FOR CONTRACT NO.: 09-334204

INFORMATION HANDOUT

Natural Environment Study

(DATED 5-20-2008)

ROUTE: 395-Mno-5704

Natural Environment Study

(Minimal Impacts)

09-Mono-395

09-33420

2008

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

Prepared By: Wendy Campbell Date: 5/20/08
Wendy Campbell
(760) 872-2331
Eastern Sierra Environmental Branch
District 9/Central Region

Approved By: Tom Dayak Date: 5/20/08
Tom Dayak
(760) 872-0690
Eastern Sierra Environmental Branch
District 9/Central Region

Caltrans
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1. Summary

District 9 proposes to construct a new cinder/salt storage facility at the Conway Summit satellite maintenance station. The project is proposed for the 2007/2008 fiscal year. This is a State funded Minor A project. The Engineering Service Center will prepare the plans.

The project will consist of constructing a new cinder/salt shed (Conway Summit, Mono 395-PM 63.7) complete with an enclosed equipment bay for parking a snow blower, a storage area, crew room and restroom. There are no water and sewage systems at this location. Drinking water will be a bottled water dispenser in the crew room. A water storage tank will supply wash water. A flush toilet and septic system will be installed.

Fifteen species where analyzed in this document. A no effect determination was made for all of them, based on the fact that habitat associated with these species does not exist within the project area and protection measures will be implemented to prevent swallows from nesting on the existing building.

2. Introduction

District 9 proposes to construct a new cinder/salt storage facility at the Conway Summit satellite maintenance station. The project is proposed for the 2007/2008 fiscal year. This is a State funded Minor A project.

The project will consist of constructing a new cinder/salt shed (Conway Summit, Mono 395-PM 63.7) complete with an enclosed equipment bay for parking a snow blower, a storage area, crew room and restroom. There are no water and sewage systems at this location. Drinking water will be a bottled water dispenser in the crew room. A water storage tank will supply wash water. A flush toilet and septic system will be installed.

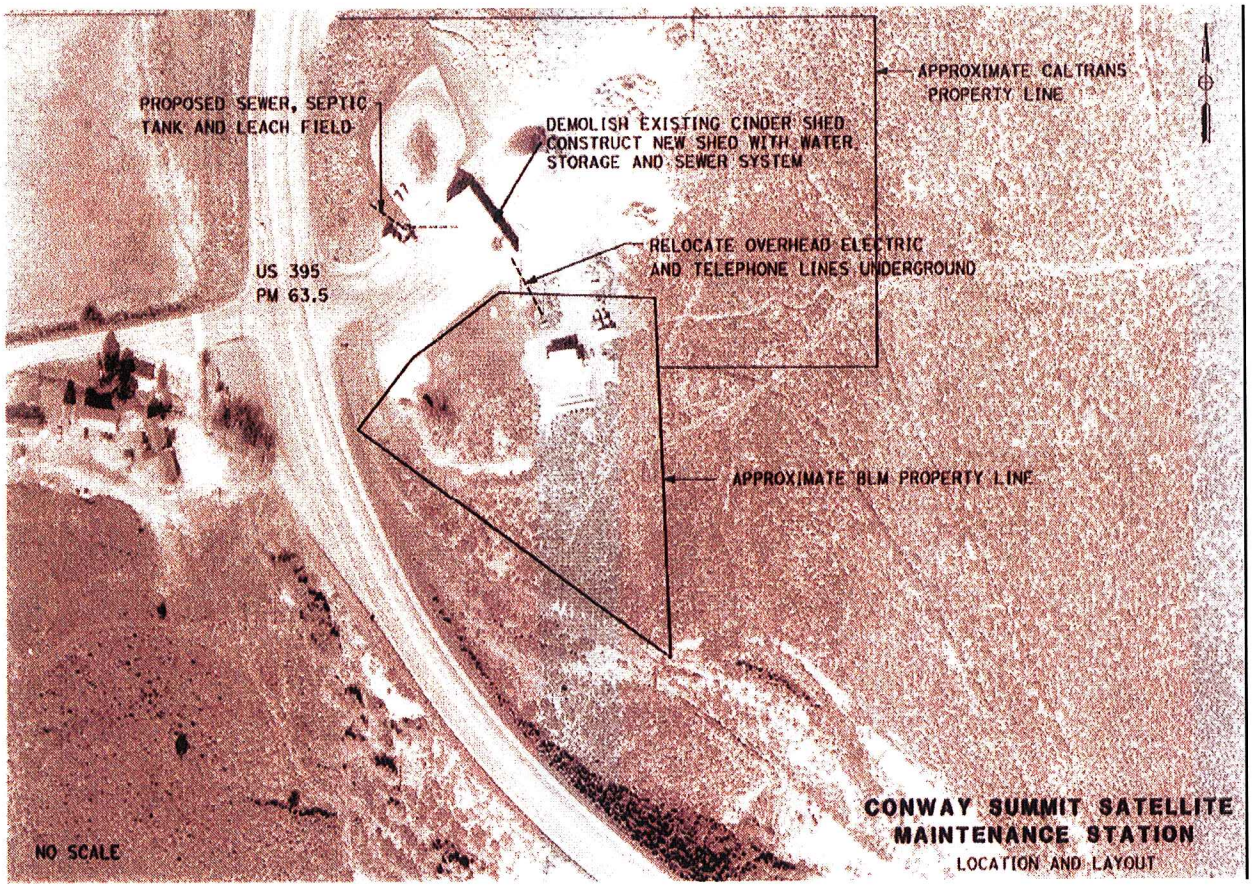
No new Right of Way will be needed for the reconstruction of the cinder shed. An agreement with the BLM will be required if the State pursues improving the aesthetics of the site and moving the location of material storage.

