

# CALTRANS ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS FOR CONSULTANTS

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**Supporting project delivery & ensuring  
regulatory compliance**

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# OVERVIEW

Today we will discuss the following topics:

- The roles that consultants play in conjunction with Caltrans Division of Environmental Planning.
- The basics of Caltrans' Project Development Process, specifically the Environmental Process.
- Environmental Document levels.
- New developments in policy which impact the Environmental Process.



# CONSULTANTS & THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS

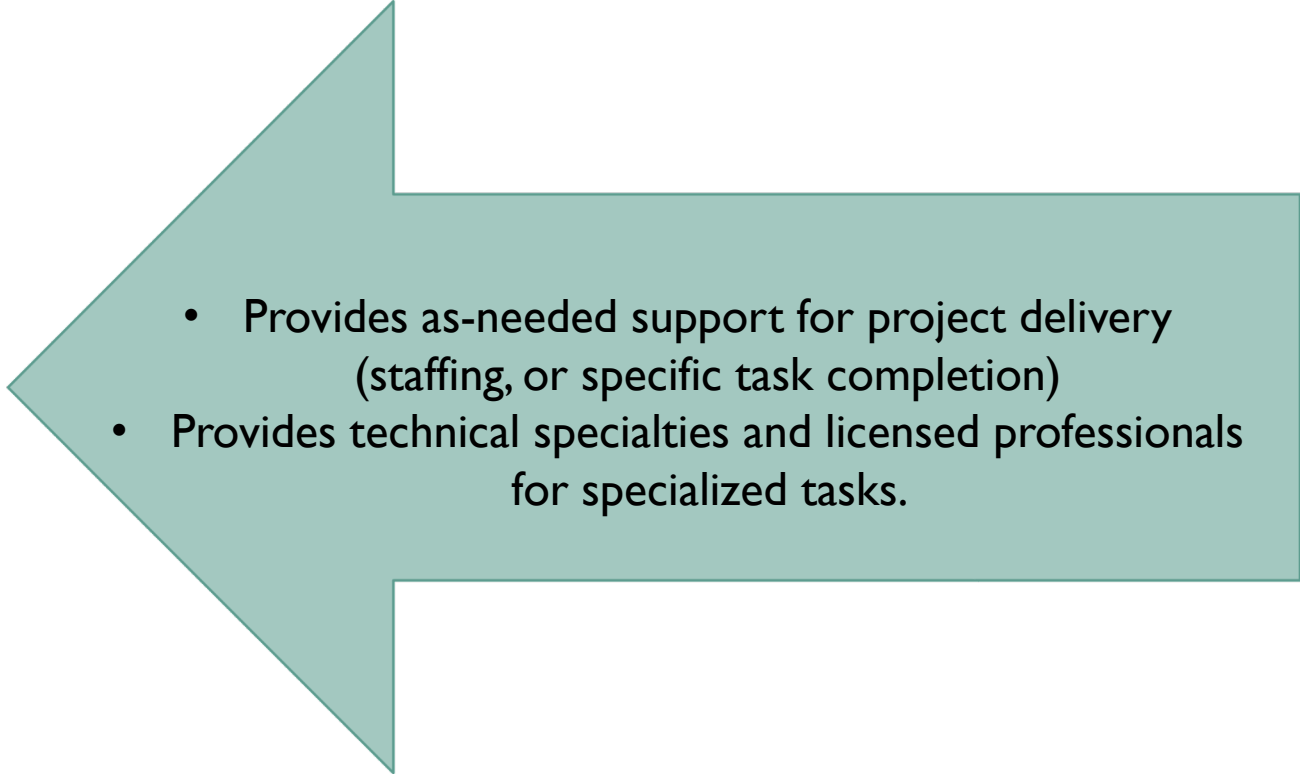
- Caltrans Division of Environmental Planning generally works with consultants under two types of contracts: On-call Contracts, and Multi-phase Contracts.
  - On-call contracts allow Caltrans to lean on consultants for support with delivery of environmental products. Often, task orders are drafted so that consultants may provide support with public engagement, document review, and other miscellaneous tasks.
  - Under multi-phase contracts, the entire project delivery process is handed over to a consultant. All deliverables are overseen by Caltrans including Environmental Studies and Documents.
- Requirements specific to each contract can be found in the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) document.



