

# CHAPTER 1

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## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

To comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA) has developed a Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). The Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Plan would restore wetland and upland habitats. LCWA, as the Lead Agency, has prepared this Draft PEIR to provide the public and trustee agencies with information about the potential effects on the local environment associated with implementation of the proposed activities under the Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Plan (proposed program). This Draft PEIR has been prepared in compliance with CEQA (as amended), codified at California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq. and the *CEQA Guidelines* in the California Code of Regulations Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Environmental Impact Report

This PEIR has been prepared to address the potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the proposed program. Since the Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Plan consists of numerous conceptual restoration designs that involve implementation of projects over a long time period, a PEIR has been prepared. *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168 states that a PEIR may be used to evaluate a plan or program that has multiple components (projects and actions) or addresses a series of actions that are related:

- Geographically;
- As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions;
- In connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or
- As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental affects that can be mitigated in similar ways.

A PEIR can provide the following additional advantages:

- Provide for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action;
- Ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might not be evident in a case-by-case analysis;
- Avoid duplicative consideration of basic policy issues;

- Allow the lead agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures early in the process when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts; and
- Allow a reduction in paperwork.

A PEIR may be prepared for a plan before the details of each and every project within the long-term plan have been developed. For the proposed program, restoration designs are in the concept development or planning phase. The PEIR analysis is not intended to focus on the site-specific construction and operation details of individual restoration activities. Rather, this PEIR serves as a first-tier environmental document that focuses on the overall effects of implementing the proposed program as a plan with some project-level detail, to provide for wetland and upland habitat restoration.

## 1.3 CEQA Environmental Review Process

### 1.3.1 CEQA Process Overview

The basic purposes of CEQA are to (1) inform the public and governmental decision makers regarding potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities, (2) identify ways in which potential environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced, (3) prevent significant, avoidable environmental damage by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures, and (4) disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project if significant environmental effects are involved.

An environmental impact report (EIR) should use a multidisciplinary approach applying social and natural sciences to provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of all the foreseeable environmental impacts that a proposed project would exert on the surrounding area. As stated in *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15151:

*An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible.*

This PEIR was prepared to comply with CEQA regulations and is to be used by local regulators and the public in their review of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed program, alternatives, and mitigation measures that would minimize or avoid the potential environmental effects. LCWA will consider the information presented in this PEIR, along with other factors, prior to approving the Los Cerritos Wetlands Restoration Plan and related projects for implementation.

### 1.3.2 Notice of Preparation

To determine the appropriate scope of analysis for this PEIR, the LCWA prepared and circulated an NOP and Initial Study (NOP/IS) from March 8, 2019, through April 8, 2019, as required by *CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15082 and 15063. The NOP/IS was circulated to solicit input from interested public agencies (e.g., responsible and trustee agencies) and interested individuals on the scope and content of this PEIR. **Table 1-1, *Scoping Meeting Commenters***, below, provides a

list of the commenters that sent comments on the NOP/IS. A copy of the letters and comments received during the NOP/IS comment period are provided in Appendix A to this PEIR.

**TABLE 1-1  
SCOPING MEETING COMMENTERS**

No.	Entity	Name	Date
1	State	Caltrans District 7 letter by Miya Edmonson, IGR/CEQA Branch Chief, contact is Reece Allen, Project coordinator	28-Mar-19
2	State	California Coastal Commission via letter from Kate Hucklebridge, Senior Environmental Scientist	8-Apr-19
3	State	Department of Fish and Wildlife letter by Erinn Wilson, Environmental Program Manager I	17-Apr-19
4	Local	South Coast Air Quality Management District via letter from Lijin Sun, Draft Supervisor, CEQA IGR	2-Apr-19
5	Local	Los Angeles County Sanitation District via letter by Adriana Raza	3-Apr-19
6	Local	OC Public Works via letter from Richard Vuong, Manager, Planning Division	8-Apr-19
7	Local	Los Angeles County Public Works and Los Angeles County Flood Control District via email from Toan Duong, Civil Engineer	9-Apr-19
8	Organization	Native American Heritage Commission via letter from Steve Quinn, Associate Governmental Program Analyst	2-Apr-19
9	Organization	Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter, Long Beach Area Group via email from Ana Christensen, Conservation Committee Representative	8-Apr-19
10	Organization	El Dorado Audubon via electronic comment card submitted by Mary Parsell and Cindy Crawford	8-Apr-19
11	Organization	Chief of Gabrielino/Tongva, Anthony Morales via email by Rebecca Robles	8-Apr-19
12	Organization	Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust via letter by Michelle Black of Chatten-Brown, Carstens & Minter LLP	8-Apr-19
13	Organization	Los Angeles Chapter of the Climate Reality Project via email from Co-Chair, Michael Zelniker	8-Apr-19
14	Organization	Los Angeles Chapter of the Climate Reality Project via email from Climate Reality Leader, Molly Basler	8-Apr-19
15	Individual	boerum245@gmail.com via email	13-Mar-19
16	Individual	Douglas Frackenfeld via comment card at Scoping Meeting	21-Mar-19
17	Individual	Amy LeSage via comment card	21-Mar-19
18	Individual	Kim Garvey via comment card	21-Mar-19
19	Individual	Janice Dahl via letter	7-Apr-19
20	Individual	Virginia Bickford via emailed letter	8-Apr-19
21	Individual	Protect the Los Cerritos/Long Beach Wetlands via email from Ann Cantrell	8-Apr-19

