

News Release

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Sacramento District

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U.C. Merced Biological Opinion issued

Construction of the U.C. Merced campus is not likely to jeopardize the 13 endangered plant and animal species living on the site of the proposed campus, according to a biological opinion received by the Army Corps of Engineers.

A permit for campus construction is required from the Corps under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. This section of the act regulates work in waters of the United States, including wetlands.

Prepared for the Corps by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as required by the Endangered Species Act, the opinion concludes that, based on certain parameters and conservation measures identified in the report, the UC Merced campus and associated infrastructure is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of endangered species.

However, the biological opinion does require the Corps to further consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service once the final campus design is identified through the Corps' permit process.

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UC Merced Biological Opinion
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“The biological opinion is just one piece of information we must consider in reviewing the U.C. Merced permit application,” said Andrew Rosenau, chief of the Corps’ Sacramento Regulatory Branch. “We have many other steps to go through in our evaluation of the proposed campus site.”

“No one factor by itself will determine the outcome of the application,” said Colonel Michael Conrad, Jr., the Sacramento District Engineer. “Our final decision must balance all factors involved in the development. For us to issue a permit, we must find that the project is in the public interest, and that it is the least environmentally damaging alternative, in terms of costs, logistics, and existing technology,” he added.

In its review process, the Corps must analyze the project’s impacts on conservation, economics, aesthetics, wetlands, water supply, cultural values, fish and wildlife resources, and the welfare of people and the environment.

It will take up to three years to complete the review process.

The biological opinion is available on the Corps of Engineers’ Sacramento District web site at: <http://www.spk.usace.army.mil/>

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