EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

EXECUTIVE ORDER N-13-26

WHEREAS State Route 1, commonly called the Pacific Coast Highway or Highway 1, is an iconic road that travels 656 miles along California's Pacific coast; and

WHEREAS Highway 1 serves as an essential transportation corridor for those who live and work in California's coastal communities, as well as for visitors from around the world seeking to access California's treasured coastline, including thousands of access points to beaches, state parks, viewpoints, coastal trails, fishing, boating, surfing, and other natural and cultural and recreational resources; and

WHEREAS California's coast serves as a significant economic driver, generating approximately $51 billion in annual economic activity and supporting 600,000 jobs; and

WHEREAS climate change is increasing the intensity of extreme precipitation events and contributing to long-term sea-level rise; increasing the exposure of California's coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources to flooding, erosion, and wave damage; and increasing the frequency and severity of wildfires, which both affect coastal wildlands and create burn scars that can lead to significant debris flows during subsequent storms; and

WHEREAS an El Niño event can temporarily elevate sea levels along California's coast, and these elevated water levels, when combined with long-term sea-level rise caused by climate change or high tides or storm surges, can compound coastal flooding and erosion and increase the reach of damaging storm conditions; and

WHEREAS coastal highways like Highway 1 are especially vulnerable to damage and closures from coastal erosion, flooding, landslides, and wave impacts that may be exacerbated by both climate change and El Niño conditions; and

WHEREAS prior landslides, including the February 9, 2024, Regent's Slide event in Monterey County that closed a 6.8 mile stretch of Highway 1, have severely impacted communities that rely on the highway, isolating homes and businesses and damaging the local economy; and

WHEREAS emergency project expenditures on the Big Sur Highway 1 Coastal Corridor totaled approximately $312 million from 2020–2026; and

WHEREAS the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) plans, builds, operates, and maintains approximately 100 miles along the Big Sur Highway 1 Coastal Corridor; and

WHEREAS Caltrans has undertaken significant work to repair damaged sections of Highway 1, shore up portions of the surrounding landscape that are at risk of erosion or landslides, and improve drainage; and

WHEREAS the continued integrity, safety, and accessibility of Highway 1 is essential to sustaining local businesses, connecting coastal communities, ensuring access to places of work and medical care and other basic

necessities, as well as recreation, and maintaining and expanding California's economic growth and tourism industry; and

WHEREAS maintaining safe and reliable evacuation routes and essential roadways along the Highway 1 corridor is critical to protecting public safety and ensuring access for emergency response personnel during and following potential El Niño-related storms and flooding, as well as in the longer-term in the face of climate change-driven harms such as wildfires, shore erosion, and more intense storms; and

WHEREAS effective preparedness and preventative measures requires coordinated action among state agencies, local governments, tribal governments, federal partners, and community organizations to identify vulnerabilities, strengthen readiness, and prepare for the oncoming El Niño event and longer-term sea-level rise and coastal erosion; and

WHEREAS on September 21, 2026, I proclaimed a State of Emergency and directed the prepositioning of resources throughout California in preparation for the developing El Niño storm season; and

WHEREAS subsequently, on October 8, 2026, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center reported that El Niño conditions continue to strengthen and that a strong-to-very strong El Niño is likely to occur in early 2027.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, in accordance with the authority vested in me by the State Constitution and statutes, including the California Emergency Services Act, and in particular, Government Code sections 8567 and 8627, do hereby issue the following Order to become effective immediately.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. The California State Transportation Agency and the California Natural Resources Agency are directed to convene a Highway 1 Task Force comprising senior representatives of the California Department of Transportation, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, the California Coastal Commission, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and such other agencies as the Secretaries of the California State Transportation Agency and the California Natural Resources Agency shall deem necessary.

2. The Highway 1 Task Force shall assess the vulnerability of Highway 1, and adjoining communities and state resources, to increasing threats from climate change, including but not limited to sea-level rise, coastal erosion, landslides, and increasingly severe and frequent storms. The Highway 1 Task Force shall also identify portions of the highway that are under immediate threat of failure or damage from the anticipated effects of the 2026–2027 El Niño event.

3. The Highway 1 Task Force shall develop an assessment of the threats identified under Paragraph 2 and a plan to address them, which shall be presented to the Governor's Office in a report with recommendations no later than December 15, 2026. This report and recommendations may include, but shall not be limited to:

a) Assessment—based on existing climate projections, adaptation guidance, and planning tools—of the corridor's key climate risks, where those risks compound, where communities and infrastructure are most vulnerable, and where corridor-specific analysis would inform near term and midterm decisions.

b) Assessment of existing tools and guidance that can help prioritize investments and determinations concerning protecting, repairing, realigning, or adapting vulnerable segments of Highway 1.

c) Assessment of how general plans, local coastal programs, hazard mitigation plans, and infrastructure decisions can account for the corridor's changing risks, and where state guidance, technical assistance, or regional coordination would help communities plan for recurring disruptions and align transportation investments with housing, land use, and conservation goals.

d) A prioritized list of actions that address the identified threats.

e) A prioritized list of funding, maintenance, and additional critical response needs required to fully mitigate identified threats.

f) Identification of measures to streamline and expedite planning, permitting and implementation of these actions, including potential emergency suspensions and orders as necessary to mitigate near-term impacts of the El Niño event.

g) Identification of an advanced approval process for preventive projects designed to minimize roadway closures on the Big Sur Coast, such as identifying debris disposal locations along the coast to diminish the cost of emergency projects, reduce the need for extensive hauling outside of Big Sur, and reduce roadway closure times.

4. The Highway 1 Task Force shall develop a long-term adaptation strategy, including through the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan, which outlines fiscal and planning analyses of alternative considerations and a consensus vision for the future of the Big Sur Highway 1 Coastal Corridor.

5. The California Department of Transportation shall continue to monitor and proactively assess landslide risk in areas of Highway 1 that have previously experienced landslide activity or have recent burn scars or other conditions that may heighten risk of landslides during major storms. The Department shall, to the extent practicable, prioritize prevention and mitigation work in areas identified. The Department shall coordinate with the State Water Board and the Department of Water Resources on best practices and opportunities to streamline the management of debris flows through watercourses that could affect Highway 1.

6. Whenever storm conditions during the El Niño event make it appropriate to do so, the California Department of Transportation shall promptly request immediate assistance through the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program, United States Code, Title 23, section 125, in order to obtain federal assistance for local road and highway repairs, improvements, or reconstruction that are needed to address damage and prevent recurring damage to Highway 1.

7. The California Department of Parks and Recreation is directed to assess potential impacts to lands it owns and manages resulting from closure or repairs of Highway 1, including but not limited to public access, recreation, natural resources and tribal resources. The Department shall also assess how closure of high-use access points along Highway 1 would generally impact state parks, limit public access, disrupt park operations and generally affect concession operations.

I FURTHER DIRECT that as soon as hereafter possible, this Order be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State and that widespread publicity and notice be given of this Order.

This Order is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the State of California, its agencies, departments, entities, officers, employees, or any other person.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 27th day of October 2026.

GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California

ATTEST:

SHIRLEY N. WEBER, PH. D
Secretary of State