Conway Summit is located on U.S. Route 395 in Mono County, in the Eastern Sierra Nevada mountains at an elevation of 8,138 feet.

The Conway Summit maintenance station was constructed in 1938 and included a truck shed, bunkhouse, supervisors house, and other outbuildings. It remained functional until the Bridgeport maintenance station was constructed 12 miles to the north in 1980 and Conway Summit became

a satellite station for cinder storage and a location to stage essential year round maintenance operations in the area. At that time the bunkhouse was removed and other outbuildings were demolished. The old truck shed and fuel shed were the only buildings that remained on State property. The truck shed became the cinder shed. The supervisors house and property surrounding it was relinquished to the BLM for use as a fire station.

Figure 1. Project Location



Existing Facility

The wood sided cinder shed is literally falling apart. The walls are leaning and the windows are broken and boarded up. In 2005 District 9's Safety Officer reviewed the facility for safety concerns and noted "Bottom sides of north and east walls of sand shed are bowing out and falling apart". In addition to cinder storage, two bays of the shed are used for storage of a snow blower and deicing materials as well as emergency response and traffic control equipment such as signs, cones, and an arrow board. In 2005 the fuel shed was torn down and a 2,000 gallon above ground diesel tank installed on the same location. In 2005 BLM closed their fire station at Conway summit and constructed a new fire station on Lundy Lake road.

Justification

US 395 is the only north-south route in California that traverses the Eastern Sierra and is vital to tourists, interstate commerce, and the local communities it serves. Winter driving conditions over the summit can be extreme. The Conway Summit cinder shed is strategically located, and is crucial to maintenance for winter snow removal and sanding operations over the summit. A new cinder shed will ensure that that service to the traveling public will continue. Enclosed cinder storage at Conway Summit contributes to the Department's mission of improving mobility across California.

3. Study Methods

On June 6, 2006, April 10, 2008, June 16, 2008, and May 13, 2008 botanical and wildlife surveys were conducted by Wendy Campbell, Associate Biologist with Caltrans. Surveys for bats were conducted by Wendy Campbell on May 19, 20, and 21, 2008.

The following resources were used to develop the list of special-status plant and wildlife species and plant communities that could potentially occur within the survey area and to identify appropriate survey protocols for use in conducting biological surveys:

- *California Natural Diversity Database* (CNDDB) search for the Lundy topographic quadrangle (CDFG 2008a).
- *California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California* (Online Edition, v7-08a).

4. Environmental Setting

4.1. Description of the Existing Biological and Physical Conditions

The project is located at the existing maintenance facility on Conway Summit. The existing cinder shed is exposed to weather elements on a ridgeline. The area that will be disturbed is paved with asphault and thus void of vegatation. Swallows are nesting on a building that is on Bureau of Land Management Land approximatly 100 feet south of the exisitng Caltrans cinder shed. Swallows were observed during surveys to be nesting inside the cinder shed.