# Bridging the Gap: On-Call Environmental Consultants

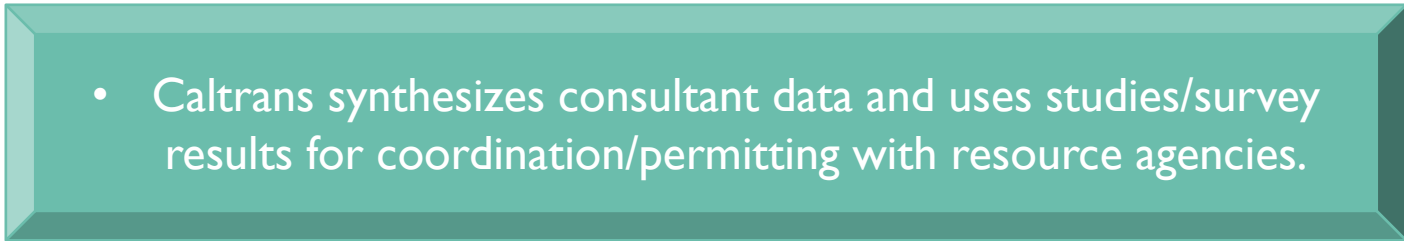
## Caltrans:

- Must meet project delivery milestones
- Often requires support with either technical specialties or project staffing

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- Provides as-needed support for project delivery (staffing, or specific task completion)
  - Provides technical specialties and licensed professionals for specialized tasks.

## On-Call Consultant:

- Employs experienced Environmental Professionals and Certified Specialists (advanced technical areas: Cultural, biological, etc.)

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- Caltrans synthesizes consultant data and uses studies/survey results for coordination/permitting with resource agencies.

# PROJECT LEVEL OVERSIGHT: MULTIPHASE CONTRACTS

## Caltrans:

- Identifies projects which would be suitable for completion by a third party.
- Delegates a project to a prime consultant in order to expedite delivery and bring in a “fresh set of eyes” to encourage innovation in project delivery.

## Multiphase Contractors:

- Multiphase Contracts are often procured by Engineering Firms which collaborate with an Environmental Sub-Consultant.
- The Contractor and Sub-contractors complete all project development tasks with Caltrans oversight

# CALTRANS PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OVERVIEW

- **K (PID) Phase: Prepare Project Initiation Document**
  - Environmental Professionals prepare a PEAR or miniPEAR (Preliminary Environmental Analysis Report) to accompany the project initiation document.
- **0 (PA/ED) Phase: Process Project Approval & Environmental Document**
  - Environmental Professionals complete all necessary environmental studies and prepare the Environmental Document to accompany the Project Report.
- **I (PS&E) Phase: Prepare Plans Specifications & Estimates**
  - Environmental Professionals review the PS&E package to ensure ongoing consistency with the Environmental Document & all applicable regulations. Any necessary permits/agreements are obtained during this phase. If a change in scope has occurred, an Environmental Re-validation is processed with any necessary supplemental studies.
- **3 (construction) Phase: Ensure Environmental Compliance During Construction**
  - Environmental Professionals attend pre-construction meetings, monitor construction activities, perform any necessary surveys prior to the start of work, and process all necessary paperwork to document CEQA/NEPA compliance.

# K PHASE: ENVIRONMENTAL ROLES & DELIVERABLES BY UNIT

- Generalist
  - Summarizes preliminary technical studies in Mini-PEAR/PEAR.
  - Provides Estimated Environmental Document Delivery Schedule
  - Coordinates work of the specialists.
- Biology
  - Prepares preliminary biological study.
- Cultural Resources
  - Prepares preliminary cultural study.
- Hazardous Waste
  - Prepares preliminary Hazardous Waste Assessment.
- Air Quality
  - Prepares preliminary air quality study.
- Noise
  - Prepares preliminary noise study.
- Landscape
  - Prepares preliminary Visual Impact Assessment.
- Stewardship
  - Reviews potential mitigation measures (if needed).



