



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Agencies and Interested Parties
From: Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
Date: July 18, 2008
Subject: Announcement of:
1) **Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program, Phase 3 Landside Improvements Project;**
2) **Public Scoping Meeting to be held on August 6, 2008; and**
3) **Scoping comments due by August 18, 2008**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Sacramento District, and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) will be the federal and state lead agencies, respectively, and will prepare an environmental impact statement/environmental impact report (EIS/EIR) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the subject project in the Natomas Basin in Sacramento and Sutter Counties, California. USACE and SAFCA are soliciting input from interested agencies and the public as to the scope and content of the EIS/EIR.

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) specifies that a public agency must prepare an EIR on any project that it proposes to carry out or approve that may have a significant direct or indirect effect (also referred to as "significant impact") on the environment (Public Resources Code Section 21080[d]). SAFCA is proposing the Natomas Levee Improvement Program (NLIP), Phase 3 Landside Improvements Project (Phase 3 Project), as described below, and has determined that the proposed project may have significant impacts on the environment. Therefore, acting as the lead agency for CEQA compliance, SAFCA will prepare an EIR that evaluates these significant environmental impacts.

To implement the proposed project, SAFCA requires a permit from USACE pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for the discharge of fill into jurisdictional waters of the United States, and permission pursuant to Section 408 of the Rivers and Harbors Act for alteration of a federal project levee. A joint EIS/EIR will be prepared to evaluate the significant environmental impacts of the proposed project, including those impacts associated with USACE's decision making processes for Sections 404 and 408.

PURPOSE OF THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The purposes of this notice are to:

1. briefly describe the proposed project and the anticipated content of the draft EIS/EIR to be prepared for the proposed project;

2. announce the public scoping meeting to facilitate public input and to be held: Wednesday, August 6, 2008, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at 1321 Garden Highway (Sierra Health Foundation) in Sacramento, California; and
3. solicit input by August 18, 2008, from interested federal and state agencies, and from interested organizations and individuals about the content and scope of the draft EIS/EIR, including the alternatives to be addressed and the potentially significant environmental impacts.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Landside Improvements Project is part of SAFCA's efforts to reduce flood risk for the Sacramento area, and is part of the NLIP evaluated in SAFCA's programmatic *EIR on Local Funding Mechanisms for Comprehensive Flood Control Improvements for the Sacramento Area* (State Clearinghouse # 2006072098). Volume II of that EIR contained a project-level evaluation of the Natomas Cross Canal South Levee Phase 1 Improvements (Phase 1 Project). In 2007, SAFCA prepared the *EIR on the NLIP Landside Improvements Project* (State Clearinghouse # 2007062016), which covers the three additional phases of "landside" improvements to the levees protecting the Natomas Basin in Sacramento and Sutter Counties, including the Phase 2 Project and Phase 3 Project. The Phase 2 Project was analyzed at a project level and the remainder of the Landside Improvement Project was analyzed at a program level. On November 29, 2007, the SAFCA Board of Directors certified the EIR and approved implementation of the Phase 2 Project components proposed for construction in 2008. Following completion of the *EIR on the NLIP Landside Improvements Project*, USACE prepared an EIS to meet USACE's NEPA requirements to support USACE's decisions on 408 permission and 404 permitting. A Record of Decision (ROD) is expected to be signed by USACE in October 2008.

The EIS/EIR to be prepared for the Phase 3 Project will evaluate the environmental effects of the Phase 3 Project at a project level, and will evaluate subsequent phases of the Landside Improvements Project at a general, program level. These subsequent phases will be subject to additional project-specific NEPA and CEQA analysis in the future prior to approval and implementation.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following objectives were adopted by SAFCA in connection with approval of the NLIP: (1) provide at least a 100-year level of flood protection to the Natomas Basin as quickly as possible, (2) provide "200-year" protection to the basin over time, and (3) avoid any substantial increase in expected annual damages as new development occurs in the basin.

The specific purpose of the Landside Improvements Project is to provide at least 100-year flood protection as quickly as possible while laying the groundwork to achieve at least "200-year" flood protection over time.

Additional project objectives adopted by SAFCA in connection with approval of the Phase 2 Project that are also applicable to the Phase 3 Project are to:

- (1) use flood control projects in the vicinity of the [Sacramento International] Airport to facilitate changes in the management of Airport lands that reduce hazards to aviation safety, and
- (2) use flood control projects to increase the extent and connectivity of the lands in Natomas being managed to provide habitat for giant garter snake, Swainson's hawk, and other special-status species.