4.2. Regional Species and Habitats of Concern

Table 1: Listed, Proposed Species, and Critical Habitat Potentially Occurring or Known to Occur in the Project Area.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	General Habitat Description	Habitat Present/ Absent	Rationale
Sierra Nevada mountain beaver	*Aplodontia rufa californica*	SSC, FSS	Dense growth of small deciduous trees, wet soil, water source present	A	No habitat present in project area.
Mono brine shrimp	*Artemia monica*		Mono Lake	A	No habitat present in project area.
Yellow warbler	*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*	SSC, MB	Riparian habitat	A	No habitat present in project area.
Spotted bat	*Euderma maculatum*	SSC	Cliff-roosting	A	No habitat present in project area.
Western mastiff bat	*Eumops perotis californicus*	SSC, FSS	Cliff-roosting	A	No habitat present in project area.
Hoary bat	*Lasiurus cinereus*	SSC	Tree-roosting	A	No habitat present in project area.
Mono Lake lupine	*Lupinus duranii*	CNPS 1B.2	Great basin scrub, subalpine coniferous forest. Flowers May-Aug	A	No habitat present in project area.
American marten	*Martes americanan*	FSS	Old growth dependent	A	No habitat present in project area.
Utah monkeyflower	*Mimulus glabratus ssp. utahensis*	CNPS 2.1	Meadows and seeps. Flowers in April.	A	No habitat present in project area.
Yuma myotis	*Myotis yumanensis*	FGC 4150, CCR 2511	Roosts in bridges, buildings, cliff crevices caves, and mines	P	Survey efforts determined the existing building is not being used for day or night roosting.
Wong's spring snail	*Pyrgulopsis wongi*	FSS	Water dependent	A	No habitat present in project area.
Masonic Mountain jewel-flower	*Streptanthus oliganthus*	CNPS 1B.2, FSS	Pinyon and juniper woodland. Flowers June-July	A	No habitat present in project area.
Badger	*Taxidea taxus*	SSC	Open grasslands and deserts	A	No habitat present in project area.
Foxtail thelypodium	*Thelypodium integrifolium ssp. complanatum*	CNPS 2.2	Great basin scrub, meadows and seeps. Flowers June – Oct.	A	No habitat present in project area.
Frog's bit	*Ranunculus*	CNPS	Marshes and	A	No habitat present

buttercup	*hydrocharoides*	2.1	swamps. Flowers June-Sept.		in project area.
Cliff swallow	*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*	MB	Nests mostly on manmade structures, like bridges and buildings	P	Swallows are using the existing building to construct nests.

Absent [A] - no habitat present and no further work needed. **Status:** State Species of Special Concern (SSC); Forest Service Sensitive (FSS); California Native Plant Society (CNPS 1B.2) are, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere: Fairly endangered in California; (CNPS 2.1) -Rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere: Seriously endangered in California; (CNPS 2.2) - Rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere: Fairly endangered in California; Migratory Bird (MB); Protected under Fish and Game Code (FGC) 4150 and California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 2511.

5. Project Impacts

Bat Surveys- Surveys for bats was conducted on May 19 and 20, 2008 by Wendy Campbell, Caltrans Associate Biologist. The existing building was observed for day and night roosting activity. Bats do not seem to use the building.

Cliff Swallow - The cliff swallow is the only species that occurs in the project area. Swallows are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Cliff swallows are using the existing cinder shed for nesting. The existing building will be netted off to prevent nesting, prior to nesting season, which can start as early as February 1. If nesting does occur, then the project cannot proceed until the swallows are done nesting.

6. Mitigation Measures

A swallow special provision will be required for this project and netting of the existing building will take place prior to the nesting season, which starts as early as February 1.

7. Permits Required

No biological permits are required.

8. References

California Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Database. 2007.

California Native Plant Society (CNPS). 2008. Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (online edition, v7-08a). California Native Plant Society. Sacramento, CA. Accessed on Mon, mar. 24, 2008 from http://www.cnps.org/inventory

Western Bat Working Group. 2008. http://wbwg.org