

1 INTRODUCTION

This environmental impact report (EIR) describes the potential environmental consequences of amending the City of Elk Grove’s sphere of influence (SOI) to include the 480-acre Bilby Ridge area (Sphere of Influence Amendment [SOIA]). The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that state and local government agencies consider the environmental effects of projects over which they have discretionary authority before taking action on those projects. The purpose of an EIR is to evaluate the project’s effects on environmental resources, both singularly and in a cumulative context, to examine alternatives to the project as proposed, and identify mitigation measures to reduce or avoid potentially significant effects. Projects with potential to result in significant and unavoidable environmental impacts that cannot be feasibly mitigated to less-than-significant levels can be approved, but the lead agency’s decision-making body must issue a “statement of overriding considerations” explaining, in writing, the specific economic, social, or other considerations that they believe make those significant effects acceptable (Section 21002 of the Public Resources Code [PRC]; Section 15093 of the of the California Code of Regulations [CCR]).

This document has been prepared in compliance CEQA (PRC Sections 21000-21189) and the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Title 14, Sections 15000-15387 of the California Code of Regulations).

1.1 AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1.1 Lead Agency

The lead agency is the public agency with the principal responsibility for carrying out or disapproving a project. The lead agency is also responsible for scoping the analysis, preparing the EIR, and responding to comments received on the draft EIR. Before making a decision to approve a project, the lead agency is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects its independent judgment. The Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) is the lead agency for the evaluation of the Bilby Ridge SOIA.

LAFCO’S AUTHORITY

LAFCo’s authority is defined in the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. Government Code Section 56300 requires that each LAFCo establish policies to provide well-planned urban development, preservation of open space, and orderly formation of local agencies. Therefore, the proposed SOIA must be reviewed and approved by LAFCo (Government Code Section 56425[a], PRC Section 21067). The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act contains the following specific “policy elements” for LAFCo review:

- ▲ encourage orderly growth and development patterns (Government Code Section 56001);
- ▲ discourage urban sprawl, preserve open-space and prime agricultural lands, efficiently provide government services, and encourage the orderly formation and development of local agencies based upon local conditions and circumstances (Government Code Section 56301); and
- ▲ guide development away from open space and prime agricultural land uses unless such action would not promote planned, orderly, and efficient development (Government Code Section 56377).

LAFCo has review authority for annexations to, or detachment from, cities or special districts; formation or dissolution of districts; incorporation or disincorporation of cities; consolidation or reorganization of cities or districts; establishment of subsidiary districts; and development of, and amendments to, SOIs. LAFCo can

approve, modify and approve, or disapprove applications and impose terms and conditions (Government Code Section 56885.5).

1.1.2 Responsible and Trustee Agencies

Responsible agencies are public agencies that have discretionary approval power over the project. Sacramento LAFCo has sole authority to consider local agency reorganizations, including requests to amend an existing SOI under the Cortese-Knox Hertzberg Act. This project would be subject to review and approval by Sacramento LAFCo. No other governmental approvals would be required as part of this action.

Under CEQA, a trustee agency is a state agency that has jurisdiction by law over natural resources that are held in trust for the people of the State of California (PRC Section 21070). The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is a trustee agency with jurisdiction over fish and wildlife and their habitats that may be affected by this project.

1.2 PROJECT REVIEW AND CEQA PROCESS

Public input is an important aspect of LAFCo's environmental review process. In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15083, LAFCo provides opportunities for individual members of the public, as well as organization and agency representatives, to consider proposed actions and provide input and recommendations concerning the content of an EIR. The following sections summarize the public involvement efforts conducted by LAFCo.

1.2.1 EIR Scoping

LAFCo prepared and distributed a notice of preparation (NOP) for this EIR on April 27, 2017. The NOP provided a brief description of the project, a map of the project location, and an overview of the environmental review process. The purpose of the NOP was to provide notification that an EIR for the project would be prepared and to solicit guidance on the scope and content of the document. The NOP invited all interested parties to provide comments during a 30-day period. The NOP was mailed to individuals and organizations, including property owners and/or residents within the vicinity of the project site. The NOP was also filed with the State Clearinghouse and Sacramento County Recorder-Clerk's Office, and was posted on LAFCo's website (www.SacLAFCo.org). A public notice announcing the NOP's availability was posted in April 27, 2017.

