the right to inspect all equipment prior to entry, as appropriate and determined necessary. Infested and uninfested areas will be determined by the Forest Service. Cleaning shall include the removal of soil by steam cleaning or use of high pressure water spray.

#### Cultural Resources:

The FHWA completed a cultural resources survey and determined that no historic properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) will be affected. The SRNF Forest Archaeologist agreed with the FHWA's finding and will conduct State Historic Preservation Office consultation under an existing programmatic agreement.

This area is within the Smith River and Elk Valley Rancherias historic range. Due to the sensitivity of the area, tribal monitors will be present during initial ground disturbance at each of the bridge locations. Tribal monitors are not needed at Sites A, B, C, and D since those locations are on very steep hillsides where there is little possibility of encountering Native American artifacts.

An area where five fingered ferns have traditionally been collected for basket making will be impacted by the project. Avoidance of this area is not possible. Five fingered ferns will be included in the revegetation plan for the project. The FHWA will coordinate with the Smith River and Elk Valley Rancherias to determine an appropriate location for the ferns.

#### Vegetation:

Some removal of vegetation will occur during construction of the bridges. Slopes will be reseeded with a seed mix recommended by Del Norte County or the SRNF. In addition, five fingered ferns will be included in the revegetation plan.

#### Noxious Weeds:

The following standard management requirements are included for the project: all heavy equipment will be cleaned prior to entering the project area; all erosion control materials and imported fill, aggregate, and rock will be certified weed free, and plant material for revegetation will follow the seed mix recommended by Del Norte County or SRNF. In addition, the FHWA will coordinate with the SRNF on treatment of existing weed populations within the project limits; the weeds will be removed during construction and transported off Forest Service lands. Given these management requirements, the proposed project will have a minor potential to spread noxious weeds.

#### Hazardous Waste Sites:

The FHWA conducted an Initial Site Assessment for hazardous materials. Studies indicate that the bridges have lead paint on some bridge components. These will be handled and disposed of properly in accordance with State, Federal, and local regulations. Any hazardous material that are located within the construction limits or is discovered during construction will be removed and disposed of properly.

#### Cumulative Effects:

Although there are other past, present, and foreseeable future actions in the general area (previous road construction, recreation, etc.), some of which are growth-inducing and have measurable environmental impacts, the proposed action does not have impacts that would be additive to impacts from those other actions.

#### Section 4(f) Properties:

The Smith River NRA was established in 1990. The 305,337-acre Smith River NRA was created to protect the area's special scenic value, natural diversity, cultural and historical attributes, wilderness, wildlife, fisheries, and the Smith River watershed with its clean waters.

#### *Programmatic Section 4(f) Applicability*

Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act, codified as 23 U.S.C., Section 138 and 23 CFR Section 771.135, states that the FHWA may not grant approval for a project if the project uses land that is a publicly-owned park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or any significant historic site, unless (1) there is no prudent and feasible alternative to the use of such land, and (2) any such program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to these resources.

The FHWA has prepared a programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation titled "Final Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for Federally-aided Highway Projects with Minor Involvement with Public Parks, Recreation Lands and Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges." The proposed project meets the eligibility criteria established in that document as described in this programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation.

This project meets the programmatic eligibility criteria because:

- (1) It improves operational characteristics, safety, and physical condition of the road on essentially the same alignment;
- (2) The project is on land managed by the publicly owned NRA;
- (3) The additional 5.5 acres of recreation area land being converted to transportation use is less than 1 percent of the total recreation area land;
- (4) Impacts of this project will not impair the rest of the Section 4(f) lands from its intended use;
- (5) Agreement was received in writing from the NRA District Ranger regarding impacts and mitigation of the proposed project (see attached letter);
- (6) No transfer or land conversions of 6(f) properties are involved with this project; and,
- (7) This project does not require an Environmental Impact Statement.

#### *Alternatives and Findings*

Three alternatives were considered for this project besides the proposed project.

