CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION



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STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

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ON CONSISTENCY CERTIFICATION

Consistency Certification No.CC-052-05	
Staff:	MPD-SF
File Date:	4/7/2005
3 Months:	7/7/2005
6 Months:	10/7/2005
Commission Meeting:	6/9/2005

APPLICANT:

DEVELOPMENT LOCATION:

DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION: North County Transit District

Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and City of Oceanside, from north of the Santa Margarita River, to north of San Luis Rey River, San Diego County (Exhibits 1-3)

Replacement of Santa Margarita River Railroad Bridge (between north- and south-bound lanes of I-5), addition of second track across the bridge and for an additional 0.8 miles (mi.) south of the river, and rehabilitation of 1.7 miles of existing second track further south (Exhibits 3-5)

SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS:

See page 20.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North County Transit District (NCTD) proposes to: (1) replace the existing single-track railroad bridge with a double-track bridge over the Santa Margarita River; (2) add a second lane of track for 0.8 mi. south of the Santa Margarita River; and (3) rehabilitate and realign 1.7 mi. of existing second track. The project is located predominantly within existing railroad right-of-way, along the Interstate-5 (I-5) highway corridor, between the north side of the Santa Margarita River on southern Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, and just north of the San Luis Rey River in Oceanside. Most (approximately 60%) of the project is located in between the north and south lanes of I-5; the remainder (the southern 40%), is parallel to and just west of I-5. The project is proposed: (1) to replace a deteriorating bridge; and (2) through addition of

second track construction, to improve operational efficiency and service reliability, and, hopefully, to induce more people to use passenger rail as an alternative travel mode to the personal automobile.

The project will help maintain highway capacity on I-5 for public access to and along the shoreline. Section 30252 of the Coastal Act encourages maintenance and enhancement of public access through facilitating the provision or extension of transit service. Construction staging activities would not adversely affect public accessways or reduce parking for beach access. The only area where public parking would be used for staging is at Oceanside Harbor, where 30 parking spaces will be temporarily displaced at an overflow lot used by the public during peak recreational periods when the primary lot at the harbor is full. NCTD has agreed to avoid peak recreational-period use of this lot. The project is therefore consistent with the public access policies of the Coastal Act (Sections 30210-30212 and 30252). The project is also consistent with the air quality policy (Section 30253) promoting energy consumption-reduction strategies (e.g., reducing automobile vehicle miles traveled).

The project will benefit coastal salt marsh habitat through: (1) relocating the bridge over the Santa Margarita River further from a marsh area on the south side of the river; and (2) reduction in total square footage of bridge pilings in the river. Nevertheless, because new piles will be placed in the river, the project triggers, and is consistent with, the 3-part test of Section 30233(a) of the Coastal Act. The project is an allowable use as an incidental public service, is the least damaging feasible alternative, and includes avoidance, monitoring, and mitigation measures where appropriate. Also, the project will not adversely affect the functional capacity of the estuary at the mouth of the river. Therefore, the project is consistent with the wetland protection policy (Section 30233) of the Coastal Act.

Other habitat issues raised are the potential to affect sensitive species in the greater project vicinity, including the California gnatcatcher, tidewater gobies in the river estuary, and the Belding's savannah sparrow. NCTD conducted surveys and none of these species is present in the project footprint. NCTD will conduct additional pre-construction surveys to determine whether they occupy the project site or are close enough to be affected by the project. Habitat measures negotiated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service involve additional monitoring, avoidance and minimization measures for these species. The project is not located within any environmentally sensitive habitat, and with the measures included, would be consistent with the sensitive habitat policy (Section 30240) of the Coastal Act. One of the staging areas will affect agriculture on federal land; the only other feasible available alternatives for this staging would be within a sensitive (riparian) habitat. Thus, the agricultural site would be environmentally preferable, temporary, and NCTD will compensate the farmer who leases the land from the Marine Corps for any economic losses. Thus, the project will not affect long term agricultural viability and is consistent with the agricultural policies (Sections 30241 and 30242) of the Coastal Act.

The project includes appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize water quality impacts from construction and operation of the project (with the final "SWPPP" and "SPCC" plans to be reviewed and approved by the Commission staff) and is consistent with the water

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quality policies (Sections 30231 and 30232) of the Coastal Act. The project will not adversely affect public views or archaeological resources and is consistent with Sections 30251 and 30244 of the Coastal Act.

I. STAFF SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION:

A. <u>Project Description</u>. The North County Transit District (NCTD) proposes to replace the single-track railroad bridge with a double-track bridge over the Santa Margarita River, add a lane of track for 0.8 mi. south of the Santa Margarita River, and rehabilitate and realign the existing, 1.7 mi., "Fallbrook Passing" second track. The project would be located within the existing railroad right-of-way,¹ along the Interstate-5 (I-5) corridor, between the north side of the Santa Margarita River on southern Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, and just north of the San Luis Rey River in Oceanside (i.e., between Mileposts 222.6 and 225.4) (Exhibit 2). The northern project limit is located approximately 0.4 miles north of the Santa Margarita River, and the southern project limit is just north of the San Luis Rey River. Most (approximately 60%) of the project is located between the north and south lanes of I-5; the remainder, the southern 40%, is parallel to and just west of I-5. The project is within the Los Angeles to San Diego (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor, which is used by NCTD's Coaster commuter rail service, Southern California Regional Rail Authority's Metrolink commuter rail service, Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner intercity rail service, and Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway's freight service.

The new bridge will be just west of the existing bridge (i.e., between the existing bridge and the southbound lane of I-5). The bridge will be concrete box girder construction, 755 ft. long (500 ft. of which will span the river, and with a 255 ft. approach trestle to the south). The bridge embankments will be shifted, and the existing bridge will be removed. The bridge work will also include constructing a temporary construction trestle (timber decks on steel beams, supported on driven steel pile bents spaced 30 ft. apart), between the southbound lane of I-5 and the new bridge. The temporary construction trestle will be connected at each end to the graded access roads located on both sides of the river. The new bridge construction will include steel sheet pile cofferdams, placement of steel reinforced concrete bridge piles, and placement of the bridge superstructure and installation of new track. The new tracks will be eight ft. higher than the existing tracks, and fill will be imported to support the higher elevation.

The project is proposed: (1) to replace a deteriorating bridge; and (2) through addition of second track construction, to improve operational efficiency and service reliability, and, hopefully, to induce more people to use passenger rail as an alternative travel mode to the personal automobile. Double track construction provides for reduced travel times through high-speed train meets and passes, increasing operation efficiency and service reliability. As a result, people are more likely to turn to passenger rail as an alternative travel mode to the personal automobile. Under current conditions, when two trains traveling in opposite directions on the existing

¹ Some embankment toes may be located outside the right-of-way (or a retaining wall may be used to keep within the right-of-way). Also, several staging areas will be outside the right-of-way (Exhibit 4).

mainline need to pass each other, one train must pull off into the existing short siding, come to a stop and wait for the other train to pass before resuming its course. Enabling trains to meet and pass each other at greater speed reduces delays and improve service reliability. The double track construction would connect to existing double-tracked segments to the north and south, and upon completion, a 4.5 mile stretch of continuous double track will be available, enabling trains to reach speeds between 75 and 90 miles per hour on this stretch.

The limits of project construction would occur between "CP (Control Point) Puller" (MP 222.6) and "CP East Brook" MP 225.4 (Exhibit 2)). Project components include construction of a new second mainline track, rehabilitation and realignment of existing track, new turnouts, modification of signals, and drainage improvements. Due to the length of the project, several construction staging areas are proposed (shown on Figures FP-O1 through FP-O7 (Exhibit 4)):

- CP East Brook -Southern Terminus (MP 225.2 to MP 225.3)
- Wire Mountain Road Overpass (MP 224.3 to MP 224.8)
- Interstate 5 Southbound Fallbrook Junction Overpass (MP 223.7 to MP 224.1)
- Santa Margarita River Crossing (MP 222.6 to MP 223.7)

The Santa Margarita River staging will itself be divided into four sub-areas for staging (three on the north side of the river and one on the south side): on the north side – Northeast Quadrant, Agricultural Field, and Northwest Quadrant; and on the south side – Southwest Quadrant. NCTD proposes use of the agricultural field on the north side of the river (on Camp Pendleton, and leased for farming) as an alternative to staging in environmentally sensitive habitat areas. NCTD estimates the construction period to be approximately two years. All disturbed areas will be restored upon project completion.

The project will also include several drainage improvements: (1) replacement of one existing drainage culvert (at MP 222.65) with two new culverts located north and south of the existing culvert (these existing and proposed culverts drain the area between the two main tracks into the north side track ditch and do not connect to any existing natural drainage course); (2) replacement of an existing corrugated steel pipe culvert located at the south abutment of the existing railroad approach with a new culvert that will be located approximately 1000 feet further south; and (3) replacement of an existing concrete-lined drainage swale on the north side of the Santa Margarita River (located between the existing railroad bridge and the I-5 bridge to the west) with a pipe culvert. The project also includes relocating an MCI fiber optic cable from the existing to the new bridge.

B. <u>Procedures – Permitting Issue</u>. The project triggers federal consistency review because it needs U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Marine Corps permission. However the Commission also believes it is subject to the permitting requirements of the Coastal Act, as a private (i.e., non-federal) activity on federal land, based on the U.S. Supreme Court's "Granite Rock decision" (CCC v. Granite Rock Co.)(1986)(480 U.S. 572). The NCTD disagrees with this

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position; however the Commission is willing to concur with this consistency certification because it can be found consistent with Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. Any permit review would involve the same substantive standard of review (i.e., Chapter 3). The Commission notes that the NCTD has applied for a number of permits for its "double tracking" activities in other sections of the coast, including, CDP's No. 6-01-64 (NCTD - Balboa Avenue), 6-01-108 (NCTD - Tecolote Creek), 6-93-60 (NCTD - Del Mar), 6-94-207 (NCTD - Solana Beach), 6-93-106 (NCTD – Carlsbad), and 6-93-105 (NCTD - Camp Pendleton).

C. <u>Status of Local Coastal Program</u>. The standard of review for federal consistency determinations is the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and not the Local Coastal Program (LCP) of the affected area. If an LCP that the Commission has certified and incorporated into the California Coastal Management Program (CCMP) provides development standards that are applicable to the project site, the LCP can provide guidance in applying Chapter 3 policies in light of local circumstances. If the Commission has not incorporated the LCP into the CCMP, it cannot guide the Commission's decision, but it can provide background information. The San Diego County LCP has not been incorporated into the CCMP.