## 0 (PA/ED) PHASE: ENVIRONMENTAL ROLES & DELIVERABLES BY UNIT

- **Generalist**
  - Ensures compliance with CEQA, NEPA, and other federal, state, and local environmental laws.
  - Coordinates the work of specialists.
  - Summarizes technical reports into environmental document and issues to PE and PM when complete.
  - Creates Environmental Commitments Record
  - Issues Re-validations when and if necessary.
- **Biologist**
  - Responsible for determining the level of impact to natural resources (plants, animals) and summarizing in a Natural Environment Study (NES).
  - Determines if permits will be required.
  - Performs consultation with resource agencies.
- **Cultural Specialist**
  - Responsible for determining the level of impact to cultural resources (historic, archaeological, tribal) and summarizing in the Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR) and Finding of Effect (FOE).
  - Responsible for Section 106 Consultation with interested parties, tribal groups and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).





# 0 (PA/ED) PHASE: ENVIRONMENTAL ROLES & DELIVERABLES BY UNIT CONT.

- Hazardous Waste
  - Determine the types of hazardous waste present in the project area and any that would be generated from the project and ensure compliance with hazardous waste laws for proper handling and disposal.
  - Summarizes hazardous waste types and necessary compliance measures in a Hazardous Waste Assessment.
- Air Quality
  - Responsible for determining if a project conforms to a Regional Transportation Plan and/or Federal Transportation Plan.
  - Provides Design with GHG Emissions Analysis to comply with Governor's EO B-30-15.
  - Summarizes air quality impacts in an Air Quality Report.
- Noise
  - If the project is considered a Type I project, the noise specialist is responsible for summarizing noise impacts in a Noise Study Report.
  - Most projects are typically not Type I.
- Stewardship
  - Reviews Environmental Commitments Record
- Landscape
  - Responsible for determining visual impacts and summarizing in a Visual Impact Assessment.



# I (PS&E) PHASE: ENVIRONMENTAL ROLES & DELIVERABLES

- Generalist
  - Performs Quality Review at 60% and 95%.
  - Checks with specialists if additional review is needed if changes in design occur.
  - Issues Revalidation and Environmental Certification at 100% before RTL.
- Stewardship
  - Performs Quality Review at 60% and 95%.
  - Updates Environmental Commitments Record (ECR) if new measures are needed based on project design changes and/or permit conditions.
  - Ensure Environmental Commitments are met.
  - Provide concurrence to generalist to issue Environmental Certification.
- Biologist
  - Responsible for obtaining permits from resource agencies.
- Coastal Liaison
  - Responsible for obtaining permits from the California Coastal Commission or Local Coastal Programs.



## 3 (CONSTRUCTION) PHASE: ENVIRONMENTAL ROLES & DELIVERABLES

- Biology
  - Performs nesting bird surveys or surveys for other species of concern at pre-construction.
  - Confirm boundaries of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) and ensure protection of sensitive resources.
- Cultural
  - Native American Monitors oversee construction in sensitive areas.
  - Confirm boundaries of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) and ensure protection of sensitive resources.
- Stewardship
  - Acts as the Environmental Construction Liaison to ensure Environmental Commitments are being followed during construction.
  - Attend pre-construction meetings and monitor construction activities.
  - Obtains signatures from responsible parties on ECR.
  - Issues Certificate of Environmental Compliance (CEC) at end of construction.

# ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT LEVELS: CEQA

- The Environmental Document is prepared during 0 Phase. The level of documentation depends on the project scope and potential for Environmental Impacts.
- Most Caltrans projects are exempt from rigorous review and public notification. These projects can satisfy CEQA with a Categorical Exemption (CE).
- More complex projects with potential or definite environmental impacts require more in-depth studies.
- Any project which would require mitigation is considered to have an environmental impact under CEQA and therefore are not Categorically Exempt. The project will require a higher level of document depending on the severity of impacts. (Either an Initial Study or an Environmental Impact Report)
- After the Environmental Document is approved, any change in project scope must be documented with an Environmental Re-validation. This may require supplemental studies depending on the nature of the scope change.

