

State of California

SAN JOAQUIN RIVER CONSERVANCY

RESOLUTION 17-01

November 15, 2017

***Regarding Certification of the Environmental Impact Report for
River West Fresno, Eaton Trail Extension Project***

WHEREAS, the San Joaquin River Conservancy was established in the California Natural Resources Agency by the California State Legislature to acquire and manage public lands within the San Joaquin River Parkway, which will consist of the San Joaquin River and approximately 5,900 acres on both sides of the river in Fresno and Madera counties between Friant Dam and the Highway 99 crossing; and the Conservancy was directed in the Act to acquire and manage these lands in the Parkway to provide a harmonious combination of low-impact recreational and educational uses and wildlife protection through the preservation of the San Joaquin River, existing publicly owned lands, the wildlife corridor, and natural reserves (PRC Section 32510);

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code (PRC) sections 32500 et seq. authorize the San Joaquin River Conservancy (Conservancy) to implement the San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan and to adopt and carry out management plans for the protection of the natural and recreational resources of the parkway;

WHEREAS, in December 1997, the Conservancy approved the San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan, including certification of a programmatic Environmental Impact Report, together containing the goals, objectives, policies, design standards, and mitigation measures guiding future development of specific projects implemented by or sponsored by the Conservancy;

WHEREAS, the Parkway Master Plan calls for the development of a multi-use trail extending the length of the Parkway, called the Lewis S. Eaton Trail within the city of Fresno, and contains the following objective: RO3 Link all recreation areas and natural reserves between Highway 99 and Friant Dam with a continuous, multipurpose trail on land and with canoe put-in, take-out, and rest areas along the river to create a recreation system with a variety of recreational opportunities within the Parkway;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy proposes to extend the existing Lewis S. Eaton Trail by constructing a multi-use trail extension approximately 2.4 miles from the Perrin Avenue alignment near State Route 41 on the east to Spano Park on the west (proposed Project) within the city limits of Fresno on State owned property under the Conservancy's jurisdiction, referred to as River West Fresno or the project site;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy, as the Lead Agency, prepared and circulated a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) and a Partially Revised Draft EIR for the proposed Project (State Clearinghouse No. 2014061017) to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Public Resources Code, section 21000 et seq.; California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15000 et seq.);

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WHEREAS, the Conservancy cohosted two open house–style public and agency scoping meetings with the City of Fresno and the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust. The first public meeting was held November 17, 2008, at 7815 N. Palm Avenue, Suite 310, in Fresno (office of H. T. Harvey & Associates). The second public meeting was held March 29, 2011, at Nelson Elementary School, 1336 West Spruce Avenue in Fresno;

WHEREAS, The Conservancy completed and published the River West Fresno Constraints and Opportunities Report, a review of regulatory, physical, and policy guidance toward development of conceptual design of the project, on September 22, 2011;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy Board considered action items posted on the agenda relating to the scope of the project, conceptual design, and alternatives project designs at regularly scheduled Board meetings, and received public comments, on August 5, 2004; May 10, 2007; and April 11, 2012; and September 17, 2014;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP; California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15082) to inform responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties that the Conservancy was preparing a Draft EIR for the proposed Project and to solicit input on the scope and content of the descriptions of the significant environmental issues, mitigation measures, and reasonable range of alternatives to be examined in the Draft EIR;

WHEREAS, the NOP was circulated from June 4, 2014, through July 8, 2014;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy held a public scoping meeting on June 17, 2014, at the Pinedale Community Center, 7170 N. San Pablo, Fresno, California, to present information about the trail project, describe the process and timelines, and solicit input, including written comments, on the scope and content of the Draft EIR;

WHEREAS, 236 comment letters and comment cards were received on the NOP at the public scoping meeting and by mail and email (included in the Draft EIR as Appendix A), which were considered during the preparation of the Draft EIR;

WHEREAS, The Conservancy consulted with 12 Native American organizations and individuals who might have knowledge of cultural resources on the project site. Letters, e-mail messages, and follow-up phone calls were sent to these groups and individuals between June and July 2014, requesting that they participate in the local land use planning process to ensure consideration of tribal cultural resources. The Conservancy reviewed letters from Native American representatives that asked for information regarding cultural resources and followed up to provide all requested information;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy evaluated the comments on the NOP and, at publicly noticed regular meeting of the Board and as stated on the agendas of September 17, 2014, and August 19, 2015, decided to analyze within the Draft EIR several possible routes and develop a new off-site public access alternative in the vicinity of the intersection of Palm and Nees Avenues, in Fresno, that became Alternative 5;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy conducted two additional constraints analyses (Road Feasibility Study and Phase I Hazardous Materials Assessment, Appendices F and I of the EIR) to examine the potentially

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feasibility of several vehicle routes for public access and to help determine which routes to examine in the Draft EIR;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy filed the Notice of Completion of the Draft EIR with the State Clearinghouse, California Office of Planning and Research on February 14, 2017, and sent to each responsible and trustee agency; an official 45-day public comment period for the Draft EIR was established. The public comment period ran from February 15, 2017, through April 15, 2017;

WHEREAS, a Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIR was mailed and emailed on February 15, 2017, to all interested groups, organizations, and individuals who had previously requested notice in writing, and to landowners within 0.5 mile of the project site;