The scoping meeting was held on May 16, 2017 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Wackford Community and Aquatic Complex. Sacramento LAFCo held a public workshop at the regular Commission meeting on June 7, 2017 to receive Commission and public input on the scope of the EIR. Responsible agencies and members of the public were invited to provide input on the scope of the EIR. The comments received on the NOP and at the hearing are addressed, as applicable, in each technical section of this EIR. Table 1-1 lists the comments received on the NOP. Appendix A contains a copy of the NOP and comment letters received on the NOP.

Table 1-1 List of Commenters

Commenter	Affiliation	Date of Comment
State Agencies		
Sharaya Souza, Staff Services Analyst	Native American Heritage Commission	June 2, 2017
Stephanie Tadlock, Environmental Scientist	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board	June 2, 2017
Local Agencies		
Angela C. McIntire, Regional & Local Government Affairs	Sacramento Municipal Utilities District	June 9, 2017

Table 1-1 List of Commenters

Commenter	Affiliation	Date of Comment
Chrisandra J. Flores, Chief Deputy Agricultural Commissioner	Sacramento County Department of Agriculture	June 1, 2017
James Corless, Chief Executive Officer	Sacramento Area Council of Governments	June 2, 2017
Joanne Chan, Air Quality Planner/Analyst	Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District	May 31, 2017
Leighann Moffitt, Planning Director	Sacramento County Office of Planning and Environmental Review	May 16, 2017
Mathew G. Darrow, Senior Transportation Engineer	Sacramento County Department of Transportation	May 10, 2017
Mike Huot, Principal Civil Engineer	Sacramento County Water Agency	May 3, 2017
Sarena Moore, Policy and Planning	Sacramento Regional Sanitation District and Sacramento Area Sewer District	May 9, 2017
Organizations		
Brandon Rose, Environmental Council of Sacramento Board President Rob Burness, Friends of Stone Lanes National Wildlife Refuge Sean Wirth, Co-Chair, Habitat 2020	Environmental Council of Sacramento, Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and Habitat 2020	June 9, 2017
Individuals		
Jim Gillum, on behalf of the owners of APN 132-0132-007	Gillum Consulting	June 9, 2017
May 16, 2017 Scoping Meeting		
No formal comments were received at this meeting.		
June 7, 2017 Sacramento LAFCo Meeting		
Gay Jones	Sacramento LAFCo Commissioner	June 7, 2017
Michael Monasky	Elk Grove Resident	June 7, 2017
Katherine Bardis	Applicant	June 7, 2017
Patrick Hume	Sacramento LAFCo Commissioner	June 7, 2017

1.2.2 Review of the Draft EIR

Upon completion of the draft EIR, the Sacramento LAFCo filed a notice of completion with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to begin the public review period (PRC Section 21161). Concurrent with the notice of completion, this draft EIR has been distributed to affected agencies, surrounding cities, and interested parties, as well as to all parties requesting a copy of the draft EIR, in accordance with PRC Section 21092(b)(3). During the public review period, the draft EIR, including the technical appendices, is available for review at the Sacramento LAFCo offices, located at the address provided below. Written comments on this draft EIR are due by 4:00 p.m. on Monday February 12, 2018, and should be addressed to:

Don Lockhart, AICP, Executive Officer
 Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission
 1112 I Street, Suite 100 Sacramento, CA 95814
 Phone: (916) 874-2937
 Fax: (916) 854-2939
 Email: Don.Lockhart@SacLAFCo.org

Submittal of electronic comments in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format is encouraged.

Following the public review period, a final EIR will be prepared that will include comments on the draft EIR received during the public review period and LAFCo's responses to those comments. The final EIR will

address any revisions to the draft EIR made in response to public comments. The draft EIR and final EIR together will comprise the EIR for the SOIA.

1.2.3 Final EIR Certification Process

Before LAFCo can approve the project, it must first certify that the EIR was completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects LAFCo's independent judgment. LAFCo will also be required to adopt Findings of Fact describing the disposition of each significant impact and alternatives. For any impacts determined to be significant and unavoidable, LAFCo will be required to adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations. Certification of the EIR does not approve the project and LAFCo will consider the SOIA as a separate action. If the EIR is certified, LAFCo would adopt and implement a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan that specifies the methods for monitoring mitigation measures required to eliminate or reduce the project's significant effects on the environment.