D. <u>Applicant's Consistency Certification</u>. The North County Transit District certifies that the proposed activity complies with the federally approved California Coastal Management Program and will be conducted in a manner consistent with such program.

II. <u>Staff Recommendation and Motion</u>. The staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following motion:

MOTION. I move that the Commission concur with the North County Transit District's consistency certification.

The staff recommends a **YES** vote on this motion. A majority vote in the affirmative will result in adoption of the following resolution:

Concurrence

The Commission hereby **concurs** with the consistency certification made by the North County Transit District for the proposed project, finding that the project is consistent with the California Coastal Management Program.

III. Findings and Declarations.

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

A. <u>Public Access and Recreation</u>. Sections 30210-30212 of the Coastal Act provide for maximum public access to the shoreline, consistent with, among other things, public safety, military security needs, and fragile habitat protection. Section 30252 encourages mass transit and identifies reducing traffic congestion as a coastal access benefit. These sections provide, in relevant part, that:

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Section 30210: In carrying out the requirement of Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution, maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.

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Section 30212(a): Public access from the nearest public roadway to the shoreline and along the coast shall be provided in new development projects except where: (1) It is inconsistent with public safety, military security needs, or the protection of fragile coastal resources,

Section 30252: The location and amount of new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by (1) facilitating the provision or extension of transit service....

In reviewing several past actions involving mass transit improvements in San Diego County, the Commission has considered traffic congestion to constitute a constraint on public recreation and access to the shoreline. Increased traffic on highways such as I-5, which is a major coastal access thoroughfare, reduces the ability of the public to attain access to coastal recreation areas and makes it more difficult for the public to get to the beach. Section 30252 of the Coastal Act recognizes the importance of improving public access through, among other things, improvements in public transit.

NCTD has addressed potential temporary access issues raised by construction activities, as well as the project's potential long-term benefits to public access through improvements to public transit. NCTD states:

The proposed project conforms with the public access objectives of the California Coastal Act because it does not propose any change to existing coastal accessways. There are no coastal accessways located within the project's area of potential effect (APE). The majority of the project lies within CPEN [Camp Pendleton], and is not accessible to the general public. The southern portion of the project is located entirely within the railroad ROW in the City of Oceanside; however no access roads to coastal areas, including Oceanside harbor, would be affected. Access roads to San Onofre State Beach, west of the project site, would not be affected. The proposed project is anticipated to be beneficial to public coastal access and reduced traffic congestion by providing improved public transportation services as an alternative to individual vehicles. In addition, intercity passenger rail service, as well as freight service would be improved, which in turn, would also help to relieve traffic congestion on Interstate 5.

.... Interstate 5 is a major coastal access route, and congestion on Interstate 5 reduces the ability of the public to attain access to coastal recreation areas and the congestion inhibits the public's ability to get to the beach. Section 30252 of the Coastal Act (see below) recognizes the importance of improving public access through improvements in public transit. ...

> The purpose of the project is to provide operational flexibility and increase service reliability and on-time performance of passenger rail services (i.e., Coaster, Metrolink, Pacific Surfliner) operating in the LOSSAN Corridor. Freight train services (i.e., BNSF) would also be improved with the project. The project will not result in any additional operations staff, nor will it require large numbers of construction staff for significant periods of time that might significantly affect public services and use of recreation or natural resource areas in CPEN and the City of Oceanside.

In terms of short term impacts, NCTD notes that most of the construction staging areas would be located on Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, in areas not open to the public, for military security and public safety reasons. The main exception to this is the southern-most staging area, which NCTD states would be located within an area used for public parking in Oceanside. NCTD states:

The southerly portion of the project is located approximately 1/3 of a mile from the beach....

The construction access routes that are proposed have been identified with the primary intent of minimizing impacts to sensitive coastal resources as well as not affecting public access to coastal areas. Proposed construction access routes will not utilize primary public coastal access roadways. As depicted on Figures FP-O1 through FP-O7, construction access will be taken from Harbor Drive, Carmelo Drive, Coast Highway, A Street, Santa Fe Avenue, Wire Mountain Road, and Vandergrift Boulevard. A Street, Santa Fe Avenue, Wire Mountain Road, and Vandergrift Boulevard are roadways located within CPEN, and do not provide direct access to coastal areas for the general public.

Carmelo Drive and Coast Highway provide local access to businesses and residences near the harbor area. Harbor Drive is the primary roadway that provides public access to the beach and the harbor directly from Interstate 5. However, use of these streets for construction access will not involve a significant amount of construction vehicles and activity, and no vehicle control plan would be required for any of these roadways. Harbor Drive is an overpass at the project location. In summary, where construction access is planned on existing roadways, no changes or alterations to these roadways would be required, and no traffic control, or detour plans would be needed.

... The primary construction/assembly and construction staging areas are proposed at publicly inaccessible locations between the Interstate 5 northbound and Interstate 5 southbound freeway lanes as well as within CPEN. Lane control on Interstate 5 southbound may be required for access to this construction/assembly area; however, this would not preclude or inhibit public access to the beach.

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> A construction staging area is proposed near the southern terminus of the project (MP 225.3), which would utilize a portion of the existing public parking lot immediately east of the railroad tracks. This parking lot serves as an overflow parking area for the Oceanside Harbor and nearby beach areas. It is most heavily utilized during peak events at the harbor and beach areas. Approximately 30 parking spaces would be made unavailable during use of this area for construction staging. Use of the parking area is temporary, and anticipated to be needed for a maximum of 8 weeks. While use of this area would temporarily reduce the amount of parking available in this location, this area is proposed to be used due to its proximity to the proposed railroad improvements as well as its ability to avoid impacts to natural habitats at this location of the proposed project. No portion of the proposed project will permanently limit access to the beach or coastal areas.

NCTD has also agreed to avoid peak recreational-period use of this lot. With this agreement, the Commission finds that the project would not adversely affect public access and would, in fact, improve public access to the shoreline by reducing automobile traffic on I-5, in an area where the highway supports public access and recreation. The Commission finds that the proposed project is consistent with the public access and recreation policies (including Sections 30210-30212 and 30252) of the Coastal Act.

B. <u>Wetlands and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas</u>. Section 30233 of the Coastal Act provides that:

(a) The diking, filling, or dredging of open coastal waters, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes shall be permitted in accordance with other applicable provisions of this division, where there is no feasible less environmentally damaging alternative, and where feasible mitigation measures have been provided to minimize adverse environmental effects, and shall be limited to the following: ...

(5) Incidental public service purposes, including but not limited to, burying cables and pipes or inspection of piers and maintenance of existing intake and outfall lines. ...

(c) In addition to the other provisions of this section, diking, filling, or dredging in existing estuaries and wetlands shall maintain or enhance the functional capacity of the wetland or estuary.

Section 30240 provides:

(a) Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas.

(b) Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which

would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas.

Section 30107.5 defines "Environmentally sensitive area" as follows:

"Environmentally sensitive area" means any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments.

NCTD states that the bridge replacement will slightly *decrease* the amount of wetland fill in the Santa Margarita river (compared to the existing bridge)(Exhibits 5 & 8), and that the project footprint is located outside environmentally sensitive areas. NCTD also notes that, by relocating the bridge slightly to the west, the project will reduce the bridge's shading effects because it will be further from existing coastal salt marsh along the southern river bank (Exhibit 6). The project nevertheless triggers the 3-part test of Section 30233(a) of the Coastal Act, because the bridge replacement will include temporary and permanent placement of bridge piles in the Santa Margarita River. The Commission therefore needs to analyze the project's consistency with the allowable use, alternatives, and mitigation tests of Section 30233(a).

Under the first of these tests, a project must qualify as one of the eight stated uses allowed under Section 30233(a). The Commission has considered minor expansions of existing roads, railroad lines, and airport runways in certain situations to qualify as "incidental public service purposes," and thus allowable under Section 30233(a)(5), but only where no other feasible less damaging alternative exists and the expansion is necessary to maintain existing traffic capacity.

The Court of Appeal has recognized this definition of incidental public service as a permissible interpretation of the Coastal Act. In the case of *Bolsa Chica Land Trust et al.*, *v. The Superior Court of San Diego County* (1999) 71 Cal.App.4th 493, 517, the court found that:

... we accept Commission's interpretation of sections 30233 and 30240... In particular we note that under Commission's interpretation, incidental public services are limited to temporary disruptions and do not usually include permanent roadway expansions. Roadway expansions are permitted only when no other alternative exists and the expansion is necessary to maintain existing traffic capacity.

NCTD states that the purpose of the project is to "...provide operational flexibility and increase service reliability and on-time performance of trains in the LOSSAN Corridor. This purpose is an incidental public service as outlined in Section 30233 (a)(5)." NCTD also maintains the project fits into this historically accepted interpretation, noting that the Commission previously determined a similar situation to qualify based on the same rationale. In reviewing NCTD's double track construction project for the more northern San Onofre area of Camp Pendleton, which also involved fill of coastal waters and application of Section 30233, NCTD argued, and the Commission found, as follows:

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NCTD statement (CC-086-03):

Allowable Use Test - Coastal Act Section 30233(a)

Section 30233(a) does not authorize wetland fill unless it meets the "allowable-use" test. Similar to the Commission decision regarding safety improvements at the Santa Barbara Airport (CC-58-01), the proposed project is an allowable use as an incidental public service because is it necessary to maintain existing passenger service. The second main track project is being proposed to streamline service for existing trains, and would not result in an increase in the number of trains (capacity) utilizing the tracks. Rather, the proposed project would improve mass transit services by providing more efficient services, thereby increasing the incentive for travelers to choose this mass transit option instead of personal automobiles. Therefore, any increase in utilization of the train service would be related to an increase in number of passengers aboard, rather than an expansion of train services.

Commission Response (CC-086-03):

The Commission agrees and finds that the project is a limited expansion and is necessary to maintain existing capacity, and can be considered an allowable use as an incidental public service under Section 30233(a)(5). In making this finding the Commission notes that future double tracking proposals may not qualify under this section, because at some point with increasing numbers of double tracking proposals, the double tracking: (a) will no longer be limited; and (b) will contain enough length of a second set of tracks to in fact constitute an increase in capacity. However at this time and in this location the Commission finds that the double tracking does not meet either of these thresholds that would render the project ineligible for consideration as an incidental public service.

