



California
Department of Conservation
Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources

Gavin Newsom, Governor
David Bunn, Director

March 13, 2019

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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

MAR 13 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

CEQA Project: **SCH #2019029068**

Lead Agency: **Merced County Department of Public Works, Roads Division**

Project Title: **Merced County Bridge Maintenance and Replacement Project**

The Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (Division) oversees the drilling, operation, maintenance, and plugging and abandonment of oil, natural gas, and geothermal wells. Our regulatory program emphasizes the wise development of oil, natural gas, and geothermal resources in the state through sound engineering practices that protect the environment, prevent pollution, and ensure public safety. Northern California is known for its rich gas fields. Division staff have reviewed the documents depicting the proposed project.

The proposed Merced County Bridge Maintenance and Replacement Project (project) includes bridges and culverts throughout the County of Merced, California. The project's proposed improvements would correct deficiencies identified during routine inspections of 396 bridges/culverts. The locations of bridges/culverts provided by Merced County are presented on the attached map sheets which also show known locations of oil and gas wells. We have made no mapped differentiation of well status (active, injection, or abandoned wells) and we have made no attempt to verify well locations for accuracy. It should be noted that oil and gas wells are not generally very close to roads or bridges. **No known well is located within the project bridge/culvert areas; the closest well to any bridge is shown on the Inset Map, the inset location is shown on Map 2.** The closest well is 200-300 ft from the nearest bridge. All other mapped bridges/culverts are generally more than ¼ mile from the mapped structures.

For future reference, you can review wells located on private and public land at the Division's website: <https://secure.conservation.ca.gov/WellSearch>. Based on our review of available data, no impact to known oil or gas wells is likely.

The local permitting agencies and property owner should be aware of, and fully understand, that significant and potentially dangerous issues may be associated with development near oil and gas wells. These issues are non-exhaustively identified in the following comments and are provided by the Division for consideration by the local permitting agency, in conjunction with the property owner and/or developer, on a parcel-by-parcel or well-by-well basis. As stated above, the Division provides the

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above well review information solely to facilitate decisions made by the local permitting agency regarding potential development near an oil or gas well.

1. It is recommended that access to a well located on the property be maintained in the event re-abandonment of the well becomes necessary in the future. Impeding access to a well could result in the need to remove any structure or obstacle that prevents or impedes access. This includes, but is not limited to, buildings, housing, fencing, landscaping, trees, pools, patios, sidewalks, and decking.
2. Nothing guarantees that a well abandoned to current standards will not start leaking oil, gas, and/or water in the future. It always remains a possibility that any well may start to leak oil, gas, and/or water after abandonment, no matter how thoroughly the well was plugged and abandoned. The Division acknowledges that wells abandoned to current standards have a lower probability of leaking oil, gas, and/or water in the future, but makes no guarantees as to the adequacy of this well's abandonment or the potential need for future re-abandonment.
3. Based on comments 1 and 2 above, the Division makes the following general recommendations:
 - a. Maintain physical access to any oil or gas well encountered.
 - b. Ensure that the abandonment of oil or gas wells is to current standards.

If the local permitting agency, property owner, and/or developer chooses not to follow recommendation "b" for a well located on the development site property, the Division believes that the importance of following recommendation "a" for the well located on the subject property increases. If recommendation "a" cannot be followed for the well located on the subject property, then the Division advises the local permitting agency, property owner, and/or developer to consider any and all alternatives to proposed construction or development on the site (see comment 4 below).

4. Sections 3208 and 3255(a)(3) of the Public Resources Code give the Division the authority to order the re-abandonment of any well that is hazardous, or that poses a danger to life, health, or natural resources. Responsibility for re-abandonment costs for any well may be affected by the choices made by the local permitting agency, property owner, and/or developer in considering the general recommendations set forth in this letter. (Cal. Public Res. Code, § 3208.1.)
 5. Maintaining sufficient access to a gas well may be generally described as maintaining "rig access" to the well. Rig access allows a well servicing rig and
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associated necessary equipment to reach the well from a public street or access way, solely over the parcel on which the well is located. A well servicing rig, and any necessary equipment, should be able to pass unimpeded along and over the route, and should be able to access the well without disturbing the integrity of surrounding infrastructure.

