

Floodplain Expansion and Ecosystem Restoration at
Dos Rios Ranch Project

Addendum to Initial Study / Negative Declaration
SCH 2015112050

Lead Agency:

Reclamation District 2092
3559 Shiloh Road
Modesto, California 95358
Stanislaus County
(209) 872-3744

Introduction

This document is an addendum to the previously approved Floodplain Expansion and Ecosystem Restoration at Dos Rios Ranch Project - Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND), SCH #2015112050 (Approved Project). The IS/ND was recorded on November 23, 2015, and adopted by Notice of Determination on June 29, 2017 by Reclamation District 2092, lead agency on the project. Minor technical revisions to the project scope have necessitated further review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As demonstrated in this Addendum, after consideration of the proposed revisions, the adopted IS/ND continues to serve as the appropriate document addressing the potential for environmental impacts from the project. Further, conditions were not met to require a subsequent Negative Declaration pursuant to CEQA Sections 15162-15164.

Background

The Approved Project scope is for the restoration of native vegetation and ecosystem services on previously degraded agricultural lands along the San Joaquin and Tuolumne Rivers, located at the Dos Rios Ranch Project site (the Site) in rural Stanislaus County. The Approved Project was assessed for potential environmental impacts in the original 2015 Initial Study resulting in a Negative Declaration of impact (the IS/ND) (Attachment A). The Notice of Determination adopting and certifying the IS/ND was filed by RD2092 on June 29, 2017 with the Stanislaus County Clerk.

The Approved Project's primary goals are to restore much of the Site to native habitat types to the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife including threatened and endangered species, reconnecting much of the acreage to the San Joaquin and Tuolumne Rivers to allow flooding for habitat and transient floodwater storage, and to promote physical river processes. The scope of work includes site preparation including field preparation and grading with no changes to the soil mass balance on site, installation of drip and/or furrow irrigation served by existing fish-screened river pumps and planting a diversity of native plants across the site with maintenance for three growing seasons to follow. The restoration of the Site is planned for completion in phases based on the availability of funding and organizational capacity, as detailed in the 2015 IS/ND and its supporting documentation. To-date some restoration phases have been completed and are now in the maintenance and monitoring phases.

Applicability and Use of an Addendum

When a proposed project is changed, there are changes in environmental setting, or additional analysis is required, a determination must be made by the Lead Agency as to whether an Addendum or Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or ND is prepared. CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162 and 15164 set forth criteria to assess which environmental document is appropriate. The criteria for determining whether an Addendum or Subsequent ND is prepared are outlined below.

If the criteria below are true, then an Addendum is the appropriate document:

- No new significant impacts will result from the project or from new mitigation measures.
- No substantial increase in the severity of environmental impact will occur.
- No new feasible alternatives or mitigation measures that would reduce impacts previously found not to be feasible have been found to in fact be feasible.

The impact analyses and determinations provided within the original IS/ND were reassessed in the context of the proposed revision and the above criteria. Based upon the available information, the revision will not result in new significant environmental impacts or substantially increase the severity of impacts previously identified. No new alternatives or mitigation measures were identified to be feasible that were previously found not to be feasible and none of the other factors set forth in Section 15162(a)(3) are present. Therefore the circulation or preparation of a Subsequent Negative Declaration is not required. As a result, per State CEQA Guidance, RD2092 has prepared this Addendum.

Project Description

Location

The Dos Rios Ranch Project Site is located at the confluence of the Tuolumne and San Joaquin Rivers approximately 9 miles west-southwest of downtown Modesto in Stanislaus County (Fig. 1). The Site is east of the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge and northeast of the Grayson Riverbend Preserve Restoration Project (Fig. 2). The area subject to this Addendum comprises the acreage at the south end of the Site and is a portion of the total area identified as "Restoration Phase 5" in the IS/ND's supporting documentation (Fig. 3).

Project Description from the Adopted 2015 Initial Study / Negative Declaration

The project will restore native vegetation on previously degraded primary and secondary floodplain lands along the San Joaquin and Tuolumne Rivers. Site preparation will include clearing of debris and weeds. Fields will be levelled and slightly modified (all grading will include mass balance on site) to promote improved hydraulic conditions for floodplain wildlife. A drip irrigation system will be installed above ground to service portions of the restoration project, while existing furrow irrigation systems will be used to irrigate the balance of the restoration project. Native plants will be propagated from local material and planted across the site in a patterned configuration parallel to the directions of overland flow. Weed control and irrigation will be performed during the growing season for three years. Irrigation will be provided from 3 existing fish-screened river pumps drawing riparian surface water from the San Joaquin and Tuolumne Rivers. Detailed information is provided in the Restoration Plan for the Dos Rios Ranch Floodplain Expansion and Ecosystem Restoration Project prepared by River Partners in 2015.