In order to help determine at what point extensive, rather than piece-meal, continuous double track construction is likely to become capacity-increasing, the Commission staff requested that NCTD identify other proposals "on the books" for double track construction at Camp Pendleton. NCTD responds that, aside from the pending (submitted but recently withdrawn from active consideration) proposal for Second Track in the O'Neil - Flores portion of Camp Pendleton (CC-004-05), and an additional 1.8 miles of second track in the for the San Mateo Creek Bridge area of northern Camp Pendleton (MP 207.4 to MP 209.2), it does not intend to submit further double track construction proposals on the base, and, further, it believes the Commission is not likely to see additional double track construction on Camp Pendleton unless and until the more comprehensive "LOSSAN" (Los Angeles-San Diego Rail Corridor) plan to improve the safety, capacity and speed of intercity and commuter rail service between Los Angeles and San Diego becomes viable. Given this information, the Commission believes the same conclusion for the subject bridge replacement that it relied on in CC-86-03 is warranted, and that the project can be considered is a limited expansion and necessary to maintain existing capacity, and, therefore, an allowable use as an incidental public service under Section 30233(a)(5). The Commission also reiterates its subsequent note above concerning future double track construction proposals.

Concerning the alternatives test, NCTD notes:

There is no feasible less environmentally damaging alternative than the proposed project. Due to the nature of the proposed project, in that it is a replacement of an existing bridge in a coastal area, temporary wetland impacts will unavoidably result from construction activity. However, the project would result in a long-term net beneficial impact in two ways: 1) the existing railroad bridge approach trestle is located over a coastal marsh habitat, whereas the proposed approach trestle is not. The existing trestle will be removed from the coastal marsh area, resulting in a net increase of approximately 0.083 acre of coastal marsh habitat; and, 2) the number and area of bridge pier pilings located within open water will be reduced with the new bridge structure, resulting in a net increase of open water.

The existing bridge must remain in place and used for railroad service until the replacement bridge is constructed. For that reason, the replacement bridge can only be constructed to the east or to the west of the existing railroad bridge. A linear stretch of coastal salt marsh habitat is located immediately east of the existing trestle and approach (see ... [Exhibit 6]). Preliminary alternatives analysis concluded that construction of the replacement bridge to the east of the existing bridge would result in a large impact to coastal salt marsh habitat. There is no coastal salt marsh habitat located to the west of the existing bridge, as this area is already disturbed and is embankment for the Interstate 5 southbound freeway and existing railroad tracks. Therefore, construction of the replacement bridge to the west of the existing track would avoid a permanent impact to coastal salt marsh habitat. The impact to mulefat scrub, which is located within a patch of disturbed Diegan coastal sage scrub, would be impacted with the implementation of either alternative (new bridge to the east or new bridge to the west).

The proposed bridge portion of the project will involve the construction of two concrete piers and two abutments. The bridge piers will be located in the river during normal river flows; however, the bridge abutments will only be located in the river during high storm flows. The proposed trestle approach piles will also only be located in the river during high storm flows. The placement of these structures will be such that they will not obstruct high flows during storm events or create any impoundments in the creek.

NCTD has examined the alternative of a free-span bridge, which would avoid wetland fill, and rejected it as infeasible, stating:

The possibility of clear spanning the wetlands and the river, thereby avoiding any impacts to these areas, was considered. Such a bridge must have a clear span of 500 to 704 feet depending on the track alignment. Bridges have been built with such span lengths for highway loadings, but few for railroads, due to the significantly heavier live loads involved. A railroad bridge, with a clear span of 500 to 704 feet, would most likely have to be a massive steel thru-truss over 70 feet high. Such a bridge would be difficult and costly to construct. The cost could easily be twice the cost of the concrete structure

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> types investigated in this study. Furthermore, as much, or more, ground disturbance would occur during construction as with the other structure types because of the temporary erection supports and access for equipment that would be required. Finally, the cost of maintaining a steel truss would be considerably greater than for the concrete alternatives. Consequently, it was concluded that clear-spanning the river and wetlands was not feasible.

The Commission agrees that no less environmentally damaging alternative is feasible. Concerning mitigation, because the project will result in a net increase in wetland habitat acreage and values, the Commission also finds that no further wetland mitigation is required under Section 30233. The Commission further agrees with NCTD's statement concerning the functional capacity test of Section 30233:

The functional capacity of the Santa Margarita River will be maintained during temporary project construction activities and permanently will increase once the replacement bridge structure is in place. Bridge construction is proposed utilizing a work trestle, which will accommodate river flows.

The Commission therefore concludes that the project is consistent with all the tests of Section 30233.

Concerning environmentally sensitive habitat areas other than wetlands (i.e., Section 30240 tests), NCTD notes the following potentially affected sensitive coastal resources occurring in the project area: tidewater goby, brown pelican, light-footed clapper rail, and Belding's savannah sparrow." NCTD states:

Tidewater Goby. The approximately five kilometers of the Santa Margarita River lagoon and lower river are designated as Critical Habitat for the tidewater goby. A survey was conducted to obtain current information on the presence, distribution, and relative abundance of the tidewater goby in the vicinity of the Santa Margarita River Railroad Bridge (Swift, 2004). No tidewater goby species were taken during the current project survey, and the results were expected. This species had not been taken in the Santa Margarita River Lagoon in several years in the late 1990s and then was present in 2000 and January of 2001, but has not been taken since. Even in the years when the tidewater goby was present, they were usually 1/2 to 1 kilometer upstream of the bridge or 1/2 to 1 kilometer downstream, southwest of the bridge. However, because the Santa Margarita River lagoon and lower river are designated as Critical Habitat for the tidewater goby, conservation measures identified in the Biological Opinion will be implemented during the construction to ensure that this species is not impacted.

Brown Pelican. No Brown Pelicans, nor loafing or roosting sites were detected during surveys of the project area. Brown Pelicans were detected well off-site in the San Luis Rey River several hundred feet west of the railroad tracks; however, this species is not anticipated to be impacted by the proposed project.

Light-footed clapper rail. The light-footed clapper rail does not occur within the project's APE as a breeding species. Transient use of the project site may occur, especially in the post- breeding season when adults and young often forage outside of breeding territories, and during dispersal. Because of the project site's isolation from more suitable clapper rail habitats, even transient use would probably be irregular or uncommon.

Belding's Savannah sparrow. Belding's savannah sparrows were observed only between the railroad bridge and northbound Interstate 5 within the project area. None of the other portions of the project offers suitable habitat for this salt marsh specialist and none were detected elsewhere in the project area. Belding's savannah sparrow does not appear to be a breeding species in the project area at the present time. However, prior to any disturbance to glasswort- dominated marsh during the savannah sparrow breeding period, a survey for this species should be conducted. Conservation measures identified in the Biological Opinion will be implemented during to construction to ensure that this species is not impacted.

To assure these species will not be affected, NCTD has initiated a formal Section 7 Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has resulted in the inclusion of habitat avoidance and minimization measures. NCTD states:

...the proposed project has been designed and mitigation measures developed to avoid a significant disruption to wetlands and other habitat values in the project area. The permanent impact to Diegan coastal sage scrub (an upland vegetation community) cannot be avoided. Within the project APE, the Diegan coastal sage scrub is characterized as a long linear strip of remnant vegetation that is located between the existing railroad track and the Interstate 5 southbound lanes. Furthermore, a majority of the Diegan coastal sage scrub in this area is mapped as "Disturbed", none of which is occupied by the California gnatcatcher within, or in proximity to the project's APE.

Given the location and status of the disturbed Diegan coastal sage scrub, which is not occupied by gnatcatchers and is isolated (i.e., located in between the north- and south-bound lanes of I-5 and between the rail corridor and I-5), the Commission finds that the project site is not within areas meeting the Coastal Act definition of environmentally sensitive habitat areas (contained above, p.9).

To further assure protection of gnatcatchers and other migratory birds, the Fish and Wildlife Service recommends, and NCTD has agreed, to: (1) perform surveys immediately prior to construction; (2) limit clearing of native vegetation to the period from September 16 to February 14 to avoid the sensitive bird species' breeding seasons, unless a biologist determines the area to be cleared is not occupied by the gnatcatchers or other migratory birds; (3) install noise attenuation devices in the event any gnatcatchers or other migratory birds are located in areas surrounding the project site and could be subjected to noise exceeding 60 decibels (dB(A) L_{eq}); (4) replace (at a 2:1 ratio) coastal sage scrub off-site, outside of the right-of-way, but as close as practicable to the impact area; (5) retain a qualified biologist on site during construction; and

(6) for work in the Santa Margarita River, pre-construction surveying for tidewater gobies, and, unless NCTD can document no tidewater gobies present, installation of blocking seines at least 50 feet upstream and downstream from the outer limits of the instream work footprint to minimize gobies from entering the work site during construction.

The Commission agrees with NCTD that with the additional measures incorporated into the project described in the previous paragraph, combined with the water quality measures (described in the following section of this report), the project has been designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade any nearby environmentally sensitive habitat areas, to be compatible with the continuance of those environmentally sensitive habitat areas, and to improve wetland functions and increase acreage compared to the existing bridge. The Commission therefore finds the project consistent with the requirements of Sections 30233 and 30240 of the Coastal Act.

C. Water Quality. Section 30231 of the Coastal Act provides:

The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored through, among other means, minimizing adverse effects of waste water discharges and entrainment, controlling runoff, preventing depletion of ground water supplies and substantial interference with surface water flow, encouraging waste water reclamation, maintaining natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats, and minimizing alteration of natural streams.

Section 30232 provides:

Protection against the spillage of crude oil, gas, petroleum products, or hazardous substances shall be provided in relation to any development or transportation of such materials. Effective containment and cleanup facilities and procedures shall be provided for accidental spills that do occur.

NCTD has included commitments for water quality protection in its consistency certification, stating:

Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan

The Proposed project would include the preparation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) by the project engineer, in compliance with the required National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permit issued by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), identifying construction and post-construction best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality. The temporary and permanent BMP's will conform to the Caltrans Storm Water Quality Handbook, Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual, November 2000.