6. If, during the course of development of this proposed project, **any unknown well(s) is/are discovered**, the Division should be notified immediately so that the newly-discovered well(s) can be incorporated into the records and investigated. The Division recommends that any wells found in the course of this project, and any pertinent information obtained after the issuance of this letter, be communicated to the appropriate county recorder for inclusion in the title information of the subject real property. This is to ensure that present and future property owners are aware of (1) the wells located on the property, and (2) potentially significant issues associated with any improvements near oil or gas wells.

No well work may be performed on any oil or gas well without written approval from the Division in the form of an appropriate permit. This includes, but is not limited to, mitigating leaking fluids or gas from abandoned wells, modifications to well casings, and/or any other re-abandonment work. (NOTE: The Division regulates the depth of any well below final grade (depth below the surface of the ground). Title 14, Section 1723.5 of the California Code of Regulations states that all well casings shall be cut off at least 5 feet but no more than 10 feet below grade. If any well needs to be lowered or raised (i.e. casing cut down or casing riser added) to meet this grade regulation, a permit from the Division is required before work can start.)

DocuSigned by:

Charlene L Wardlow

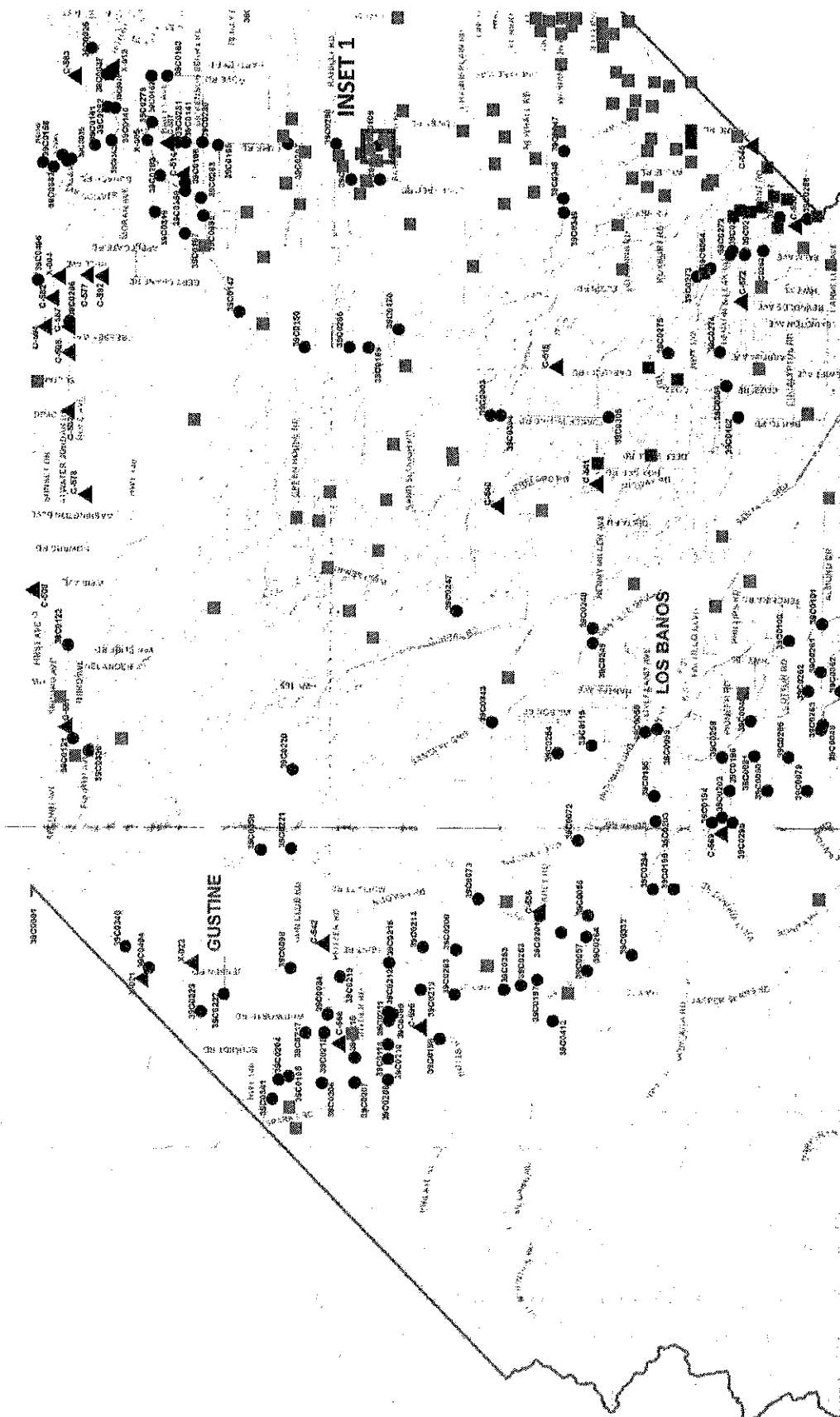
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Northern District Deputy