Alternative 1, the No Action alternative, does not constitute any improvements, and only provides for continued maintenance. The No Action alternative does not meet the purpose of the

project or satisfy the current needs. It is not prudent because the existing one-lane portions of the roadway present a substantial operational and safety hazard to the travelling public.

Alternative 2 considers rehabilitating the road area without using additional Section 4(f) land. Because it is not feasible to provide two lanes in the existing footprint of the road, this alternative would continue to only provide one lane in each of the single lane areas. If the project does not provide two lanes of traffic, it would not meet the purpose and need for the project. This alternative is not feasible or prudent.

Alternative 3 considered providing an alternative that completely avoids Section 4(f) land. NRA lands surround the roadway and the road serves as a major access within the NRA; therefore it is not possible to provide the improved roadways outside the NRA boundary. This alternative is not feasible.

#### *Measures To Minimize Harm*

This project will implement the following measures to minimize harm:

- All road closures will be well advertised at least two weeks in advance. Information about the road closures will be provided to the SRNF so that they can include information on their website regarding the closures if they so choose.
- A new raft put-in area near Steven's Memorial Bridge will be implemented as part of the project, improving recreational access to the river.
- A stormwater management plan and erosion control plan will be developed and implemented to keep sedimentation, concrete, and other objectionable material out of any waters within the project area.

#### *Coordination*

This project has been coordinated with and has the support of the Smith River NRA District Ranger. The District Ranger and/or her representatives have participated in office meetings and field reviews.

#### *Determination*

The programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation and approval for projects with minor involvements with Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges applies to this project because:

- (1) The project meets the programmatic eligibility criteria of the programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation.
- (2) All of the alternatives set out in the Findings section of the programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation have been fully evaluated.
- (3) The findings in the programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation are applicable to this project and there are no feasible and prudent alternatives that avoid the use of Section 4(f) land.
- (4) The project complies with and incorporates the Measures to Minimize Harm section of the programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation.
- (5) The official with jurisdiction over the NRA has concurred in writing with the assessment of impacts of the project, and mitigation measures.
- (6) All measures to minimize harm will be incorporated in the project construction plans and specifications.
- (7) Project records and this document clearly show that the Section 4(f) impacts created by this project are in compliance with the guidelines established by the programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation.

**Conclusion:**

Based on the above information, I have administratively determined that this project is a Class II action, falling within the definition of Categorical Exclusion as defined at 40 CFR 1508.4. The project is categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis, as provided for in the Nationwide Action Plan, the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations, and the Federal Highway Administration's Regulations at 23CFR 771.117(d)(1) & (3), "Environmental Impact and Related Procedures; Final Rule."

In addition, this project is covered by the programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation. There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the Smith River NRA for implementation of this project. The proposed action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to Section 4(f) land resulting from such use.

cc (w/attachments):

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Mary Kay Vandiver, District Ranger, Smith River national Recreation Area, P.O. Box 228,  
Gasquet, CA 95543

Art Reeve, County Engineer, Del Norte County, 981 H Street, Suite 110, Crescent City, CA  
95531

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Stephanie Popiel, Environmental Compliance Engineer, FHWA

