



# STUDIES

## Environmental Studies

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**Waters and Wetlands:** The proposed project will cross Cato Creek and Snake Creek, as well as several unnamed tributaries to Cato Creek and Snake Creek. The proposed stream and river crossings will incorporate water quality protection best management practices to prevent erosion and keep sediment and unwanted materials out of streams. As proposed, the project will be permitted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act with a Nationwide General Permit. No significant, permanent adverse impacts to waterbodies are expected.

**Threatened and Endangered Species:** Habitat surveys were conducted for federally listed threatened and endangered species, as well as for protected bird species. Due to the proximity of the new highway alignment, high-quality habitat for threatened and endangered species was observed within the proposed project area. As such, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently underway. ODOT will implement avoidance and minimization measures, like seasonal construction restrictions during critical breeding or foraging times of the year. Overall, there will likely be no significant adverse impacts to protected species.

**Cultural Resources:** Cultural resources—including both historic and archaeological aspects—were evaluated. The general project area also has important tribal importance including being associated with Cherokee Trail of Tears historic route. Consequently, several tribes were consulted initially and throughout the process.

Initial field results indicate that there are no pre-historic archeological sites within the new alignment. However, there are significant sites in the general area that need protection. Environmental avoidance notes will be included in the project plans to protect these areas of concern.

There were five potentially historic building complexes identified during the field studies. These buildings were at least 45 years old, but their actual historic significance is currently under determination. If determined to be of important historic value, the appropriate measures will be taken to avoid, minimize or mitigate any associated impacts to these structures.

**Floodplains:** A portion of the project near the Snake Creek bridge is located within a floodplain, and some of the area is associated with the Lake Tenkiller flood pool or “backwater” area. During large rain events and wet seasons, the floodplain and flood pool help to manage flood waters and prevent impacts to homes and private property. ODOT is working with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to avoid any adverse impact to Lake Tenkiller’s flood storage volume. Also, the new Snake Creek bridge will span the stream, so the impact to the floodplain and flood pool will be minimized to an acceptable level.

**Hazardous Materials:** There are a couple of sites within the project footprint that have potentially hazardous materials associated with them. There is an active gas station and an old grocery store that is no longer in operation—both of which have underground storage tanks. ODOT is currently assessing the potential impacts, but these sites are not considered to be a high risk. No adverse impacts are anticipated.