

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

DATE: June 4, 2014

To: State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street
P.O. Box 3004
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: Melinda Marks
Executive Officer
San Joaquin River Conservancy
5469 E. Olive Avenue
Fresno, CA 93727

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
River West, Eaton Trail Extension Project

Lead Agency: San Joaquin River Conservancy

The San Joaquin River Conservancy (Conservancy) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the River West, Eaton Trail Extension Project within the San Joaquin River Parkway. We want to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are described in the attached materials.

An open-house Scoping Meeting will be held on June 17, 2014 from 4:30 PM to 7:00 PM at the Pinedale Community Center, 7170 N. San Pablo Avenue, Fresno, California 93650.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the 30-day Notice of Preparation review period on July 8, 2014. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Please mail your comments to Melinda Marks, Executive Officer, at the address shown above or email to melinda.marks@sirc.ca.gov with "River West, Eaton Trail Extension Project EIR" as the subject. Please include a contact person for your agency.

Location

The study area of the proposed Project is located along the San Joaquin River between State Route (SR) 41 and Spano Park and is within the city limits of Fresno (Figure 1). It extends from the south side of the San Joaquin River (River) to the San Joaquin River bluffs (bluffs). It extends westward from SR 41 to Spano Park located near the intersection of Nees and Palm Avenues. The study area encompasses approximately 352 acres on the south side of the River. A majority of the study area is owned by the Conservancy. Two parcels owned by the City of Fresno are adjacent to Conservancy owned land. Implementation of the proposed project may occur on these properties.

Three other parcels within the study area are owned by others and not proposed for project development: One parcel of privately owned land, located near the center of the study area, contains two residences. Access to these residences is provided by a paved road from W. Riverview Drive. Two parcels owned by the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District contain stormwater detention basins.

A residential subdivision is located on the bluff adjacent to the southern boundary of the study area.

Project Description

The proposed Fresno River West, Eaton Trail Extension Project (Project) will extend the Lewis S. Eaton Trail (Trail), a multiple use trail, and include ancillary support features. The proposed Project will provide for low-impact recreation on the site, primarily consisting of hiking, bicycling, fishing and nature observation, consistent with the San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan.

Most of the study area consists of several large ponds formed from past gravel mining operations and non-native, annual upland grass species. Riparian habitat is present around the ponds and along the River. The Project will conserve the open space character of the site and includes the establishment of native plants to enhance habitat and provide visual screening.

The Trail would be extended by constructing a 22-foot wide multi-purpose trail approximately 2.5 miles long. The proposed trail would be 12-foot wide paved surface, a parallel 8-foot wide hard natural surface for equestrian use, and a 2-foot buffer (opposite the natural surface area). The trail will generally follow the alignment as seen in the enclosed illustration. However, other trail alignments such as a “commuter trail alignment” and a “river’s edge trail alignment” may be considered.

A wide staircase with bicycle guides may be constructed from Spano Park to the trail below. Pedestrian and bicycle access to the proposed trail will be provided at three locations: Spano Park, and the W. Riverview Drive and Churchill Ave entrances to the Bluff Trail. The Bluff Trail is

an existing neighborhood trail located on the historic Perrin Canal Bench. A proposed 12-foot wide trail will connect the Bluff Trail to the proposed Trail extension. The connecting trail would be constructed on the steep bluff slope.

The proposed Project will include a controlled vehicle entrance and a 50-stall parking lot adjacent to SR 41. Access to the parking lot will be provided by the Perrin Avenue undercrossing of SR 41. The parking area will provide trail access in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The parking lot will include up to 3 horse trailer stalls, potable water and a two-vault accessible restroom. A second single vault accessible restroom will be provided along the Trail near the Spano Park stairway.

The trail will be landscaped at intervals with native vegetation for habitat enhancement and shade. Vegetation creating shade and visual buffers will be established at the parking lot. Landscaping will be irrigated until vegetation is permanently established. Picnic tables, benches, and wildlife observations areas will be provided along the trail at various locations. Unimproved hiking paths to the riverbank will be connected to the trail. The paths may be widened to 6 feet and overlaid with decomposed gravel surface. These paths would not be landscaped. No structures would be constructed within the State Designated Floodway.

Alternatives

In addition to the Project as proposed, four alternatives will be evaluated in the EIR. The alternatives are:

1. **Added Parking:** In this alternative an additional controlled vehicle entrance and a public 40-stall parking lot between the H pond and E pond will be provided. A paved road from W. Riverview Drive to the parking lot will provide access. This parking area would not accommodate horse trailers. The added parking could be approved in combination with the proposed or alternative trail alignments.
2. **Commuter Trail Alignment:** In this alternative, the multi-use Trail would be aligned about 300 feet from the base of the bluff. The trail alignment as described in the proposed project description would not be constructed; however, all other amenities described in the proposed project, including the proposed parking lot, landscaping and restrooms will be provided, and the additional parking as described in Alternative 1 may be provided.
3. **River's Edge Trail Alignment:** In this alternative the multi-use Trail would be aligned on the river's edge in the more southerly portion of the site, and remain as proposed in the northerly portion of the site. All other amenities described in the proposed project, including the parking lot, landscaping and restrooms will be provided, and the additional parking as described in Alternative 1 may be provided.
4. **No Parking:** In this alternative no public parking or trailering would be provided on-site. The Trail would be constructed on the proposed or alternative trail alignments. All

entrances would be walk-in/bicycle-in only. All amenities other than the entrance station and parking landscaping described in the proposed project would be provided.