NCTD agrees that the project BMPs would include, but not be limited to:

- an Erosion Control Plan (Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), in compliance with the required National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES));
- silt fencing around proposed toes of fills and excavation stockpiles;
- stabilized construction entrances and roads;
- dust control measures (Best Available Control Technology (BACT) procedures (County of San Diego Air Pollution Control District, May 2002));
- a Decompaction, Surface Contouring and Native Seed Mix Revegetation Plan;
- *a "Wildland Fires and Other Emergency Services Response Plan";*
- construction area limits fencing around any identified sensitive habitats and historical resource sites within 30.48 m (100 ft) of the proposed construction impact area;
- access controls to minimize the environmental impacts caused by the hauling and spreading of construction materials along the right-of-way;
- during construction excavated materials will either be transferred into watertight open top containers, placed on truck chassis, and hauled to a suitable off-site disposal facility or the spoils would be pumped into Baker Tanks located upland of the floodplain; [and]
- Mechanisms will be installed to prevent debris from falling into the water, to the maximum extent practicable.

Erosion controls will also include post-construction revegetation efforts; NCTD states:

After the project construction is completed, temporarily impacted areas will be reseeded with a hydroseed mix at the completion of project construction. The proposed hydroseed mix was previously approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in conjunction with the recently approved, and under construction, San Onofre Double Track project. [CC-086-03]

For the pile installation, bridge construction, and bridge demolition in and over the Santa Margarita River, NCTD will: (1) work from a temporary construction trestle; (2) use Baker Tanks/settling ponds to dewater and haul offsite any drill fluids or other debris; (3) drive steel sheet pile cofferdams around the perimeter of the pier footings (to retain the excavation and

Santa Margarita Bridge & Second Track Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base and City of Oceanside Page 16

contain encountered groundwater); (4) maintain river flows; (5) erect temporary exclusion devices (nets) to catch any falling debris; (5) maintain exclusion devices during construction; (6) test the paint on the existing bridge for lead and take special precautions to prevent lead materials from entering the air or water during removal operations (NCTD indicates "Caltrans standard methods and protocols" would then be followed); and (7) for concrete demolition of the existing bridge piers, keep debris from entering the water through the use of sheet piling, filter fabric barriers or dikes placed around the piers.

With these measures, NCTD states impacts to coastal waters from project facilities will be minimal, and that:

The potential impacts to water quality are limited to the construction phase of the project only. Pollutants of concern during construction activities are erosion and sedimentation, the inadvertent dropping of materials into the Santa Margarita River, and potential for hazardous materials spill or leakage from construction vehicles. In the long-term, an overall improvement in water quality is expected as the improvement of operational efficiency will have a beneficial effect by reducing the reliance on the automobile.

NCTD also states:

Passenger rail vehicles are much cleaner than highway vehicles with respect to oil and grease drips. This is partially attributed to the fact that any drips from rail vehicles fall into a ballasted ROW, where gravel and soil act as a filter to prevent runoff from moving contaminants and because rail transportation involves less oil, grease, and other hydrocarbons than automobiles. On the other hand, automobiles are a significant source of hydrocarbons, which are then flushed by runoff from the Interstate 5 area into nearby water bodies. The proposed project will provide improved public transportation service and freight service, which will help reduce automobile congestion and reduce automobile vehicle miles traveled and the corresponding non-point source emissions.

In addition to the SWPPP, NCTD will also prepare a Spill Prevention Containment and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan prior to construction to protect against spillage of hazardous materials. In response to the Commission staff's request, NCTD agrees that these two plans would be submitted to the Commission staff for its review and concurrence, prior to commencement of construction. With the above measures, the Commission finds the project will not cause significant water quality impacts and would be consistent with the water quality policies (Sections 30231 and 30232) of the Coastal Act.

D. Public Views. Section 30251 of the Coastal Act provides:

The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

Addressing visual issues, NCDT states:

The proposed project is located between the existing Interstate 5 northbound and southbound lanes, inaccessible to the general public. Views to the ocean from the Interstate 5 northbound lanes (which are located east of the project) are limited due to the intervening grade of the Interstate 5 southbound lanes. In the portion of the project area where the bridge replacement will occur, views to west and ocean beyond from vehicles traveling on the northbound Interstate 5 lanes are obstructed by the grade of the Interstate 5 southbound lanes. Therefore, views to and along the ocean will not be affected by the project. The only change to the visual character of the area will be the replacement of the existing timber trestle and steel bridge with a concrete bridge. The concrete bridge will be much smaller in scale as compared to the existing truss bridge but similar in character to the existing Interstate 5 northbound and Interstate 5 southbound freeway bridges. The new railroad bridge will be located between these existing concrete freeway bridges. Therefore, the bridge replacement will not significantly change the scenic or visual quality of the area.

The Commission agrees and finds that the project will not adversely affect public views and will be consistent with the character of the surrounding highway and bridge structures. The Commission therefore finds the project consistent with Section 30251 of the Coastal Act.

E. <u>Agriculture</u>. Sections 30241 and 30242 of the Coastal Act provide for the protection and maintenance of agriculture. Although Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base is federal land (i.e., for purposes of federal consistency review technically outside the coastal zone), the Marine Corps does lease several coastal areas of the base to farmers for agricultural purposes, which could in some circumstances be considered a coastal agricultural resource. According to NCTD, it needs to use one of these agricultural fields for construction staging (Exhibit 4, p. 7 & Exhibit 7); NCTD describes this staging area as follows:

Agricultural Field (Construction/Assembly and Construction Staging Area)

Because the northeast quadrant construction/assembly area is limited in size, the contractor will require an additional area to construct and assemble bridge and track components, as well as store materials and equipment. Additional space is located in the agricultural field located east of the Interstate 5 northbound lanes (FP-O7). Because this area does not support sensitive habitat or species, it will serve as the main staging area for the project. This area is currently leased by Camp Pendleton for farming purposes so the contractor would need to negotiate with the leaseholder and Camp Pendleton to pay for use of this area.

Analyzing effects on this agricultural operation, NCTD states:

The proposed project will not permanently affect agricultural lands. All permanent improvements are proposed within the existing transportation ROW and no

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agricultural lands would be affected. However, a temporary construction/assembly and construction staging area is proposed within an area currently utilized for agricultural production (approximately 4 acres). This area would be utilized only for the duration of project construction and use of the area would not permanently affect the agricultural viability of the area. Furthermore, this location is proposed as a staging area so as to avoid impacts to sensitive coastal biological resources that occur in the surrounding area and in closer proximity to the bridge and railroad ROW.

NCTD also maintains that other feasible alternative would be more environmentally damaging and would require staging in environmentally sensitive habitat areas; NCTD states:

Only those areas essential for the construction of the project are proposed for construction/assembly and construction staging. There is only one construction/assembly and construction staging area that is proposed within an agricultural area. In addition to being essential to the construction of the project, the temporary use of this area is proposed in order to minimize impacts to sensitive coastal biological resources. There would be no impact to coastal biological resources as a result of the use of this area for construction/assembly and construction staging.

In response to further Commission staff questions, NCTD states that the agricultural field is currently in production part of the year and used to grow tomato crops. NCDT further states:

... Soil compaction is not anticipated. It is anticipated that this proposed construction/assembly and construction staging area would be tilled by the agricultural operator subsequent to construction activities and prior to use of this area again for agricultural production, as would normally be done prior to each growing season.

... Use of this area would require a lease negotiation with the agricultural operator, and appropriate compensation as determined through the lease negotiation.

... According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, the agricultural area is identified as Marina loamy course sand, which meets the criteria for Prime Farmland. However, the Soil Capability Class is IV (soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both), and the Storie Index Rating is 54. Soils are considered to be prime for high quality agricultural production if their Storie Index Rating is 80 or greater.

Addressing alternatives, NCTD states:

... The agricultural effects are anticipated to be minimal, affecting only an approximately 4-acre area for a short-term period. The temporary use of this area would not otherwise interfere with existing agricultural operations. This area would be utilized only for the duration of project construction and use of the area would not permanently affect the agricultural viability of the area. Furthermore, this location is proposed as a construction/assembly and construction staging area in order to avoid

Santa Margarita Bridge & Second Track Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base and City of Oceanside Page 19

> impacts to sensitive coastal biological resources. Within a reasonable distance from the project, the agricultural fields are the preferred staging areas. Nearby land is primarily native wetlands and uplands, is Interstate 5, or is used by Camp Pendleton (CPEN). The agricultural fields were recommended by CPEN staff as good candidates for the proposed use.

The Commission finds that the project will not affect the region's agricultural economy due to NCTD's compensation to any affected farmer for any temporary losses, because the impacts will be temporary, and because it will not affect the long-term viability of the agricultural soils at the staging area. Thus, while there may be a question as to whether the specific agricultural field constitutes a coastal zone resource for purposes of this federal consistency analysis, due to its being located on federal land (excluded from the coastal zone), because it is not part of a regional agricultural economy in nearby coastal zone areas outside the federal base, and because of the project's lack of effects on continued agriculture at the site, it not necessary to further refine this analysis. The Commission therefore finds the project consistent with the agricultural protection policies (Sections 30241 and 30242) of the Coastal Act.

F. <u>Archeology</u>. Section 30244 of the Coastal Act provides that "Where development would adversely impact archaeological or paleontological resources as identified by the State Historic Preservation Officer, reasonable mitigation measures shall be required." NCTD identified two potential areas of archaeological sensitivity, stating:

The proposed project will not impact archaeological or paleontological resources and no mitigation measures are required. One archaeological site (CA-SDI-4545) and one historic structure (the Santa Margarita River Bridge) are located within the proposed project's APE. Neither of these resources have been determined to be significant according to applicable criteria.

CA-SDI-4545: Archaeological site CA-SDI-4545 is located within a proposed construction staging area north of the Santa Margarita River and between the Interstate 5 northbound freeway lanes and the existing railroad ROW. Archaeological evaluation and eligibility testing of CA-SDI-4545 was conducted and the site has been determined to not be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (ASM Affiliates, Inc., December 8, 2004). The testing report, "Archaeological Evaluation and Eligibility Testing of CA-SDI-4545 for the North County Transit District Santa Margarita River Bridge and Second Track Project, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, San Diego County, California" is provided as Attachment C to this report. SDI-4545 is described as a low density shell scatter located on the south-facing slope of a coastal terrace overlooking the Santa Margarita River. The testing at SDI-4545 revealed that the site has no intact subsurface or in situ cultural deposits. Based on the testing results which demonstrated a lack of data capable of yielding important information with respect to regional prehistoric and historic research issues, and due to extensive disturbance ASM recommends the site as ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, no mitigation measures are recommended or warranted.