## SUMMARY: CEQA PRODUCTS

- Low level: Categorical Exemption
- Mid-level: Initial Study (Proposed Negative Declaration/Mitigated Negative Declaration))
- High level: Environmental Impact Report
- Other: Re-validation
  - Summarizes any changes in project scope since issuance of the environmental document. May include supplemental studies if necessary. A Re-validation may be issued at any time between the approval of the Environmental Document and finalization of the RTL (ready-to-list) Package.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT LEVELS: NEPA

- Similar to CEQA requirements, most projects are exempt from rigorous review and public notification. These projects can satisfy NEPA with a Categorical Exclusion (CE).
- As with CEQA, more complex projects with potential or definite environmental impacts require more in-depth studies.
- Under NEPA, any project which poses significant potential to impact the environment does not qualify for a Categorical Exclusion. The project will require a higher-level document depending on the severity of impacts. (Either an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement)
- After the Environmental Document is approved, any change in project scope must be documented with an Environmental Re-validation. This may require supplemental studies depending on the nature of the scope change.

## SUMMARY: NEPA PRODUCTS

- Low level: Categorical Exclusion
- Mid-level: Environmental Assessment
- High level: Environmental Impact Statement
- Other: Re-validation
- Summarizes any changes in project scope since issuance of the environmental document. May include supplemental studies if necessary. A Re-validation may be issued at any time between the approval of the Environmental Document and finalization of the RTL (ready-to-list) Package.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Caltrans website with links for 'About Caltrans', 'Contact Us', 'ADA Certification', 'Request ADA Compliant Documents', 'Settings', and 'Translate'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with icons and labels for 'Travel', 'Work with Caltrans', 'Programs', 'Caltrans Near Me', and 'Search'. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: 'Home | Programs | Environmental Analysis | Standard Environmental Reference (SER)'. The title 'Standard Environmental Reference (SER)' is prominently displayed. A list of links includes 'What's New', 'SER Posting History', 'Purpose of the SER', and 'Contact SER Staff'. A paragraph invites users to sign up for a 'Standard Environmental Reference (SER) Subscription List' to receive updates. A final paragraph explains that the SER is an on-line resource for state and local agency staff to plan, prepare, submit, and evaluate environmental documents for transportation projects, funded or approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).



# THINGS TO NOTE:

- The Caltrans Standard Environmental Reference (SER) is constantly updated to conform to new developments in policy.
- All Environmental Documents must conform to the most recent template or guidance available.
- Additional information, as well as templates for all documents mentioned in this presentation, and a newsletter subscription service, can be found on the Caltrans Standard Environmental Reference Site:  
<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/environmental-analysis/standard-environmental-reference-ser>



## NEW DEVELOPMENTS:

- Senate Bill 743:
  - Requires that Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) be used as the metric for highway performance evaluation, rather than Level of Service. (LOS)
  - Stay tuned for updated guidance.
- Greenhouse Gas Quantification:
  - As a result of SB 743, Air Quality evaluations must include a quantification of construction-related and operational greenhouse gas emissions.
- Ongoing changes to Caltrans guidance:
  - Caltrans headquarters continually revises the templates and Annotated Outlines for Environmental Products. These updates are made available on the Caltrans Standard Environmental Reference Site. (SER)

# CASE STUDY: TRANCAS CREEK BRIDGE

**Environmental setting has the potential to impact project delivery due to required coordination/permitting from resource agencies.**

- Trancas Creek Bridge Replacement on State Route 1 required:
  - Coordination with utility providers:
    - Relocation of a water main needed to coincide with project construction activities.
    - In order to incorporate this work under the project's Environmental Document, an addendum was prepared.
  - Biological permitting:
    - Due to the nature of the project, permits were obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, as well as the Regional Water Quality Control Board.
    - Surveys included those for Snowy Plover, and Delineation of Jurisdictional Waters.
  - California Coastal Commission: Coastal Development Permit:
    - Wave Run-up and Sea-level Rise Studies were required due to the project's location within the Coastal Zone.

# QUESTIONS?

For future inquiries, please contact:

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