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Alan Blair, Survey Manager

Rich Coco, ROW and Utility Coordinator, FHWA

Jim Holben, ROW Specialist

Gene Dodd, Construction Operations Engineer

Frank Grannis, Design Team Leader

Bryant Gonsalves, Highway Design Manager

Samir Sidhom, Bridge Team Leader

Justin Henwood, Geotechnical Engineer

Matt DeMarco, Lead Geotechnical Engineer

Reading file

**Environmental Commitments Summary Table  
CA FH 112, South Fork Smith River Road**

Commitment to be included in SCRs	Resources	Agency/Person Responsible	FP/SCR/Plan Sheet #/ Comp Date
FHWA will coordinate the facing for each type of wall with SRNF and Del Norte County. The facing will be designed to blend with the surrounding environment	Visual	FHWA (Design)	
The standard road closure for the contract (for weekdays and weekends) will be as follows: traffic will be allowed through the worksites before 8:00 am, between 12:00 and 12:30 pm, and after 4:30 pm.	Social and Economic	FHWA (Design)	
All road closures will be advertised 2 weeks in advance.	Social and Economic, Section 4(f)	FHWA (Design)	
A new raft put-in area near Steven's Memorial Bridge will be developed as part of the project, improving access to the river.	Recreation, Section 4(f)	FHWA (Design)	
The project engineer will coordinate with the residents adjacent to the worksite to let them know the schedule for the construction and when high noise producing construction activities are scheduled.	Noise	FHWA (Design)	
Dust control measures will be implemented to reduce airborne dust.	Air Quality	FHWA (Design)	
The FHWA will coordinate with utility companies regarding any necessary relocation of utilities	Utilities	FHWA (Design)	
All acquisitions will abide by the Uniform Act.	Right-of-Way	Del Norte County	
NPDES permit. If disturbance is expected to exceed one acre, FHWA will acquire the permit and ensure requirements are met through the construction period. Del Norte County will assume the permit after construction until the Notice of Termination is filed and accepted.	Water Quality	FHWA (Design), Del Norte County	
Boulder Creek. The work on the rock bank/abutment protection will take place during the portion of the dry season when Boulder Creek runs below the surface of the boulders in its bed, so all work will be out of the effective flow. The work will be done from the top of the bank (no equipment will be operated in the channel).	Water Quality	FHWA (Design)	
A stormwater management plan and erosion control plan will be developed and implemented to prevent or minimize erosion and sedimentation into South Fork Smith River.	Water Quality, SONCC Coho Salmon, Section 4(f)	FHWA (Design)	

Commitment to be included in SCRs	Resources	Agency/Person Responsible	FP/SCR/Plan Sheet #/ Comp Date
All major ground disturbing activities will take place in the non-rainy season (May 1 to October 31 each year), with the option to continue work past October 31 based on a forecast of dry weather. Other activities that have minimal or no potential to generate sediment (e.g. road paving, concrete placement, retaining wall construction with crushed rock) may occur during the rainy season if compliance with the erosion control plan can be maintained.	Water Quality, SONCC Coho	FHWA (Design)	
If a visible plume of sediment emanates from the project limits and persists more than 200 yards downstream or lasts more than 30 minutes, the construction from which the plume emanates will be halted with the exception of work to repair or install additional erosion control measures or other methods of correcting the situation.	Water Quality, SONCC Coho	FHWA (Design)	
Coordinate with SRNF and Del Norte County to create a plan for revegetation including seed mix.	Water Quality, SONCC Coho, Revegetation	FHWA (Design and Environment)	
Site A. Blasting and rock drilling during the period March 24 through September 15 shall be limited to the daytime period between 2 hours after sunrise to 2 hours before sunset. No restrictions on either drilling or blasting after September 15 or before March 24.	Marbled Murrelet	FHWA (Design)	
<p>Within three months of completion of the project, FHWA will provide a monitoring report to the US Fish and Wildlife office in Arcata, CA. The report will describe the work completed, the measures FHWA considered to minimize adverse effects of sound levels from blasting at Site A, and the measures used by the contractor at the site to reduce noise. The report will also include the dates and precise times (including reference to Pacific Standard Time or Pacific Daylight Time) of all use of explosives at Site A.</p> <p>In order to facilitate this, the contractor will keep and submit a log of the dates and times of all use of explosives.</p>	Marbled Murrelet	FHWA (Design and Environment)	
Site B. The road will be widened entirely to the fill side at this location in order to avoid impacting the <i>Darlingtonia</i> site.	<i>Darlingtonia californica</i>	FHWA (Design)	
The FHWA will coordinate with the SRNF to determine if there are infested areas within the project vicinity.	Port Orford cedar disease	FHWA (Environment)	