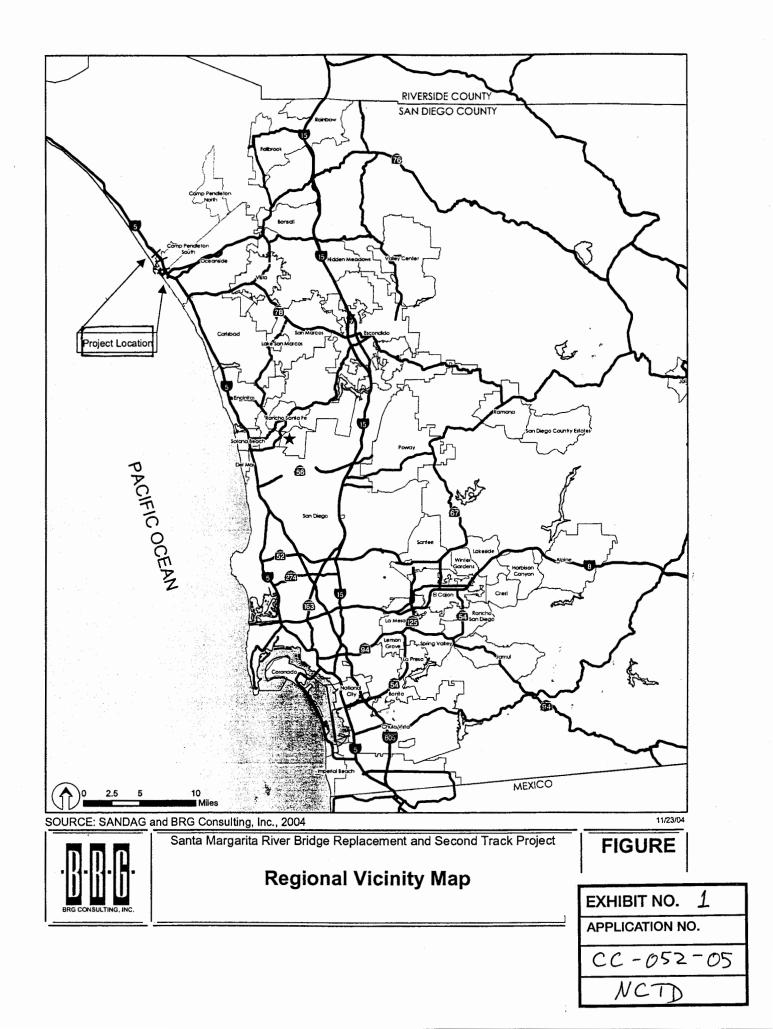
Santa Margarita Bridge & Second Track Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base and City of Oceanside Page 20

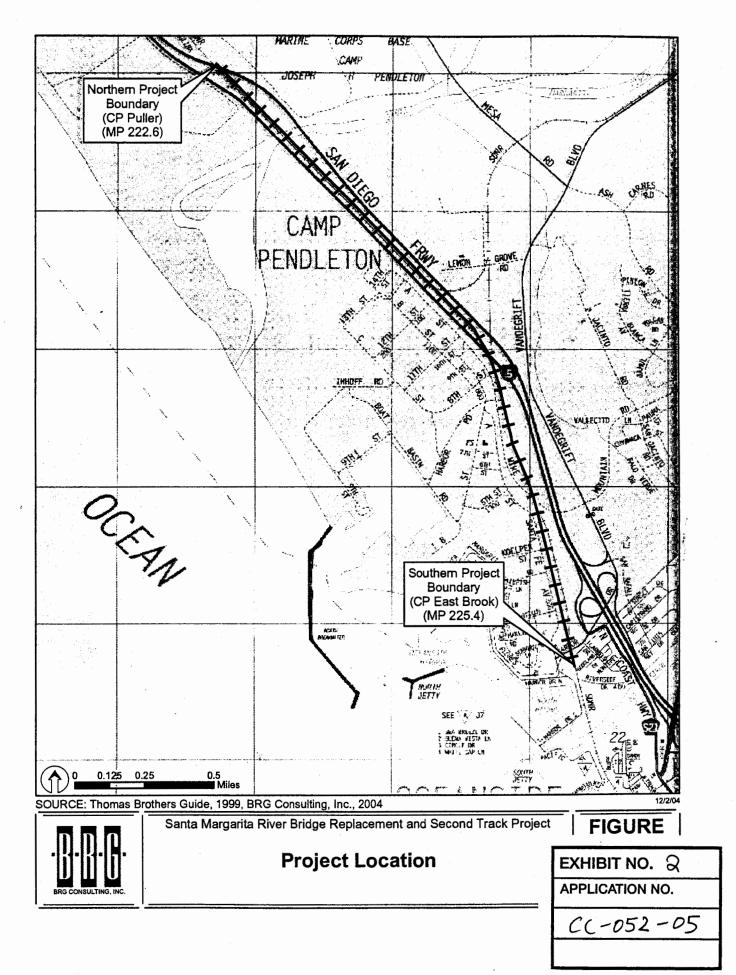
> Santa Margarita River Railroad Bridge: The primary component of the proposed project is the replacement of the existing Santa Margarita River railroad bridge. The proposed project's APE contains two resources: the Santa Margarita River Bridge, built in 1916/1927, and a reinforced concrete abutment of a former Coast Highway bridge, built in 1918, that is located adjacent to the northwest corner of the railroad bridge. A Historic Resources Inventory and Evaluation of the Santa Margarita River railroad bridge was conducted and the structures have been determined to not meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (JRP Historical Consulting, June 2004). The report, "Historic Resources Inventory and Evaluation Report North County Transit District Santa Margarita River Bridge Replacement and Second Track Project, Near Oceanside, San Diego County, California" is provided as Attachment C to this report. Additionally, no mitigation measures are recommended or warranted.

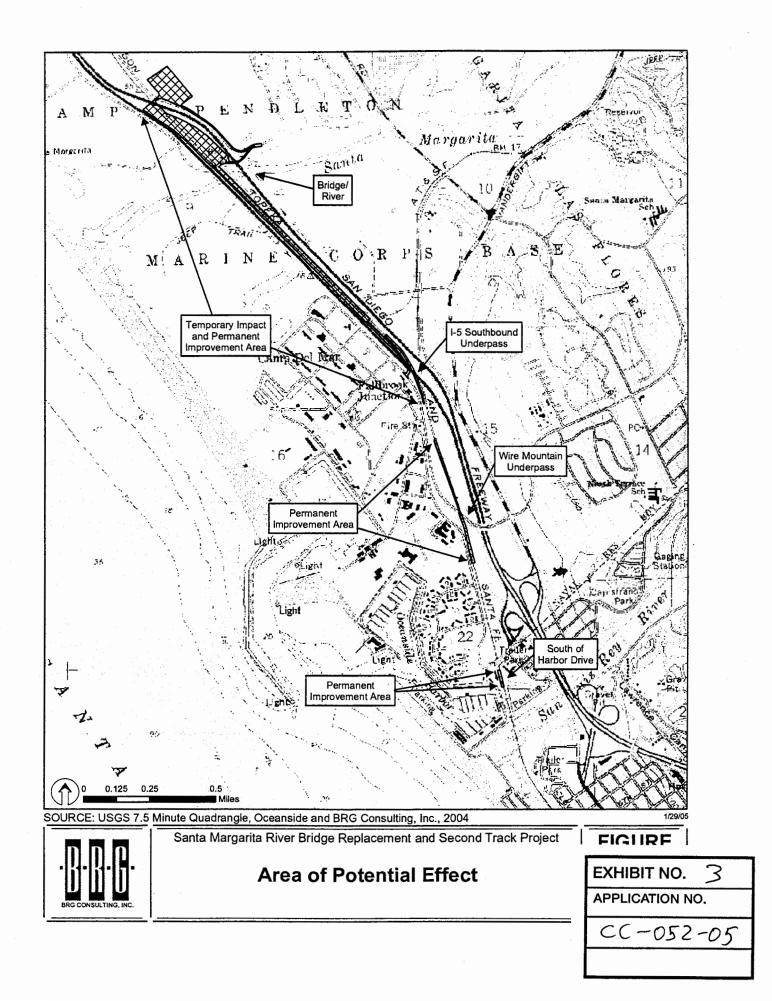
The Commission agrees and finds the project consistent with Section 30244 of the Coastal Act.