1.3 SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

1.3.1 Type of EIR

This EIR includes a program-level, or "first-tier," analysis for future development, consistent with PRC Sections 21093 and 21094 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15152 and 15168. This EIR provides an evaluation of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed SOIA and future development in the area. The potential direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of the project are analyzed in a way that is appropriate, given the level of detail provided to LAFCo in the SOIA application, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15146. This program-level or "programmatic" analysis relates to the broad environmental effects of future uses. It identifies policies and mitigation measures that would apply to subsequent projects. The program-level evaluation is warranted because no specific land use entitlements have been proposed. However, the EIR acknowledges future urbanization as a connected action. Thus, this EIR provides the public and agency decision makers with information on the potential impacts of future development. Future applications for development within the SOIA area (if approved) would require subsequent project-specific CEQA review.

1.3.2 Scope of the Draft EIR

Pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency shall focus the EIR's discussion on significant environmental effects (PRC Section 21002.1, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15143). Furthermore, the EIR must also discuss the manner in which significant impacts can be feasibly mitigated or avoided. The purpose of an EIR is not to recommend approval or denial of a project, but to provide decision-makers, public agencies, and the general public with information about the project. A determination of which impacts would be potentially significant was made for this project based on review of the information presented in the NOP, comments received as part of the public review process for the project, and additional research and analysis of relevant project data during preparation of this draft EIR.

This EIR addresses the following technical issue areas:

- ▲ Aesthetics;
- ▲ Agricultural Resources;
- ▲ Air Quality;
- ▲ Biological Resources;

- ▲ Cultural Resources;
- ▲ Energy;
- ▲ Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- ▲ Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- ▲ Hydrology, Drainage, and Water Quality;
- ▲ Land Use;
- ▲ Noise and Vibration;
- ▲ Population and Housing;
- ▲ Public Services;
- ▲ Traffic, Transportation, and Circulation; and
- ▲ Utilities.

TECHNICAL ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED FURTHER

CEQA requires that the discussion of any significant effect on the environment address substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse changes in the physical conditions that exist within the affected area. A lead agency is not required to provide a detailed discussion of the environmental effects that would not be significant, and may instead provide a brief statement of dismissal (PRC Section 21100, State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15126.2[a] and 15128). Based on a review of the information presented in the NOP and comments received as part of the public review process (Appendix A), review by LAFCo of the project, and the resources at the site and in the region, the project would not result in significant environmental effects on the following resources.

Geology and Soils

The California Building Standards Code (CBC) establishes minimum requirements for construction of new buildings. The CBC contains provisions intended to regulate grading activities, drainage and erosion control, and construction on unstable soil (expansive soils or areas subject to liquefaction). When no other building codes apply, Chapter 29 regulates excavations, foundations, and retaining walls. Chapter 18 of the Building Code contains provisions related to Soils and Foundations, including geotechnical investigations (Section 1803); excavation, grading, and fill (Section 1804); assessing soil load-bearing capacity (Section 1806); and foundation design (Sections 1808-1810). The Residential Code contains provisions regarding soil testing, geotechnical evaluations for building foundations, and excavations for compressible or shifting soils (Section R401), foundations on expansive soils (Section R403), and seismic provisions (Section R301). In addition, the Green Building Standards Code contains provisions regarding soil erosion and stormwater runoff, and grading activities.

Areas surrounding active earthquake faults with the potential to be adversely affected by fault rupture are delineated as Alquist-Priolo Fault Zones. The proposed SOIA area is not located in an area classified as an Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone (California Geological Survey 2010). According to the Sacramento County General Plan, the SOIA area is ranked as a “low” severity zone for earthquake intensity. The likelihood that an earthquake with strong seismic ground shaking would occur in the SOIA area is low. Further, the project site is characterized by an entirely flat topography; therefore, landslides are not anticipated.

