

# **American River Watershed Common Features, Water Resources Development Act of 2016, Sacramento River Erosion Contract 1: River Mile 55.2 Left Bank Protection Project Primer & Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is planning to construct erosion protection measures along a portion of the Sacramento River East Levee, immediately south of The Westin Sacramento. This primer and FAQ should answer many common questions about the project. More detail on the project can be found in the supplemental environmental document to be posted at [www.sacleveeupgrades.com](http://www.sacleveeupgrades.com).

The American River Watershed Common Features project is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Central Valley Flood Protection Board, California Department of Water Resources, and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency to modernize Sacramento's aging flood infrastructure and reduce the flood risk to more than 530,000 people in the greater Sacramento region.

## **Purpose of Draft SEA/EIR**

A draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Report (SEA/EIR) for the American River Watershed Common Features Water Resources Development Act of 2016, Sacramento River Erosion Contract 1: River Mile 55.2 Left Bank Protection Project is being released for a 45-day public review period starting on July 11, 2020. The SEA/EIR supplements the American River Watershed Common Features General Reevaluation Report Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (ARCF GRR EIS/EIR) issued in 2016 and the 2008 Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA/IS) for the Erosion Repairs of 13 Bank Protection Sites, Sacramento River Bank Protection Project (SacBank Project).

The SEA/EIR addresses the proposal to construct levee improvements along a 1,150 foot long segment of the Sacramento River left bank (when facing downstream) just downstream of The Westin Sacramento hotel in the Little Pocket, commonly referred to as Project Site 55.2L (Project). The SEA/EIR analyzes details specific to construction, staging areas, haul routes, and mitigation that were not analyzed in the ARCF GRR EIS/EIR. The draft SEA/EIR considers the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and provides measures to avoid, reduce, minimize, and mitigate those environmental effects to a less than significant level. Although the draft SEA/EIR identifies some significant and unavoidable effects, those effects are no greater than the effects described in the GRR EIS/EIR.

## **SEA/EIR Public Review Period (July 11, 2020 – August 26, 2020)**

This is your opportunity to learn about the Project and submit comments. Responses to comments will be published in the Final SEA/EIR. **The 45-day public review period for the draft SEA/EIR will end on August 26, 2020.**

**An online public meeting will be held on July 27, 2020, from 4:00PM to 5:00PM to present details of the project and to receive comments.** Instructions to access the online meeting, sign up to receive email updates, and view a copy of the draft document can be found at the following website:  
[www.sacleveeupgrades.com](http://www.sacleveeupgrades.com)

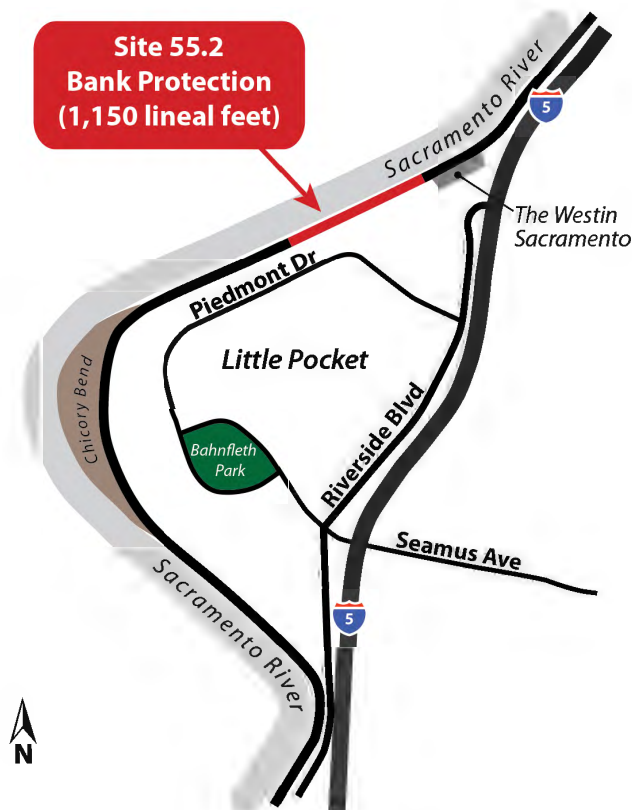
You may also submit *comments* on the document using the following methods:

Miles Claret  
Department of Water Resources  
3464 El Camino Avenue Room 150 -- OR--  
Sacramento, CA 95821  
email: [PublicCommentARCF16@water.ca.gov](mailto:PublicCommentARCF16@water.ca.gov)

Public Affairs Office  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
1325 J Street, Room 1513  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
email: [spk-pao@usace.army.mil](mailto:spk-pao@usace.army.mil)

## Project Area

The Project is located along the left bank of the Sacramento River just downstream of The Westin Sacramento in the Little Pocket.



