

Summary

- Permanent impacts are small, and compensatory mitigation should be relative and proportional.
- Onsite mitigation opportunities are limited.
- CDFW expressed a preference against mitigation in the Caltrans ROW.
- State Parks did not have any mitigation opportunities.
- Proposed mitigation is within the same hydrologic unit and similar ecological setting along the Gaviota Coast as Canada del Barro. It supports federally threatened species, steelhead and red-legged frog. Proposed mitigation is 30 times greater than what would be required by mitigation ratios.

Full Description

The permanent impacts to jurisdictional areas at Canada del Barro will be small (less than 3,000 square feet), associated with impacts from rerouting the culvert and installation of headwalls and rock slope protection. Compensatory mitigation to offset these impacts would involve approximately 9,000 square feet of restoration to degraded riparian habitats.

Onsite compensatory mitigation was not pursued because the stream channel was highly confined, leaving minimal opportunity to enhance or rehabilitate jurisdictional areas within the Caltrans Right of Way (ROW). Additionally, during project design, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) expressed reservations about permanent mitigation within the Caltrans ROW and a preference for sites with permanent legal protections, like conservation easements. Caltrans did not consider offsite mitigation elsewhere within its ROW because of this preference from CDFW.

Caltrans investigated the following offsite mitigation opportunities during design development in August of 2019.

- University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB), Cheadle Center for Biodiversity & Ecological Restoration Director, Lisa Stratton, identified a potential mitigation area within the UCSB campus in Goleta. When Caltrans discussed this option with regulatory agencies, the Corps of Engineers Liaison, Theresa Stevens, suggested Caltrans consider opportunities closer to the impacts, including Gaviota State Park/Gaviota Creek, Refugio State Park/Refugio Creek, El Capitan State Park/Beach, and Santa Barbara Land Trust properties.
- California State Parks Biologist, Nat Cox, indicated that State Parks did not have any appropriate mitigation opportunities within Gaviota State Parks or elsewhere along the Gaviota Coast.
- The Land Trust of Santa Barbara County Director, Bruce Reitherman, and Land Steward, Alison Petro, suggested the potential to contribute to mitigation at Refugio Creek. The organization, South Coast Habitat Restoration, recently began restoration work to eradicate invasive vegetation in the area, but the completion of restoration remained unfunded. The area is within the same hydrologic unit as Canada del Barro, and it has a similar ecological setting along the Gaviota Coast. Refugio Creek provides habitat for steelhead and red-legged frog. Representatives from the Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and CDFW supported this approach. As proposed, Caltrans is proposing to fund over two acres of restoration, thirty times more than would be required for compensatory mitigation for the Gaviota Culvert project.