The Phase 3 Project includes the following major activities, which will be analyzed at a project level in the EIS/EIR:

- ▶ Along the Sacramento River east levee, construct a raised adjacent setback levee from just north of Elkhorn Reservoir to just south of Interstate 5 (I-5) (Reaches 5A–9B) with cutoff walls and seepage berms where required to reduce seepage potential, and install woodland plantings.
- ▶ Widen the Pleasant Grove Creek Canal (PGCC) west levee between Howsley Road and Sankey Road and construct cutoff walls or seepage berms where required to reduce seepage potential.
- ▶ Widen the Natomas East Main Drainage Canal (NEMDC) west levee from Elkhorn Boulevard to the NEMDC Stormwater Pumping Station.
- ▶ Construct a cutoff wall in the NEMDC west levee from the NEMDC Stormwater Pumping Station to Northgate Boulevard where required to reduce seepage potential.
- ▶ Construct a new canal designed to provide drainage and associated giant garter snake habitat (referred to as the “GGs/Drainage Canal”) between Elkhorn Reservoir and the West Drainage Canal at I-5, relocate the Elkhorn Canal downstream of Elkhorn Reservoir, and reconstruct the Reclamation District 1000 Pumping Plant No. 2.
- ▶ Recontour the land and create marsh and upland habitat at borrow locations.
- ▶ Realign and relocate irrigation and drainage canals and other infrastructure, such as utility poles, as needed to accommodate the flood control improvements.
- ▶ Remove encroachments as required to meet USACE, Central Valley Flood Protection Board, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) criteria.

Phase 4 of the Landside Improvements Project will include the following activities that will be analyzed at a program level in the EIS/EIR:

- ▶ Along the Sacramento River east levee, construct an adjacent setback levee (raised where needed to provide adequate freeboard) from just south of I-5 to Gateway Oaks Drive (Reaches 10–20B) with cutoff walls and seepage berms where required to reduce seepage potential
- ▶ Construct a cutoff wall in the American River north levee between Gateway Oaks Drive and Northgate Boulevard where required to reduce seepage potential.
- ▶ Widen the NEMDC west levee from Sankey Road to Elkhorn Boulevard.
- ▶ Relocate the Riverside Canal, improve the West Drainage Canal south of I-5 to provide enhanced GGS habitat, and construct modifications to several pumping plants.
- ▶ Recontour the land and create marsh and upland habitat at borrow locations.
- ▶ Remove encroachments as required to meet USACE, Central Valley Flood Protection Board, and FEMA criteria.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIS/EIR will describe the direct and indirect significant environmental effects of the Phase 3 Project. The EIS/EIR will also evaluate cumulative effects of the project when considered in conjunction with the other phases of the Landside Improvements Project and other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, including other SAFCA projects.

On the basis of preliminary evaluation, USACE and SAFCA have determined that the probable environmental effects of the proposed project are as follows:

- ▶ **Agricultural Resources:** Conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use; temporary effects on agricultural productivity.
- ▶ **Land Use and Socioeconomics:** Temporary disturbance of an existing community.
- ▶ **Topography, Geology, and Soils:** Potential for soil erosion or loss of topsoil during construction.
- ▶ **Hydrology and Hydraulics:** Minimized flood risk; potential temporary and/or permanent alteration of local drainage patterns; potential effects on groundwater recharge.
- ▶ **Water Quality:** Temporary effects on water quality during construction.
- ▶ **Fish and Aquatic Habitat:** Loss of fish or aquatic habitat through increased sedimentation and turbidity or release of contaminants during construction; loss of shaded riverine aquatic habitat (SRA).
- ▶ **Sensitive Aquatic Habitats:** Temporary disturbance or permanent loss of jurisdictional waters of the United States.
- ▶ **Vegetation and Wildlife:** Temporary disturbance or permanent loss of woodland habitats and wildlife corridors.
- ▶ **Special-Status Terrestrial Species:** Temporary disturbance or permanent loss of special-status species habitats; construction disturbance or take of special-status terrestrial species, especially to Swainson's hawk and giant garter snake.
- ▶ **Cultural Resources:** Disturbance of historic or archaeological resources.
- ▶ **Paleontological Resources:** Potential disturbance of previously undiscovered fossils during earthmoving activities.
- ▶ **Transportation and Circulation:** Temporary increase in traffic and traffic hazards on local roadways during construction; temporary closure of roadways during construction of flood control improvements across the roadways.
- ▶ **Air Quality:** Temporary increases in pollutant emissions associated with construction activities.
- ▶ **Noise:** Temporary increases in noise and vibration levels near sensitive receptors during construction.
- ▶ **Recreation:** Temporary disturbance of recreational uses at Teal Bend Golf Club; temporary closure of the Ueda Parkway bike trail on the NEMDC west levee.

- ▶ **Visual Resources:** Temporary and long-term changes in scenic views or visual character of the project area.
- ▶ **Utilities and Service Systems:** Temporary disruption of irrigation supply; potential disruption of utility service.
- ▶ **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** Potential spills of hazardous materials; potential exposure to hazardous materials at project sites; potential for higher frequency of collisions between aircraft and wildlife at the Sacramento International Airport.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

A public scoping meeting will be held to inform interested parties about the proposed project, and to obtain the views of agency representatives and the public on the scope and content of the EIS/EIR. The meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 6, 2008, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., at 1321 Garden Highway (Sierra Health Foundation) in Sacramento, California.