## **Proposed Project Description & Justification**

The Sacramento River levees are immediately adjacent to the river which constricts flow and greatly reduces floodplain functions. The result is a channelized system with increased velocities during high water events. High winter flows can erode and stress the levees, weakening them and causing them to fail in certain locations. The Project site does not currently meet USACE criteria for erosion stability. The ARCF GRR EIS/EIR analyzed alternatives to reduce the risk of levee failure due to erosion and increase slope stability in this area, concluding that bank protection consisting of a waterside rock berm would be constructed to prevent erosion. The proposed action identified in the SEA/EIR is looking at refined or new elements for that bank protection, including three main construction features of the proposed project: (1) the refined location and design of the quarry rock bank protection, (2) a riparian planting bench, and (3) installation of in-stream woody material. The completed site would be planted with native vegetation to mitigate habitat lost through the construction process.

## **Project Elements**

The proposed rock bank protection is designed to address susceptible foundation soils, steep slopes, and the potential for shallow slope failures along 1,150 lineal feet of the levee at Site 55.2L. This bank protection would increase the roughness of the bank ultimately protecting against future erosion caused by wind-wave action and boat wake.

In preparation for construction, vegetation would be removed from mid-slope below the existing riparian bench and the mean, late summer water surface elevation. During construction, river barges equipped with a crane and an excavator would be used to place rock and shape the bank protection measures. The bank protection includes self-launching rock of an adequate volume to provide protection at the base of the levee. The bank protection design incorporates a low elevation planting bench into the channel along the length of the site. The bench is composed of a planting soil mix, which would provide a surface that can support vegetation. The purpose of the vegetation within the bench is to provide overhead cover and near-shore aquatic habitat during the low flow season for listed fish species and other local wildlife. Plantings would be installed to the extent possible to mitigate for lost riparian and shaded riverine aquatic habitat due to construction. In addition, in-stream woody material, consisting of full trees with root balls and canopies, would be anchored into place along the waterside edge of the riparian bench.

## **Anticipated Construction Timeline**

### **Pre-construction (November 2020 - March 2021)**

Construction site preparation, cut and trim trees/vegetation only in the construction footprint.

### **Levee Construction (Summer 2021 - Fall/Winter 2021)**

Install waterside erosion bank protection measures, including construction of self-launching rock and planting benches.

### **Post-Construction Planting (Begin as early as Spring 2022)**

Install a mixture of native vegetation along the planting bench. Installation of in-stream woody materials at waterside edge of planting bench.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Why is the Project necessary?**

The Sacramento metropolitan area is one of the most at-risk areas for flooding in the United States due to its location at the confluence and within the floodplain of two major rivers, the Sacramento and American Rivers. Both of these rivers have large watersheds with very high potential runoff, which in the past has overwhelmed the existing flood management system that was designed and built many years ago, before modern construction methods were employed. The consequences of flooding in the region would be catastrophic.

The Sacramento River is confined by levees, and the energy of the water flow tends to erode riverbanks and levees over time. This channel erosion could have detrimental effects on the levees by undercutting the foundation materials beneath the levees. The erosion of the riverbank adjacent to the levee embankments may also increase under-seepage through the foundation soil and reduce the overall stability of the levee. Significant erosion can lead to failure of the levee and presents an unacceptable level of risk to public safety.

### **2. The ARCF GRR EIS/EIR was adopted in 2016, why is there a need for a Supplemental EA/EIR?**

The SEA/EIR addresses the proposal to construct levee improvements along a 1,150 foot long segment of the Sacramento River left bank just downstream of The Westin Sacramento in the Little Pocket, commonly referred to as Project Site 55.2 (Project). The SEA/EIR analyzes details specific to construction, staging areas, haul routes, and off-site mitigation that were not analyzed in the ARCF GRR EIS/EIR.

### **3. Where is the Project located?**

Site 55.2L is located along the east (left) bank of the Sacramento River, in the Little Pocket area of the City of Sacramento, approximately 3 miles downstream of the Pioneer Bridge. The site begins immediately downstream (south) of the Sacramento Westin property and continues downstream approximately 1,150 feet (Figure 1).

### **4. Once completed, will there be additional waterside erosion work required?**

The work at Site 55.2L is one component of a comprehensive plan to improve the levees along the Sacramento River, as outlined in the 2016 ARCF GRR EIS/EIR. Additional erosion protection measures will be required along other portions of the Sacramento River. Overall, it is anticipated that up to 10 miles of erosion protection work will be constructed to complement levee seepage and stability improvements.