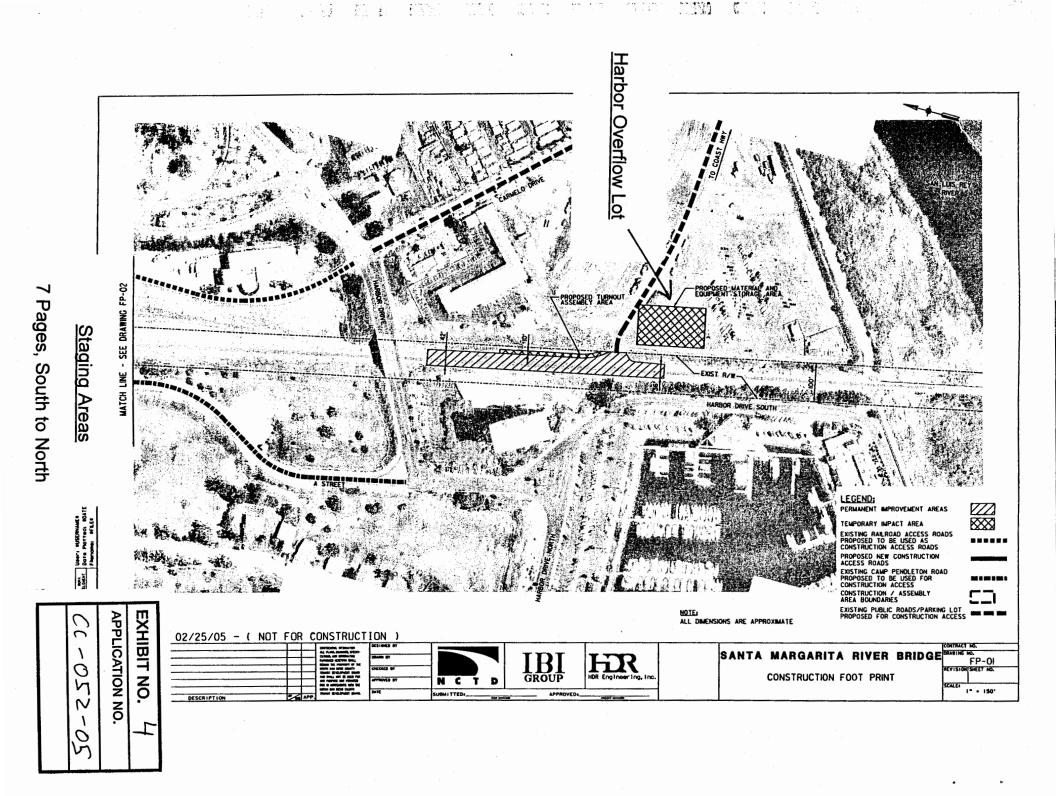
IV. Substantive File Documents

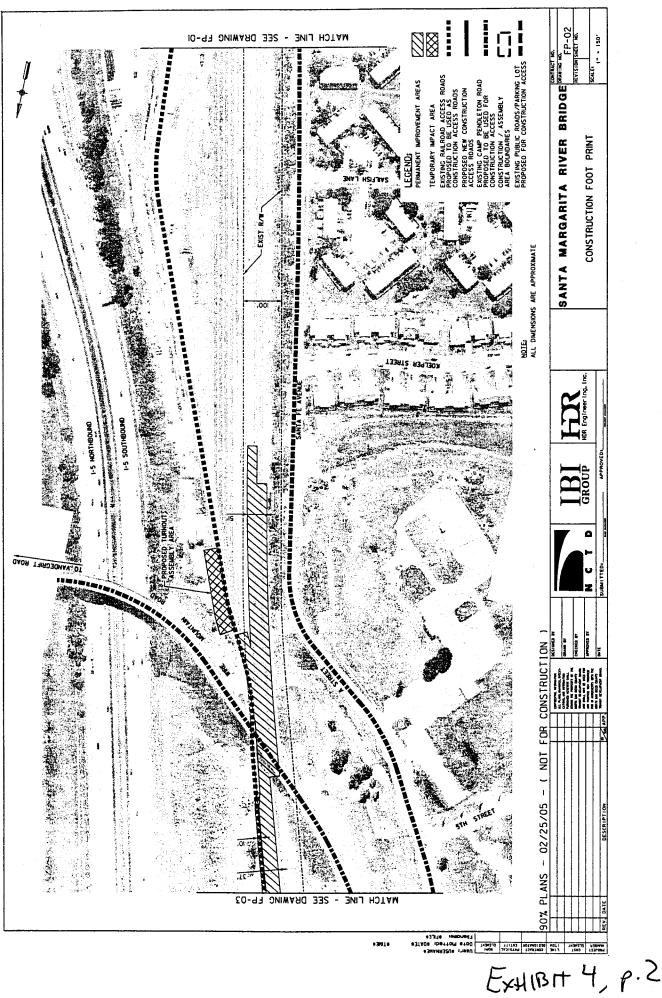
- 1. CC-086-03, NCTD, Second Track, San Onofre Area, Camp Pendleton.
- 2. CC-029-02, NCTD, Oceanside-Escondido Rail Project.
- Pending NCTD Consistency Certifications CC-004-05 (NCTD, Second Track, O'Neil -Flores, Camp Pendleton)(recently withdrawn) and CC-048-04 (NCTD, Del Mar Bluffs Stabilization Project).
- 4. CC-064-99, Metropolitan Transportation Agency, Extension of Light-Rail, City of San Diego.
- 5. CC-058-02, City of Santa Barbara, modifications to the Santa Barbara Airport.
- NCTD Coastal Development Permits 6-01-64 (NCTD Balboa Avenue), 6-01-108 (NCTD -Tecolote Creek), 6-93-60 (NCTD - Del Mar), 6-94-207 (NCTD - Solana Beach), 6-93-106 (NCTD - Carlsbad), and 6-93-105 (NCTD - Camp Pendleton).