Commitment to be included in SCRs	Resources	Agency/Person Responsible	FP/SCR/Plan Sheet #/ Comp Date
The Contractor will clean all vehicles and equipment before entry into the district unless the cleaning requirement is waived in writing by the Forest Service. Thereafter, all vehicles and equipment that leave the district or enter infested portions of the district must be cleaned prior to their reentry, unless waived by the Forest Service. All cleaning of vehicles or equipment shall be done at sites agreed to by the Forest Service, FHWA, and Contractor. The water used for washing will be from a source in a non-infested drainage. The Forest Service will have the right to inspect all equipment prior to entry, as appropriate and determined necessary. Infested and uninfested areas will be determined by the Forest Service. Cleaning shall include the removal of soil by steam cleaning or use of high pressure water spray	Port Orford cedar disease	FHWA (Design)	
Tribal monitors will be present during initial ground disturbance at each of the bridge locations. Tribal monitors are not needed at Sites A, B, C, and D.	Cultural Resources	FHWA (Design and Environment)	
Five fingered ferns will be included in the revegetation plan for the project near Stevens Memorial Bridge.	Cultural Resources	FHWA (Design and Environment)	
Contractor will wash equipment prior to entering the project site unless the cleaning requirement is waived in writing by the Forest Service.	Noxious weeds	FHWA (Design)	
Ensure all erosion control materials and imported fill, aggregate, and rock are certified weed-free.	Noxious weeds	FHWA (Design)	
Ensure all revegetation is implemented with approved weed-free materials.	Noxious weeds	FHWA (Design)	
The FHWA will coordinate with the SRNF on treatment of existing weed populations within the project limits; the weeds will be removed during construction and transported off Forest Service lands.	Noxious weeds	FHWA (Design)	
FHWA will notify the contractor of the lead paint on components of the bridges. Contractor will be required to handle and dispose of these components properly.	Hazardous Materials	FHWA (Design)	

**Column Definitions**

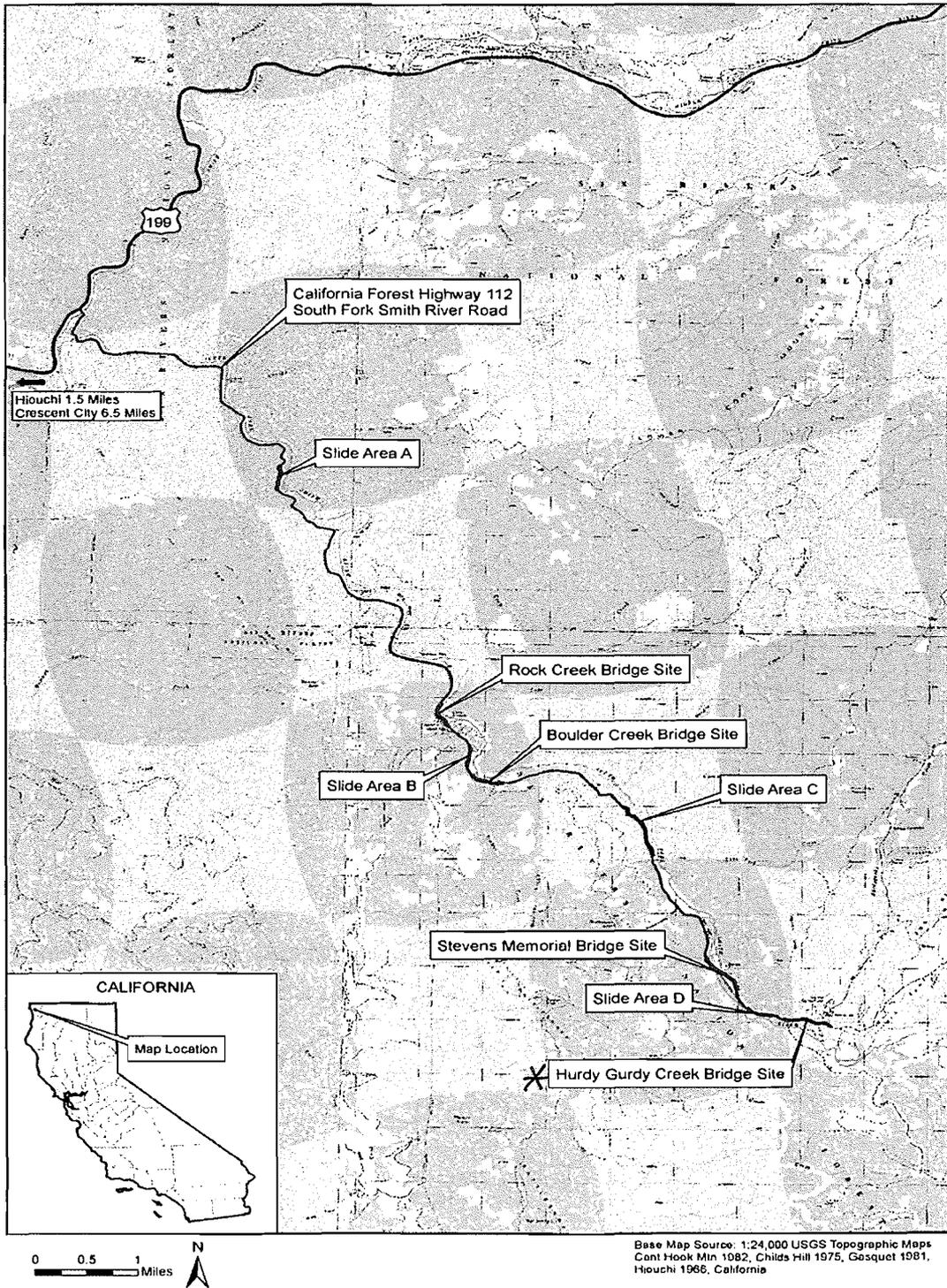
Commitment – what the commitment entails