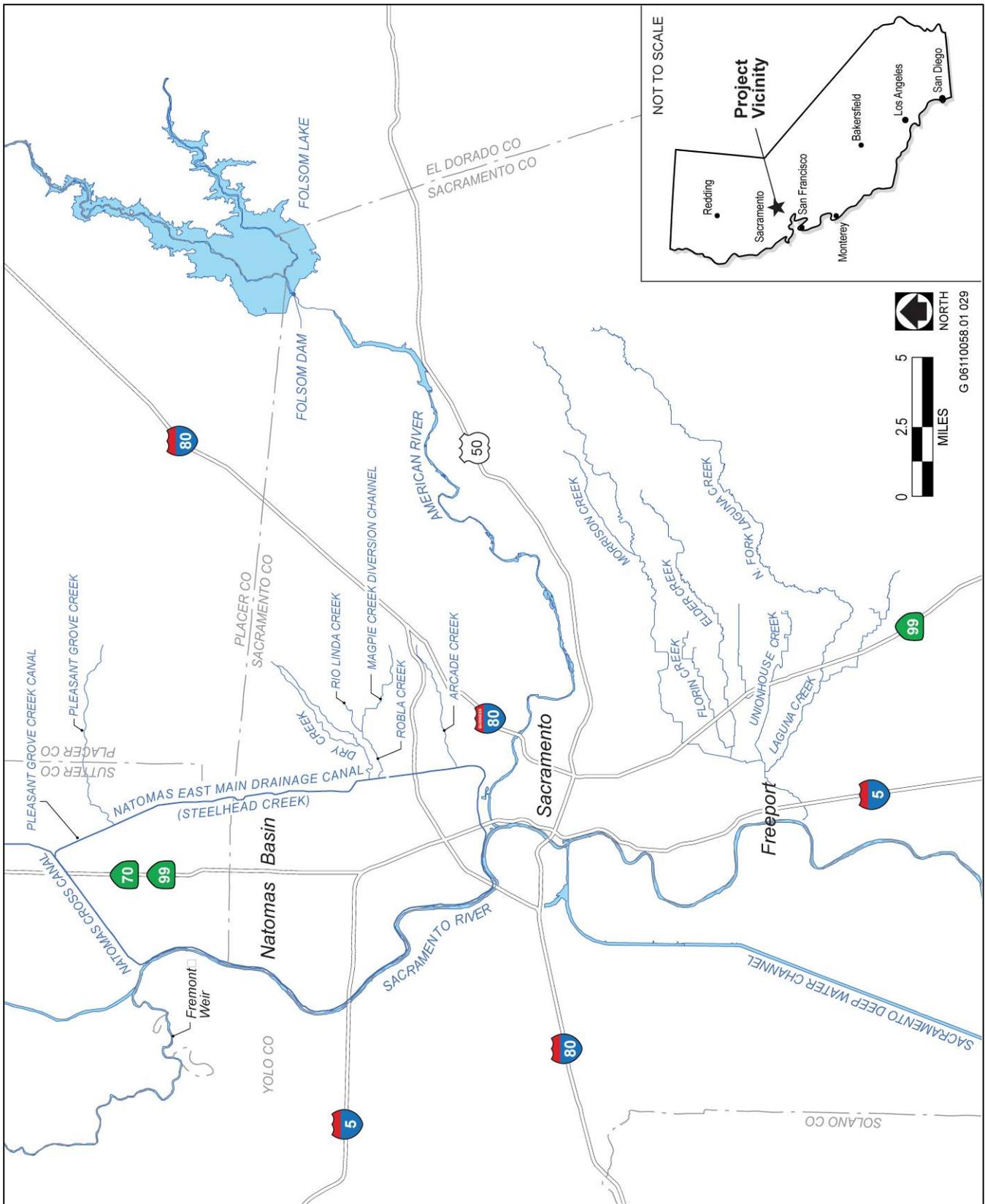
The meeting will have an open-house format with multiple stations set up to highlight different aspects of the proposed project and the NEPA/CEQA process. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the project and the EIS/EIR process with project team members and to provide oral and written comments. The meeting space is accessible to persons with disabilities. Individuals needing special assistive devices will be accommodated to the best of our ability. For more information, contact Elizabeth Holland with USACE at (916) 557-6763 at least 48 hours before the meeting.

PROVIDING COMMENTS ON THE NOP

Interested parties may provide written or oral comments on the content and scope of the EIS/EIR at the public scoping meeting or may provide written comments directly to USACE or SAFCA. **Written comments must be provided to USACE or SAFCA at the earliest possible date, but must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, August 18, 2008.** Agencies that will need to use the EIS/EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed project should provide the name of a contact person. Comments provided by e-mail should include the name and address of the sender. Please send all written and/or e-mail comments to:

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Source: CaSil, Adapted by EDAW in 2007

Project Location Exhibit