WHEREAS, the NOA stated that the Conservancy had completed the Draft EIR and that copies, including appendices, were available for review at the Conservancy website, www.sjrc.ca.gov; at the San Joaquin River Conservancy, 5469 E. Olive Avenue, Fresno, CA 93727; at the Woodward Park branch of the Fresno County Library; and copies on CD format were available free on request;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy held two public information meetings related to the Draft EIR: a public informational meeting posted on the agenda and held by the Conservancy Board on March 1, 2017, at 5469 E. Olive Ave., Fresno, California, at which public comments were recorded in the minutes; and a public informational open house at the Pinedale Community Center, 7170 N. San Pablo Ave., Fresno, California;

WHEREAS, following the close of the 45-day public comment period, the Conservancy had received 243 comment letters, including emails and comment cards;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy evaluated the comments on the Draft EIR and, at publicly noticed regular meetings of the Board and as stated on the agendas on May 3, June 6, and August 9, 2017, decided to revise and recirculate portions of the Draft EIR in a Partially Revised Draft EIR to analyze a new public access alternative, Alternative 5B, and to revise other portions of the Draft EIR to address issues raised in comments received during the public review. Consistent with the procedures described in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5, the following sections and chapters from the circulated Draft EIR were revised and circulated for a 45-day public review period in the Partially Revised Draft EIR: Section 3.11, "Land Use and Planning"; Section 3.17, "Transportation"; Section 4.2, "Environmental Justice—Disadvantaged Communities"; and Chapter 5, "Alternatives," including the addition of Section 5.11, "Alternative 5B;"

WHEREAS, a Notice of Completion for the Partially Revised Draft EIR was filed with the State Clearinghouse, Office of Planning and Research, and sent to each responsible and trustee agency and was circulated for public comments from August 17, 2017, through October 2, 2017 (the Conservancy subsequently extended the comment period to October 3, 2017);

WHEREAS, an NOA for the Partially Revised Draft EIR was mailed and emailed on August 17, 2017 to all interested groups, organizations, and individuals who had previously requested notice in writing and to those who had previously commented on the initial Draft EIR for a 45-day public review period from August 17, 2017, through October 2, 2017; the Conservancy's notice clarified that individuals and

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organizations that provided comments on the original Draft EIR sections being recirculated should review the revised section(s) and submit comments that were still relevant to the revised section(s) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(f)(2)). The NOA stated that copies were available review at the Conservancy website, www.sjrc.ca.gov; at the San Joaquin River Conservancy, 5469 E. Olive Avenue, Fresno, CA 93727; and copies on CD format were available free on request;

WHEREAS, following the close of the 45-day public comment period on the Partially Revised Draft EIR, the Conservancy had received 53 comment letters, including emails;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy evaluated the comments on the initial Draft EIR and the Partially Revised Draft EIR and prepared written responses to these comments, and included these comments and responses in the Final EIR (Volume II);

WHEREAS, the Final EIR includes an analysis of a proposed Project that would extend the existing Lewis S. Eaton Trail by constructing a multipurpose trail extension, approximately 2.4 miles, from the Perrin Avenue alignment near SR 41 on the east to Spano Park on the west, provide a parking lot (Perrin Avenue parking lot) for 50 vehicles, and pedestrian and bicycle access at four locations: Perrin Avenue, Spano Park, and the West Riverview Drive and Churchill Avenue entrances to the existing Bluff Trail;

WHEREAS, the Final EIR also fully analyzed five action alternatives (in addition to the No Project Alternative): Alternatives 2 and 3 analyzed different trail alignments, with no change to the vehicular access or parking lot; Alternatives 1, 5, and 5B each analyzed a design with an additional vehicular entrance and parking lot (in addition to the Perrin Avenue access and parking lot), with no changes to the trail alignment; and Alternative 4 analyzed a design with no vehicular access or parking lot;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy compiled the Draft EIR and Partially Revised Draft EIR into the Final EIR (Volume I), with the additions and changes made in the Partially Revised Draft EIR indicated with underlines for revised inserted text and ~~strikeouts~~ for revised deleted text;

WHEREAS, the Conservancy also made other non-substantive changes in the Final EIR to correct minor errors or to make minor clarifications from the draft versions, which are clearly indicated in the Final EIR with double underlines for new text and ~~double strikeouts~~ for deleted text; none of the changes made to the Final EIR constitute significant new information or otherwise trigger recirculation under CEQA;

WHEREAS, on November 3, 2017, the Conservancy sent draft responses to all public agency comments on the Draft and Partially Revised Draft EIRs to those agencies consistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15088;

WHEREAS, on November 10, 2017, the Conservancy posted the Final EIR on the Conservancy website, and made it available in hard copy and CD format at the Conservancy office, and available on CD free upon request, and issued a notification by mail and email of this availability to all interested groups, organizations, and individuals who had previously requested notice in writing and to those who had previously commented on the Draft EIRs, and included in the notices the date, time and place of the Board meeting in which the project and alternatives would be considered;

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WHEREAS, CEQA requires that in connection with the approval of a project for which an EIR has been prepared, the decision-maker of the lead agency must certify the Final EIR (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15090);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the San Joaquin Conservancy Board (Conservancy Board) hereby certifies that:

(a) the Final EIR (released November 10, 2017; State Clearinghouse No. 2014061017) has been completed in compliance with the requirements of CEQA;

(b) the Final EIR was presented to the Conservancy Board and it has considered the information contained in the Final EIR before considering approving the proposed Project or one of the alternatives analyzed in the Final EIR;

(c) the Final EIR reflects the Conservancy's independent judgment and analysis;

Passed this day of _____, 2017, by the following roll call vote of the San Joaquin River Conservancy governing board:

Attest:

Melinda S. Marks, Executive Officer