Resources – What resources the commitment provides mitigation for

Agency/Person Responsible – who will take care of the commitment? Examples: FHWA, County, COE, Designer, Environment

FP/SCR/Plan sheet #/Comp Date - document where the commitment is recorded or when it is completed. This column will be filled out during the final design process.

Figure 1. California Forest Highway 112, South Fork Smith River Road Project Vicinity Map, Del Norte County, California



\* Hurdy Gurdy Creek Bridge Site is not covered by this CE; it will be covered under a separate CE.



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Six Rivers  
National Forest

Smith River National Recreation Area  
P.O. Box 228  
Gasquet, CA 95543-0228  
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(707) 457-3131 Voice

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File Code: 1920

Date: December 5, 2007

Gary Strike  
Project Manager  
Central Federal Lands Highway Division  
12300 W. Dakota Ave.  
Lakewood, CO 80228

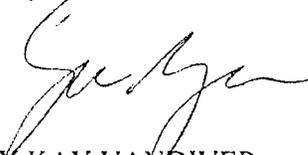
Dear Mr. Stike,

The Forest Service has been working with your office and Del Norte County on proposed improvements and road repairs to CA FH 112, also known as the South Fork Smith River Road and County Road 427 and County Road 405, located in the Smith River National Recreation Area. The proposed project begins approximately 3.5 miles south of Hiouchi, California, and involves eight areas from milepost (MP) 3.50 to MP 15.00. Specifically, the proposed action involves replacing the bridges over Rock Creek, Boulder Creek, the South Fork of the Smith River (Stevens Memorial Bridge), and Hurdygurdy Creek; and widening four single lane portions of the roadway to two lanes. CA FH 112 provides access within the Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) of the Six Rivers National Forest in the extreme northwest corner of California. The purpose of the project is to improve safety along CA FH 112 by widening the four single-lane bridges and four other single-lane portions of the road.

I understand that because this project proposes widening portions of the roadway, parts of the National Recreation Area will be permanently incorporated into the roadway. I concur that the amount of land to be used will not impair the remaining national Recreation Area lands for their intended purposes and that the project included full and appropriate mitigation.

The work as proposed meets the Six Rivers LMP Standards and Guidelines for recreational portions of the Wild and Scenic River section along the South Fork Smith River.

Sincerely,

  
for MARY KAY VANDIVER  
District Ranger