Site 55.2L was identified as a high-risk location requiring erosion protection, so that section went into design immediately. The Project partners are working to develop subsequent phases of design and construction to address the additional erosion protection measures required along the Sacramento River. The draft SEA/EIR analyzes the immediate work being conducted at Site 55.2L.

**5. How is this Project different than the other levee seepage work that is currently taking place along the Sacramento River in the Little Pocket and Pocket areas?**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is currently installing seepage cutoff walls along various sections of the Sacramento River East Levee. Through extensive geotechnical surveying and analysis, it was found that many portions of the Sacramento area levee system do not meet current seepage and stability criteria. The installation of deeper slurry walls and landside seepage berms at various locations along the Sacramento River East Levee is necessary to reduce the risk of levee failure caused by seepage during high water events. This work is being completed in combination with the waterside slope erosion protection measures required to reduce the risk of levee failure caused by levee erosion.

**6. How will mitigation be addressed for the Project?**

The bank protection design incorporates a low elevation planting bench into the channel along the length of the site. The bench is composed of a planting soil mix, which would provide a surface that can support vegetation. The purpose of the vegetation within the bench would be to provide mitigation for impacts to vegetation, wildlife, and special-status species by providing overhead cover and near-shore aquatic habitat during the low flow season for listed fish species and other local wildlife. The width of the bench would be approximately 12.5 feet wide (Figure 2). Where practicable, existing trees would be protected in place where the bank protection and planting berm are constructed. Additional native plantings would be installed on the newly constructed berm to provide habitat for fish and avian species. Plantings would be installed to the extent possible to mitigate for lost riparian and shaded riverine aquatic habitat due to construction.

The incorporation of in-stream woody materials (IWM) is also part of the Project. IWM would be incorporated into the planting bench design to provide in-stream habitat to listed fish species. IWM consist of full trees with root balls and canopies anchored in place. The anchored tree canopies will extend into the water column just below the waterside edge of the riparian bench, and oriented in a downstream direction. The downstream orientation of the IWM would be to mimic the natural orientation of downed trees along river systems. The IWM would be placed at 5- to 10-foot spacing in alternating groups of 3 to 5 trees (Figure 3). Any loss of habitat that cannot be mitigated in place will be mitigated off-site in coordination with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

**7. When would work occur?**

Site preparation would begin with vegetation removal including removal and/or trimming of trees where construction access and activities would occur. To the extent feasible, these pre-construction activities would occur between **November 2020 – February 2021** before the nesting season for birds.

**8. What should I expect during construction?**

Major construction activities will occur from barges, temporarily staged in the river adjacent to the project site. Temporary impacts to boating traffic could occur between July 1, 2021 to October 31, 2021. Construction crews completing pre-construction and post-construction activities will access the Project site from Seamus Avenue and travel along the levee crown. It is anticipated that roadway and levee crest traffic will mostly consist of personally-owned and light duty vehicles.

## **9. How will stakeholder concerns/Project impacts be addressed?**

The SEA/EIR, in combination with the ARCF GRR EIS/EIR, fully discloses the potential environmental effects of the Project and provides an opportunity for all stakeholders and members of the public to provide input/comment during the 45-day public review period. All comments received during the public comment period will be considered upon development of the final SEA/EIR. In addition, the project partners are reaching out to various stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and other interested groups on the Project. Further, the Project partners have and will continue to present project status updates and informational briefings on an as needed basis to communities impacted by the work.

Construction could begin as early as April 1, 2021 and end on November 30, 2021. Major construction activities would be conducted from barges within the Sacramento River channel. Construction hours would comply with the City noise ordinance, which allows construction from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Sundays.

## **10. How can I stay informed?**

USACE is hosting an online public meeting on **July 27, 2020** to present the SEA/EIR.

Instructions on how to participate in the online meeting can be found at [www.sacleveeupgrades.com](http://www.sacleveeupgrades.com). Stakeholders can also obtain a copy of the draft document from the site and sign up to receive future project-related email updates.

Residents can also contact USACE Public Affairs Office directly at:

Phone: (916) 557-5100





E-mail: [spk-pao@usace.army.mil](mailto:spk-pao@usace.army.mil)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/sacramentodistrict](http://www.facebook.com/sacramentodistrict)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/usacesacramento](http://www.twitter.com/usacesacramento)

FIGURE 1



-  Construction Limit
-  Project Footprint
-  Planting Bench
-  Access Route

**90% PROJECT FOOTPRINT**  
**SAC RM 55.2L**  
WRDA 2016

Figure 2  
Levee Cross Section