### 1.3.3 Scoping Meeting

Pursuant to the *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15083, the LCWA held a scoping meeting during the 30-day scoping period to solicit comments and inform the public of this PEIR. The scoping meeting was held on March 21, 2019, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Recreation Park Community Center, 4900 E 7th Street, Long Beach, CA. The purpose of the meeting was to present the proposed program and receive public input regarding the proposed scope of the PEIR analysis. Attendees were provided an opportunity to voice comments or concerns regarding

potential effects of the proposed program. Table 1-1 includes the commenters that provided comments in the scoping meeting.

This PEIR addresses the environmental issues determined to be potentially significant as identified and disclosed in the Initial Study and based on input from agencies, organizations and interested individuals provided during the scoping meeting and comment letters on the NOP/IS.

### 1.3.4 Draft PEIR

As described above, a PEIR can be prepared on a series of related actions characterized as one large project or program (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168(a)). Prior to implementation, each action in the program must be evaluated to determine if additional environmental documentation is required (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168(c)). If the environmental effects resulting from an action are fully covered by the analysis in this PEIR and no new mitigation measures are required, then the action is within the scope of this PEIR, and no additional environmental documentation is necessary (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168(c)(2)). If an action would result in significant or more severe significant environmental effects or new mitigation measures not included in the PEIR then additional environmental documentation, such as a Mitigated Negative Declaration or EIR, would be required (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168(c)(1)). The mitigation measures developed in a PEIR may be incorporated into subsequent environmental documents (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168(c)(3)).

This Draft PEIR describes the proposed program and the existing environmental setting, identifies short-term, long-term, and cumulative environmental impacts, identifies mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, and provides an analysis of program alternatives. Significance criteria have been developed for each environmental resource analyzed in this Draft PEIR.

### 1.3.5 Known Areas of Controversy and Issues of Concern

Pursuant to *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15123(b)(2), a lead agency is required to include areas of controversies raised by agencies and the public during the public scoping process in the EIR. Commenting parties have identified issues of concern. These issues include aesthetics, biological resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use, traffic, and tribal cultural resources impacts.

### 1.3.6 Public Review

In accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15105, the Draft PEIR is available for public review and comment for a 45-day review period. The Draft PEIR has been circulated to federal, state, and local agencies and interested parties who may wish to review and provide comments on its contents. Send all comments to:

Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority  
Attn: Sally Gee  
100 N. Old San Gabriel Canyon Rd.  
Azusa, California 91702  
(626) 815-1019 x 104  
sgee@rmc.ca.gov

The Draft PEIR is available for public review and download on the LCWA website at <http://intoloscerritoswetlands.org/the-lcws-eir/>.

The Los Cerritos Wetlands Oil Consolidation and Restoration Project EIR (State Clearinghouse Number 2016041083), which has been incorporated by reference, is available online at <http://www.longbeach.gov/lbds/planning/environmental/reports/>.