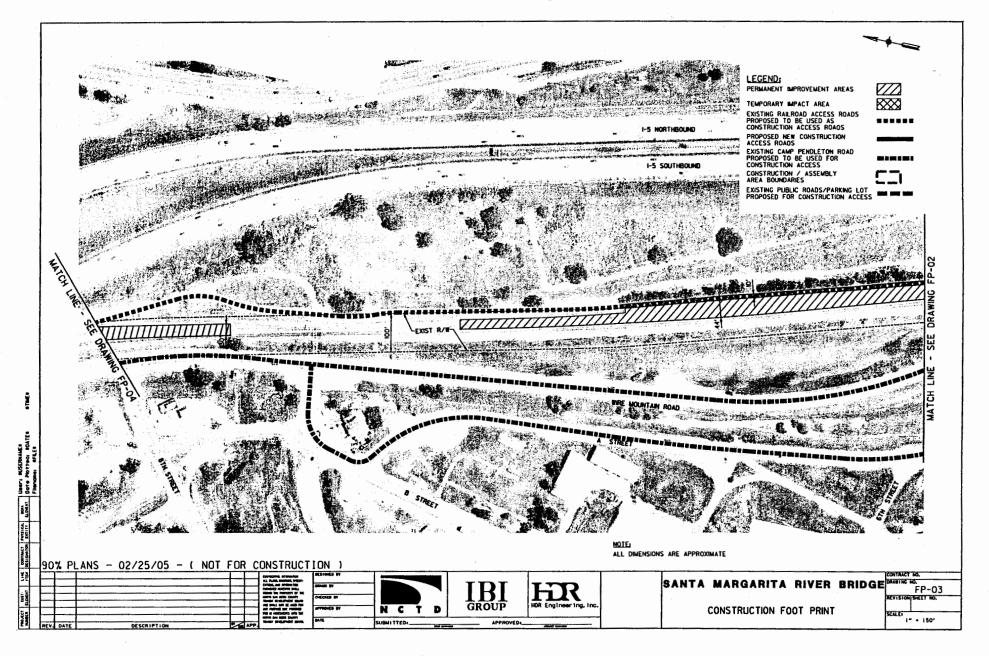




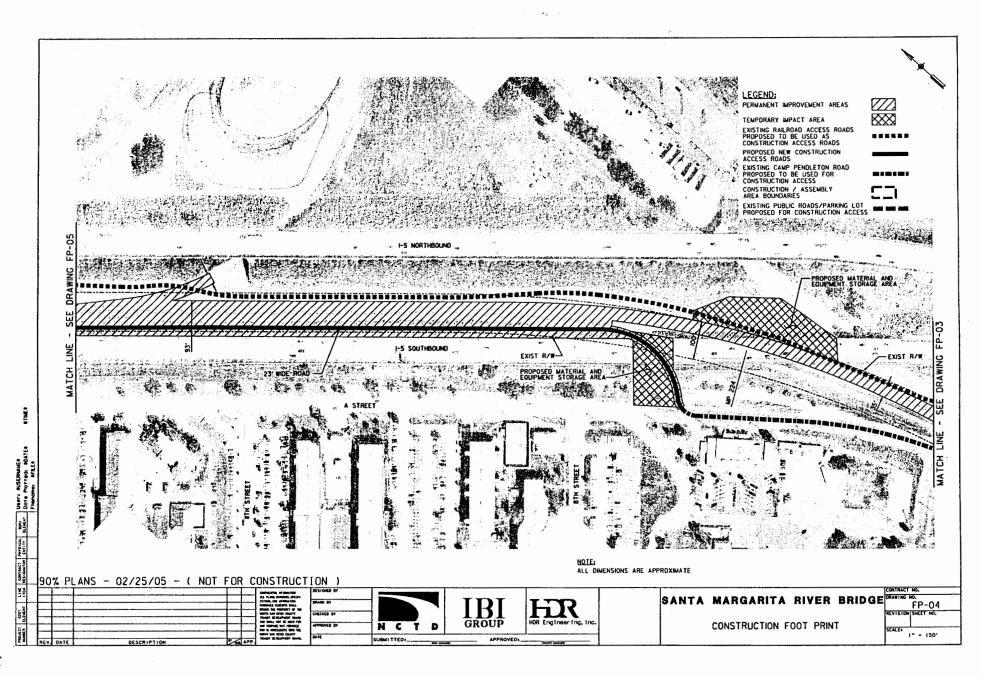








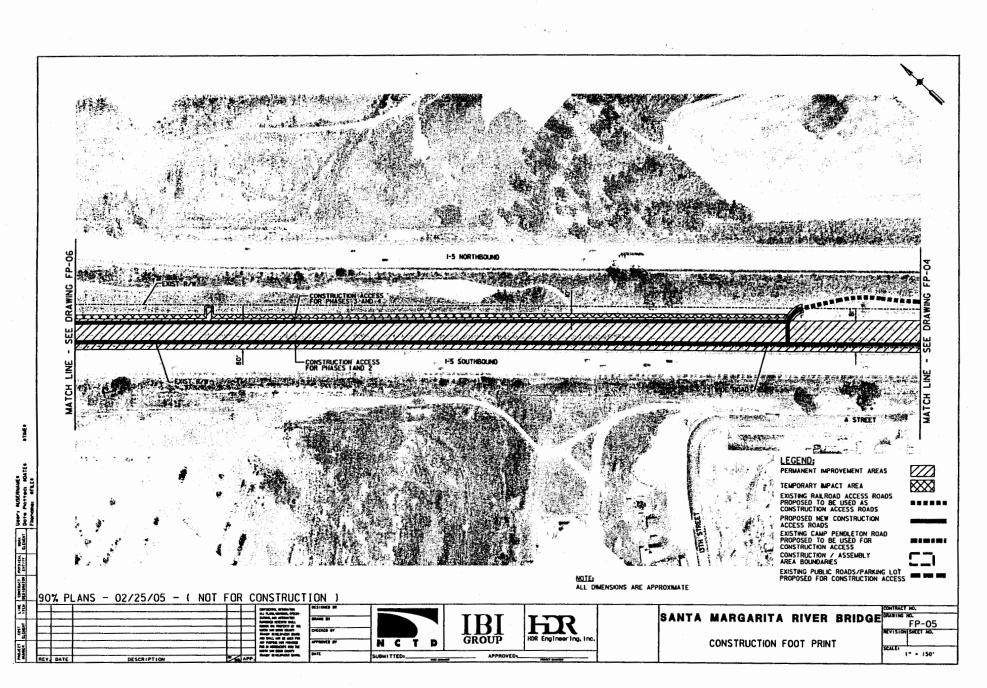
EXHBIT 4, P. 3



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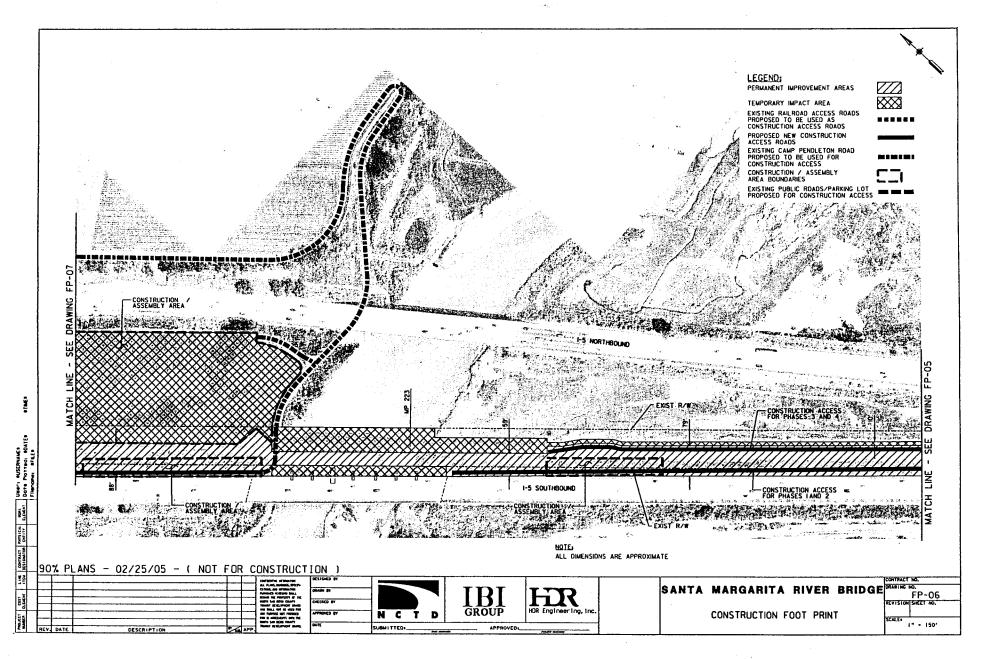


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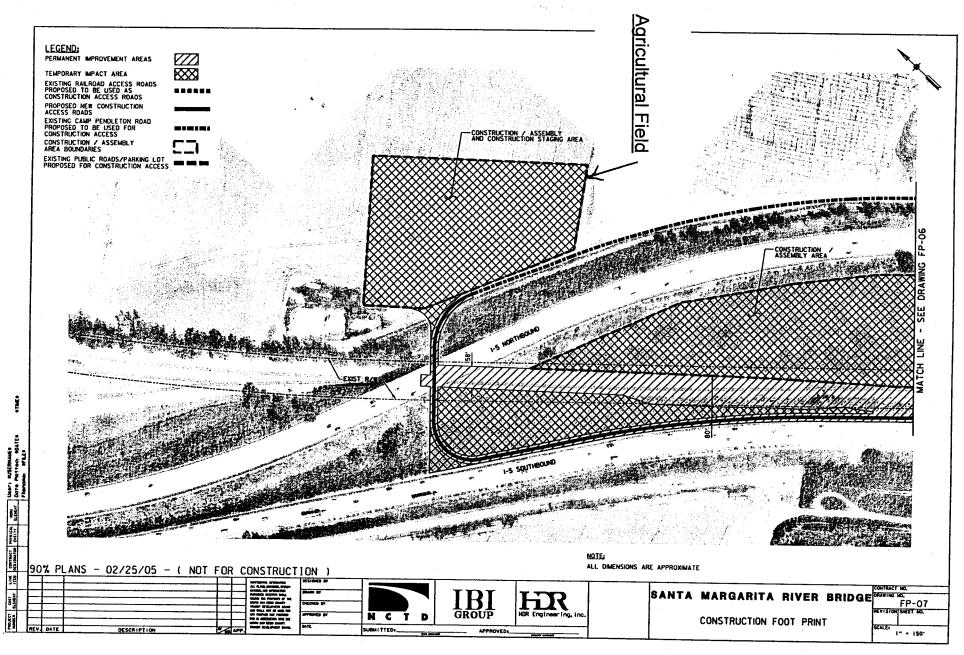
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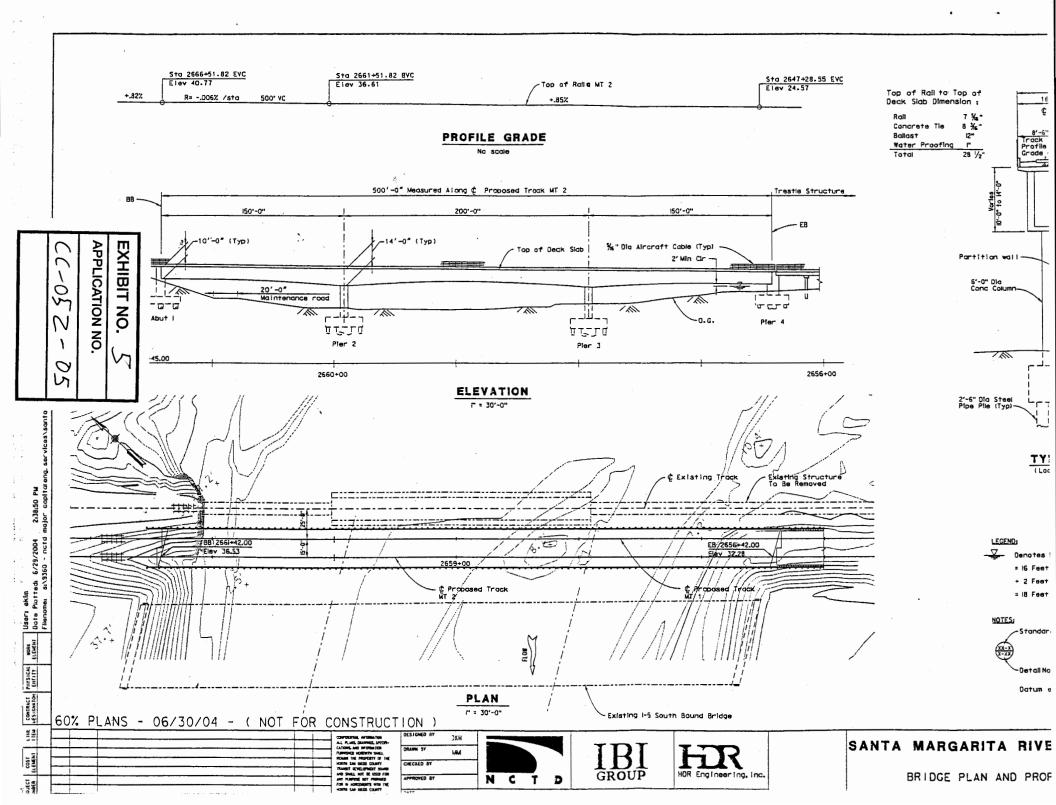