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Attachments: Locations of Affected Bridges and Wells Page 1 of 4
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Locations of Affected Bridges and Wells Page 4 of 4
Locations of Affected Bridges and Wells Inset 1





LOCATIONS OF AFFECTED BRIDGES AND WELLS
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1	3
2	4

NORTH

0 2 4 6
Miles

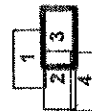


C:\PFW\2016 Merced County 2018

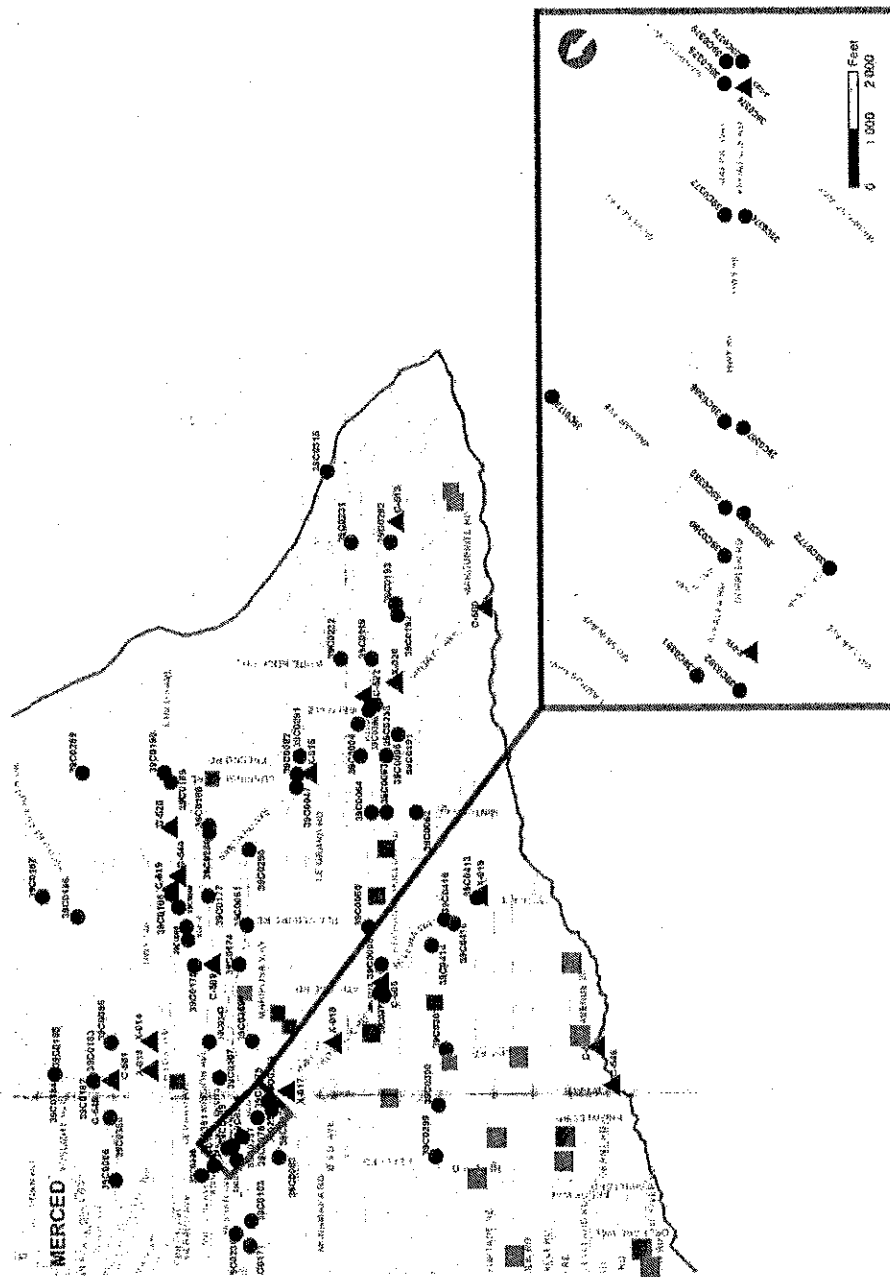


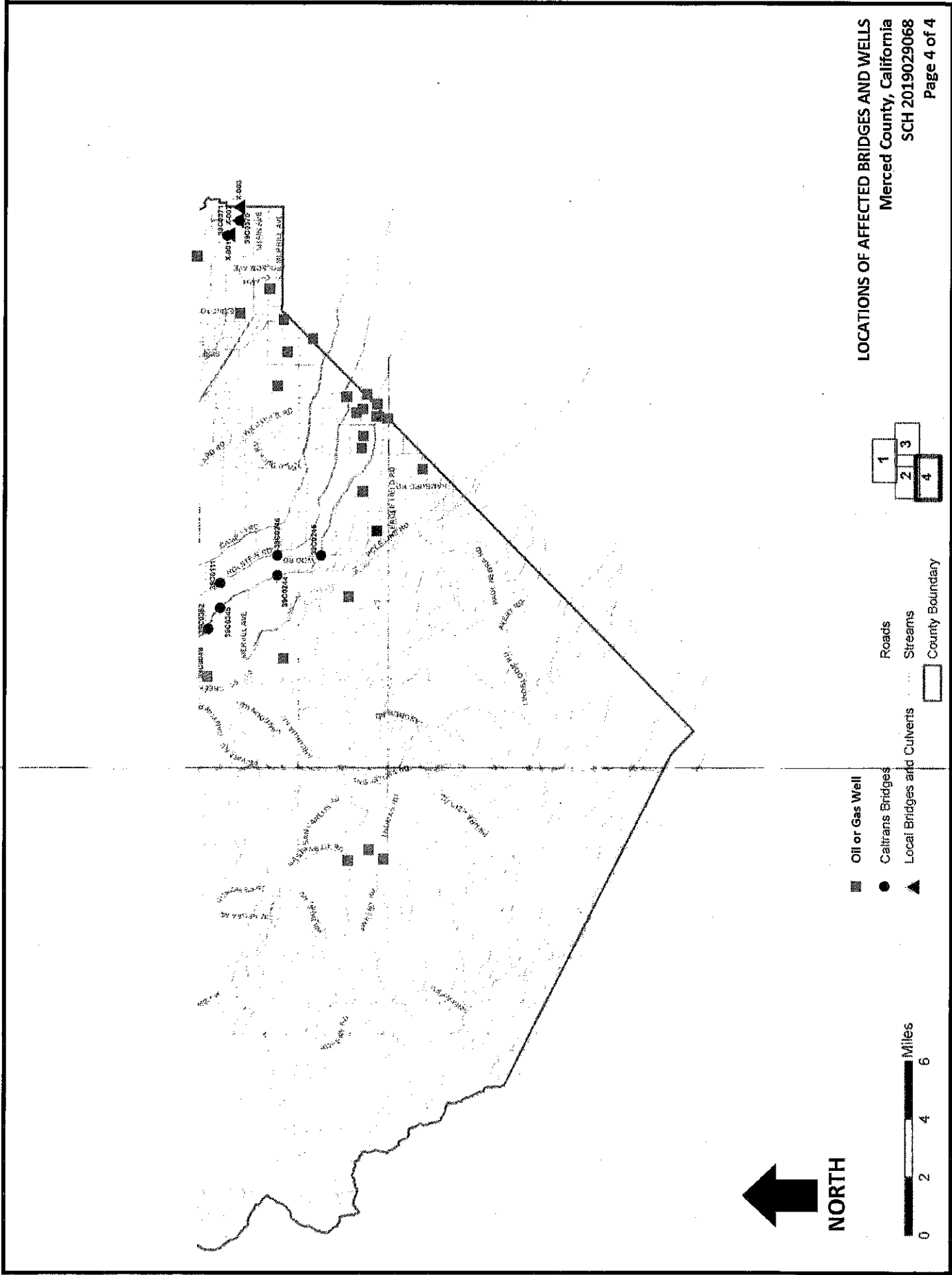
- Oil or Gas Well
- Caltrans Bridges
- ▲ Local Bridges and Culverts

