

Judge says Caltrans must halt Niles Canyon project

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A judge on Thursday ordered Caltrans to stop working on a controversial road widening project in Niles Canyon that is being challenged because of environmental concerns.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Frank Roesch issued a temporary restraining order halting construction until June 23, when he'll consider the Alameda Creek Alliance's request for a permanent injunction against the project.

The Alameda Creek Alliance sued Caltrans this week over plans to widen Highway 84 through scenic Niles Canyon, saying the project will destroy habitat for salmon, frogs and other species.

Caltrans has said Niles Canyon Road is one of the most dangerous thoroughfares in the region and widening it would reduce accidents.

The plan calls for adding shoulders, replacing a bridge and widening the road by up to 20 feet, although keeping the road two lanes.