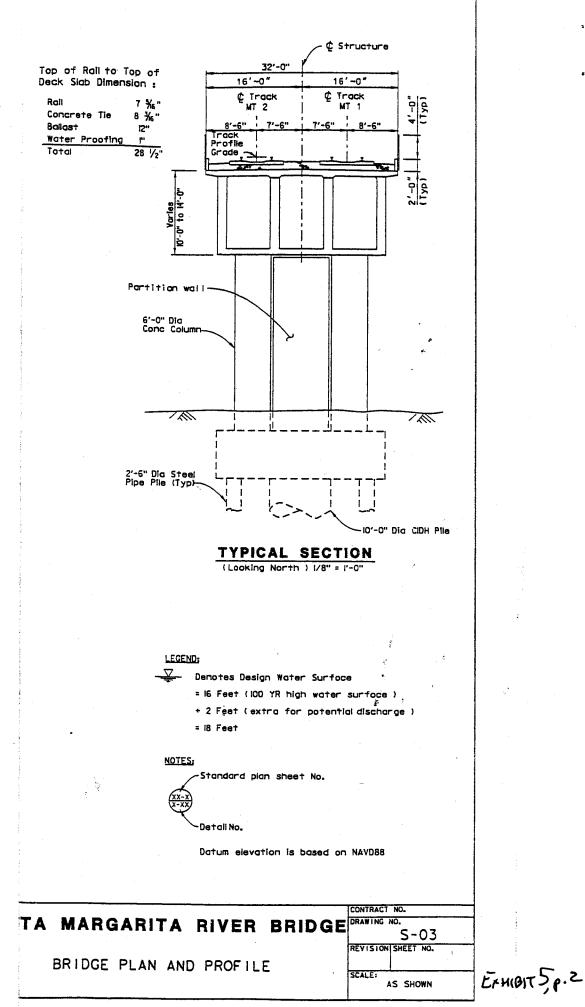
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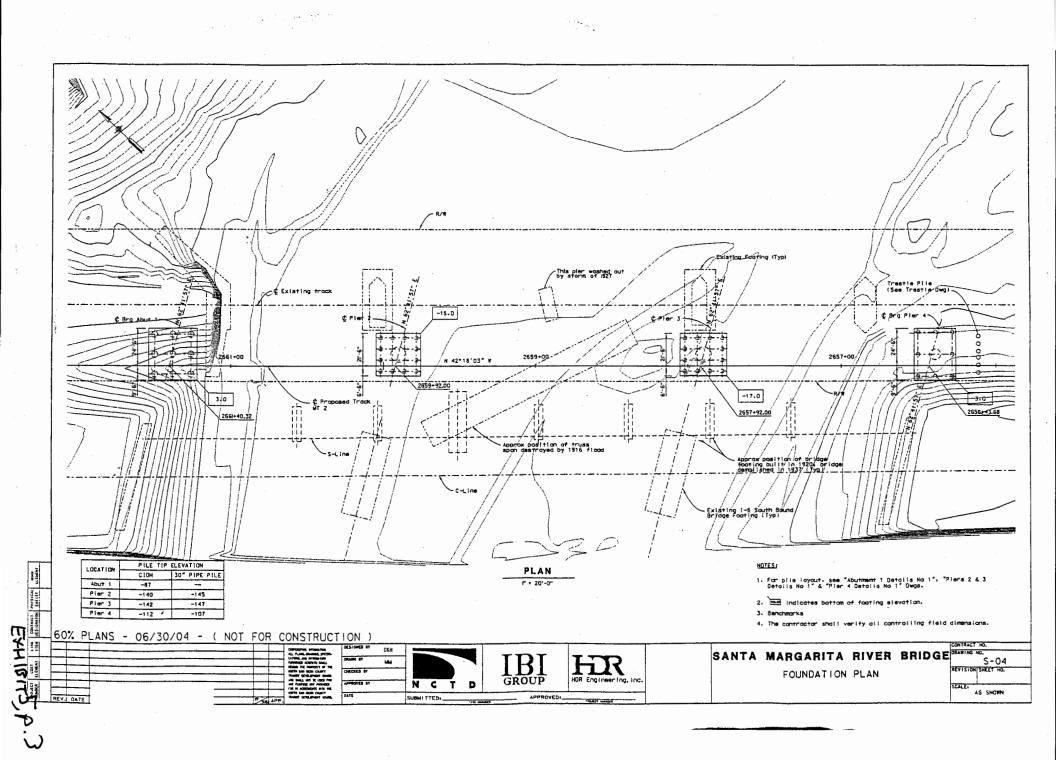
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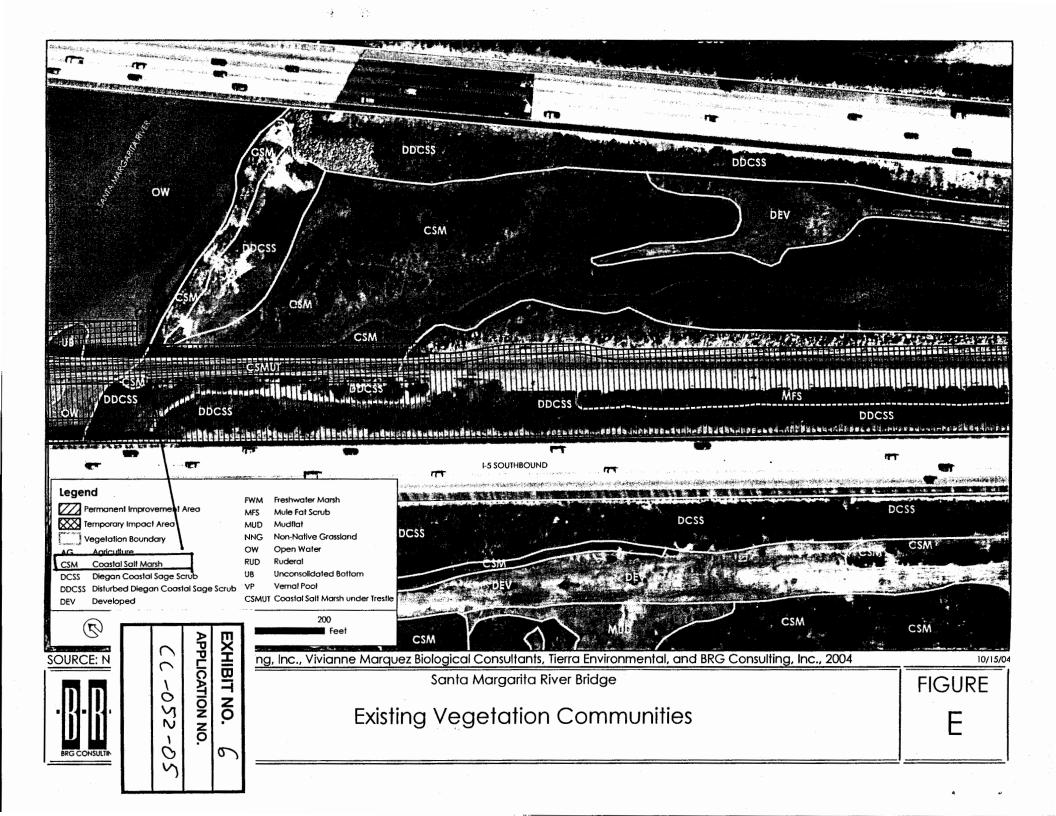
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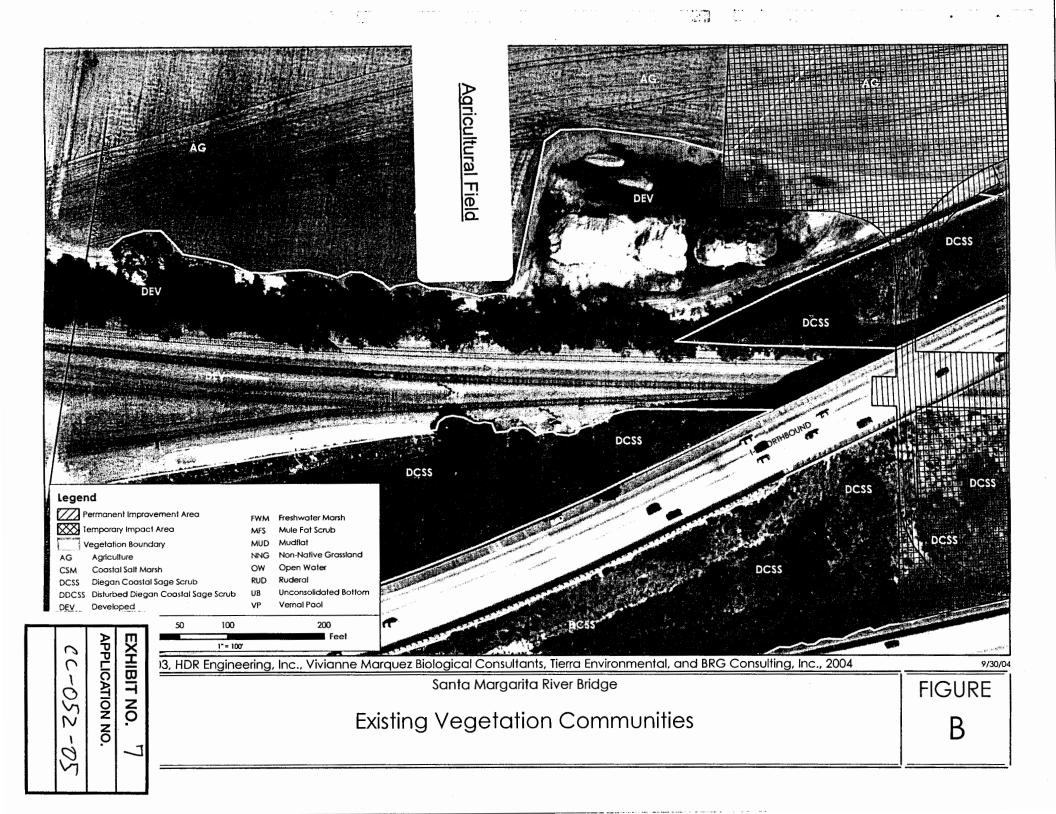
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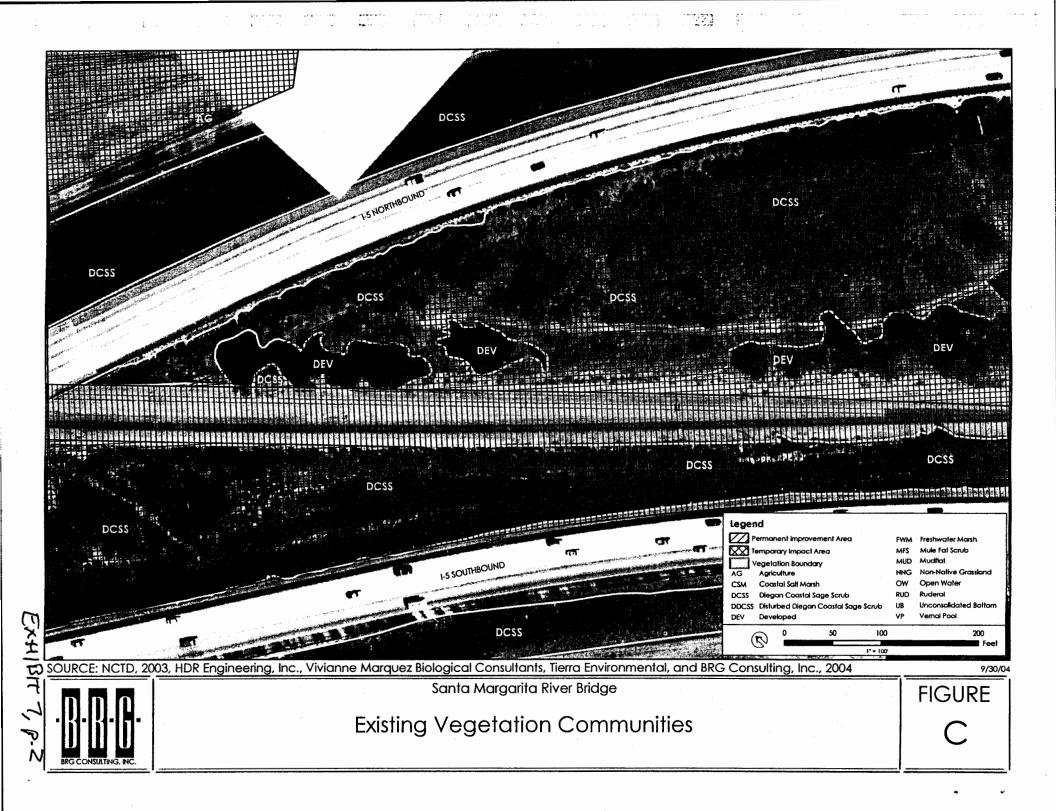












CROSS-SECTIONAL AREAS - SANTA MARGARITA BRIDGE DESIGNS

Calculations were made for these two scenarios:

Mean Tide Level (MTL): 2.75'

Mean High Water (MHW): 4.6'

EXISTING BRIDGE:

(MTL)

Cross-Sectional Area of Piers A+C: 794 sf

Add Pier D submersion: 33 sf

Add 0 timber piles submerged (16" Diameter): 0

Total (MTL): 827 sf

(MHW)

Cross-Sectional Area of Piers A+C: 774 sf

Add Pier D submersion: 133 sf

Add 58 timber piles submerged (16" Diameter): 81.2 sf

Total (MHW): 988 sf

PROPOSED BRIDGE

(MTL)

Total Design Cross-Sectional Area: 113 sf

(MHW)

Total Design Cross-Sectional Area: 113 sf

EXHIBIT NO. 8	
APPLICATION NO.	
CC-052-05	