### 1.3.7 Final PEIR Publication and Certification

Written and oral comments received on the Draft PEIR will be addressed in a Response to Comments document, which, together with changes and corrections to the Draft PEIR, will constitute the Final PEIR. Following review of the Final PEIR, the LCWA will decide whether to certify the Final PEIR. If the PEIR identifies environmental impacts that are considered significant and unavoidable, LCWA must state, in writing, the reasons for approving the proposed program despite its significant environmental effects in a Statement of Overriding Considerations, as required by *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15093. A Statement of Overriding Considerations shall be adopted by a lead agency if the agency finds that the benefits of a project outweigh significant, unavoidable adverse impacts and decides to approve a project even though these impacts cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels. The Statement of Overriding Considerations will be included in the record of the program approval and cited in the Notice of Determination (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15093(c)).

### 1.3.8 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Public Resources Code Section 21081.6(a) requires lead agencies to “adopt a reporting or monitoring program for the changes made to the project or conditions of project approval, adopted in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment.” Throughout the PEIR, mitigation measures are clearly identified and presented in language that will facilitate establishment of a monitoring and reporting program. Any mitigation measures adopted by the LCWA will be included in a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) to verify compliance. The MMRP will be included within the Final PEIR.

## 1.4 Approach to this PEIR

This PEIR evaluates impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed program as compared to existing conditions. CEQA requires that before a decision can be made to approve a project with potentially significant environmental impacts, an EIR must be prepared that fully describes the environmental impacts of the project and identifies feasible mitigation for significant impacts. The PEIR is a public information document for use by governmental agencies and the public to identify and evaluate potential environmental consequences of a proposed project, to recommend mitigation measures to lessen or eliminate adverse impacts, and to examine feasible alternatives to the project. The information contained in the PEIR is reviewed and considered by the governing agency prior to the ultimate decision to approve, disapprove, or modify the proposed program.

CEQA requires that a lead agency shall neither approve nor implement a project as proposed unless the significant environmental impacts of that project have been reduced to less than significant levels, which essentially involves “eliminating, avoiding, or substantially lessening” the expected impacts. If the lead agency approves the project despite residual significant adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated to less than significant, the agency must state the reasons for its action in writing.

As described under Section 1.3.7, *Final PEIR Publication and Certification*, above, a Statement of Overriding Considerations shall be adopted by a lead agency if the agency finds that the benefits of a project outweigh significant, unavoidable adverse impacts and decides to approve a project even though these impacts cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels.

## 1.5 PEIR Organization

This Draft PEIR is organized into the following chapters:

- **Executive Summary.** This chapter summarizes the contents of the Draft PEIR.
- **Chapter 1, Introduction.** This chapter discusses the CEQA process and the purpose of the PEIR.
- **Chapter 2, Project Description.** This chapter provides an overview of the proposed program, describes the need for and objectives of the proposed program, and provides detail on the characteristics of the proposed program.
- **Chapter 3, Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures.** This chapter describes the environmental setting and identifies impacts of the proposed program for each of the following environmental resource areas; Aesthetics; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Geology, Soils, and Paleontological Resources; Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology and Water Quality; Land Use and Planning; Mineral Resources; Noise; Public Services; Recreation; Transportation; Tribal Cultural Resources; and Utilities and Service Systems. Measures to mitigate the impacts of the proposed program are presented for each resource area.
- **Chapter 4, Other CEQA Considerations.** This chapter describes the effects that were found not to be significant and those that were found to be significant and unavoidable. In addition, this section discusses the significant irreversible environmental changes and growth-inducing impacts associated with the proposed program.
- **Chapter 5, Alternatives.** This chapter presents an overview of the alternatives development process and describes the alternatives to the proposed program that were considered.
- **Chapter 6, Report Preparation.** This chapter identifies the key staff at LCWA and the authors involved in preparing this Draft PEIR.
- **Appendices.** This PEIR includes appendices that provide either background information or additional technical support for the analysis. The following technical reports have been prepared and incorporated into the PEIR:
  - Appendix A – NOP/IS, Scoping Meeting Materials, and NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments
  - Appendix B – Air Quality Technical Report

- Appendix C – Biological Resources
- Appendix D – Cultural Resources Assessment Report
- Appendix E – Paleontological Resources Assessment
- Appendix F – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Technical Report
- Appendix G – Energy Calculations
- Appendix H – Hydrodynamic Modeling Technical Report
- Appendix I – Sediment Dynamics and Sediment Budget Analysis
- Appendix J – Sediment and Water Quality Investigation Technical Report
- Appendix K – Noise Analysis Report
- Appendix L – Summary of Environmental Effects and Mitigation Measures for the Los Cerritos Wetlands Oil Consolidation and Restoration Project

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