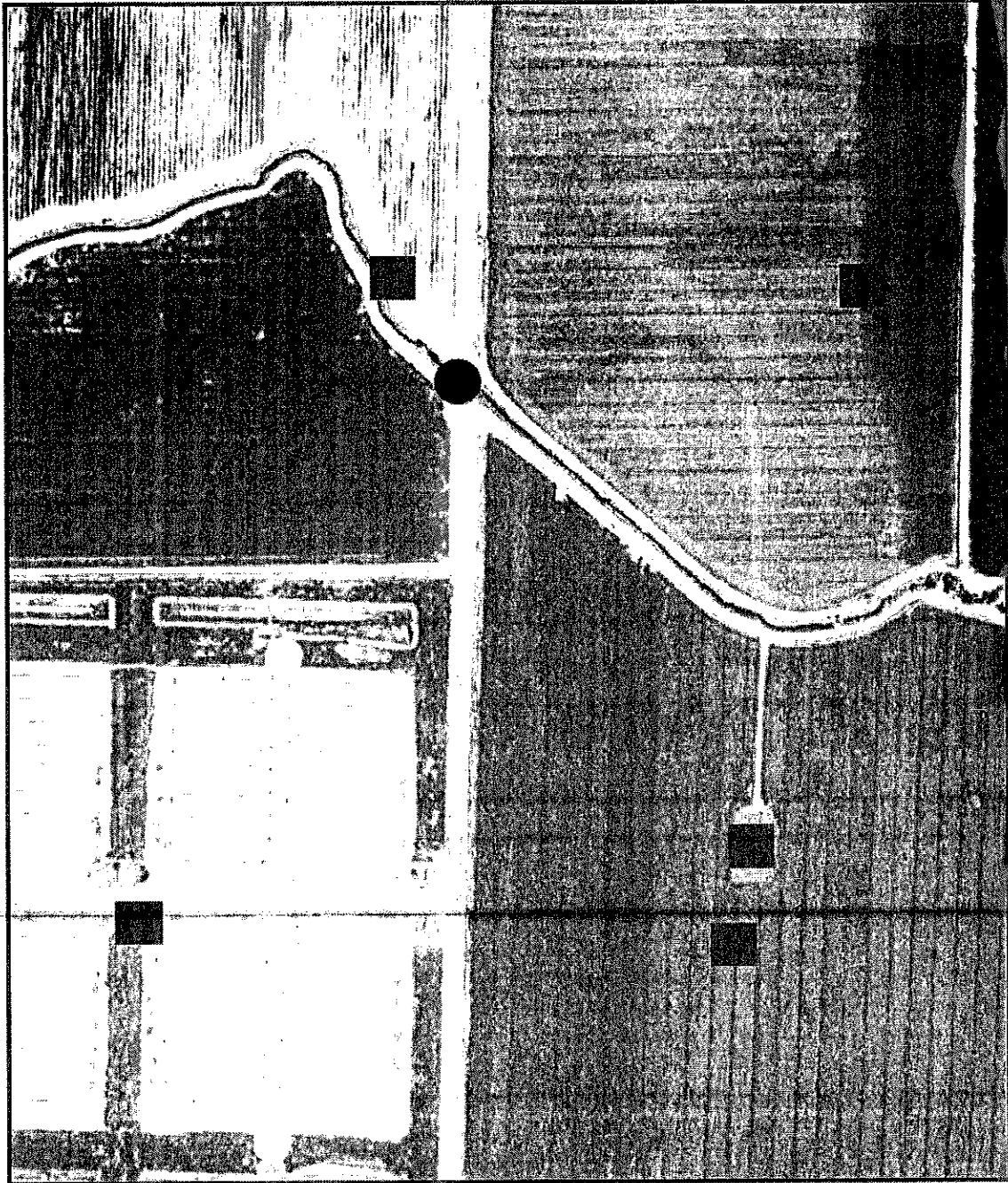
- Roads
- Streams



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600 FT



Caltrans Bridge



Oil or Gas Well

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