Environmental Resources Potentially Affected

Aesthetics: The proposed project may affect the open space setting and scenery of the San Joaquin River and floodplain.

Air Quality: The proposed project may affect air quality during construction.

Biological Resources: The proposed project may affect the habitat of plants, fish and wildlife species.

Cultural Resources: The proposed project may affect cultural or paleontological resources.

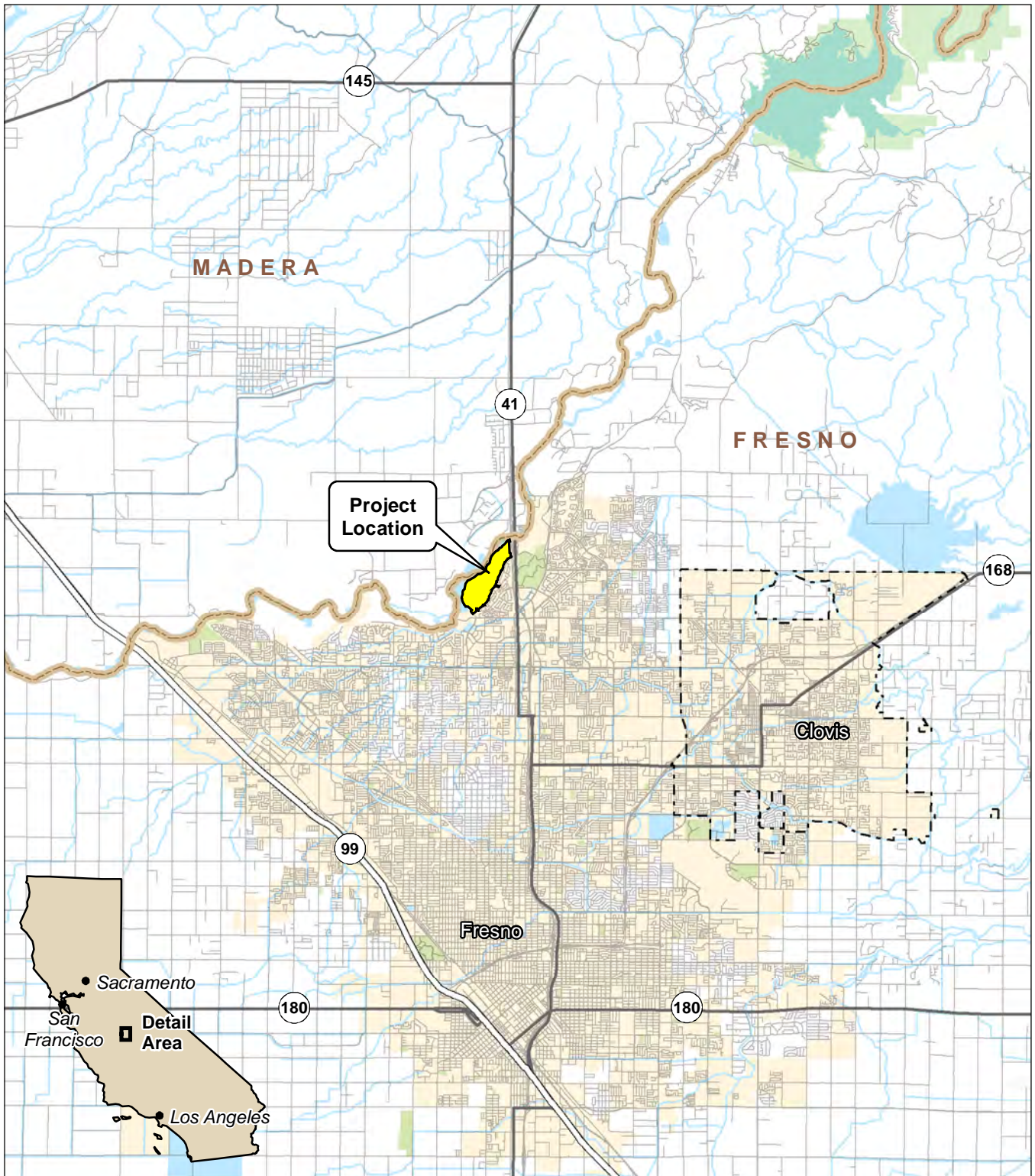
Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The proposed project may generate greenhouse gas emissions.

Hydrology and Water Quality: The proposed project may affect water quality and drainage patterns of the floodplain.

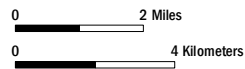
Land Use Planning: The proposed project may conflict with local land use policies.

Recreation: The proposed project may increase visitor use and affect public recreation services.

Transportation and Traffic: The proposed project may affect traffic and increase the potential for street parking by visitors.



- Project study area
- County boundary



DATA SOURCE
URS Corp., 2014
PROJECTION
NAD 1983 StatePlane
California IV FIPS 0404 Feet