The SOIA would not have the potential to affect geology or soils on the project site, because no development is linked with this discretionary action. Future annexation of the project site (if the project is approved) could, however, result in the construction of public, residential, and commercial buildings in an area that could experience some seismic shaking. As discussed above, the risk of exposing people or structures to substantial adverse effects associated with rupture of a known fault, strong seismic ground shaking, seismic-related ground failure, or landslides is low. Subsequent development would be required to comply with the seismic design standards of the CBC, and may be required to complete geotechnical investigations in accordance with the CBC. These standards account for the shaking hazard of an area and the type of occupancy and are designed to minimize the potential risk to life and property. Through completion of any required geotechnical report and adherence to its recommendations, the potential to expose users to risk related to liquefaction and expansive soils would also be minimized. Additionally, development of the project

site as part of future proposals would be required to comply with City of Elk Grove construction permitting and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit conditions requiring temporary and permanent erosion control best management practices.

Any future development would be designed in compliance with current building code requirements, including the preparation of site-specific geotechnical studies, which would identify specific recommendations for compaction and soils so as to minimize risks associated with local soils, geology, and seismicity. These requirements would be enforced by appropriate state and local agencies and documented in subsequent environmental reviews. For these reasons, analysis of potential impacts to geology and soils is not included in this program EIR.

Mineral Resources

The SOIA area is not in an area of known mineral resources. The Sacramento County General Plan (Sacramento County 2011) does not map any mineral resources on the project site. As such, the SOIA would not have the potential to result in the loss of a known mineral resource or recovery site. Therefore, analysis of potential impacts to mineral resources is not included in this program EIR.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THIS DRAFT EIR

This draft EIR is organized as follows:

Executive Summary, summarizes the EIR process and the objectives of the project; provides a brief overview of the project description; describes the project alternatives; identifies areas of controversy; and summarizes the next steps in the public review process. The Executive Summary also contains a table that summarizes the significance of the environmental impacts that would result from the project.

Chapter 1: Introduction, introduces the environmental review process; describes the purpose of the EIR; identifies lead, responsible, and trustee agencies; and outlines the organization of the draft EIR.

Chapter 2: Project Description, describes the background and need for the project, identifies project objectives, and provides a detailed description of the project.

Chapter 3: Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures, is divided into sections for each environmental issue area that was not scoped out as part of the environmental review process. For each environmental issue area, the section describes the existing environmental setting and regulatory framework, presents significance criteria or thresholds for determining the significance of impacts, evaluates environmental impacts, identifies mitigation for any potentially significant and significant impacts, and identifies the level of significance following implementation of the mitigation.

Chapter 4: Cumulative Impacts, considers existing and reasonably foreseeable projects in the vicinity of the SOIA and describes the project's potential to substantially contribute to potential environmental effects.

Chapter 5: Other CEQA Considerations, identifies impacts associated with growth inducement and significant and irreversible environmental changes. This chapter also summarizes the project's significant and unavoidable impacts.

Chapter 6: Project Alternatives, describes alternatives to the project, including the No-Project Alternative and potentially feasible alternatives that would avoid, reduce, or eliminate significant impacts, and identifies the environmentally superior alternative. Alternatives that have been proposed and rejected from further consideration are also identified, along with an explanation of the reasons for their rejection.

Chapter 7: Report Preparation, identifies report preparers.

Chapter 8: References, lists the references used in preparation of this draft EIR.

1.5 STANDARD TERMINOLOGY

This draft EIR uses the following terminology to describe environmental effects of the project:

Less-Than-Significant Impact: A project impact is considered less than significant when it does not reach the standard of significance and would, therefore, cause no substantial change in the environment (no mitigation required).

Potentially Significant Impact: A potentially significant impact is an environmental effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the environment; however, additional information is needed regarding the extent of the impact to make the determination of significance. For CEQA purposes, a potentially significant impact is treated as if it were a significant impact.

Significant Impact: A project impact is considered significant if it results in a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects in the context of specified significance criteria. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to reduce these effects to the environment where feasible.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact: A project impact is considered significant and unavoidable if it would result in a substantial adverse change in the environment that cannot be feasibly avoided or mitigated to a less-than-significant level if the project is implemented. If a lead agency proposes to approve a project with significant unavoidable impacts, it must adopt a statement of overriding considerations to explain its actions (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(b)).

Cumulative Impacts: According to CEQA, “cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15355). CEQA requires that cumulative impacts be discussed when the “project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable... [or] ... provide a basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 [a]).”

Mitigation Measures: The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15370) define mitigation as:

- a) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
- b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree of magnitude of the action and its implementation;
- c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
- d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and
- e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

This page intentionally left blank.