Proposed Project Revision

The proposed revision to the project scope would extend the previously assessed and approved habitat restoration activities to an additional 316 acres of irrigated agricultural land (the Area Subject to Addendum) located at the Site. The only change necessary to the text of the Adopted IS/ND is an amendment to the estimated total acreage slated for restoration activities from “approximately 1000 acres” to “approximately 1300 acres” as provided in the Initial Study’s Page 2 – “Project Information”. This acreage is outside of the regulatory floodway of the San Joaquin River and under common ownership and management with the Approved Project, comprising the southern extent of the Dos Rios Ranch Project Site (Figure 3).

The previously assessed project scope and work practices would be directly applied to the Area Subject to Addendum as identified in Figure 3, extending the same habitat restoration design and planning considerations, site preparation techniques, and planting and irrigation practices described in detail in the previous Approved Project’s IS/ND and supporting documentation. The purpose of this Addendum is to clarify that the Area Subject to Addendum – described as Phase 5 in the Initial Study’s supporting documentation - was included in the analysis and planning of the Dos Rios Ranch Project, and to correct the total acreage number provided in the 2015 IS/ND. Implementing the previously approved habitat restoration activities in the Area Subject to Addendum would not include any work in streams, riverbanks, floodways, or levees. There are no other changes to the Approved Project contemplated under this Addendum.

Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map – Dos Rios Ranch Project



Figure 2. Site Overview Map – Dos Rios Ranch Project

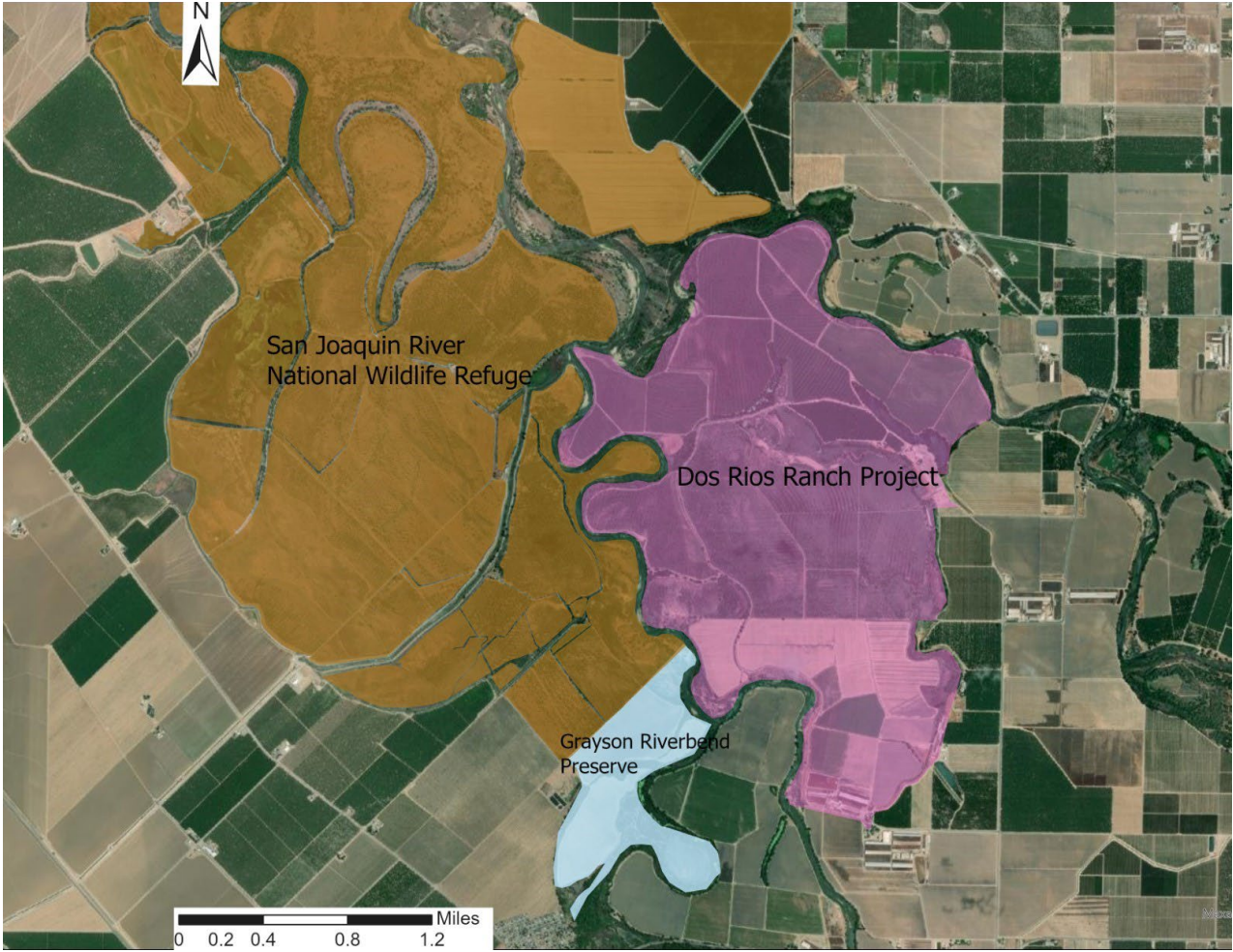
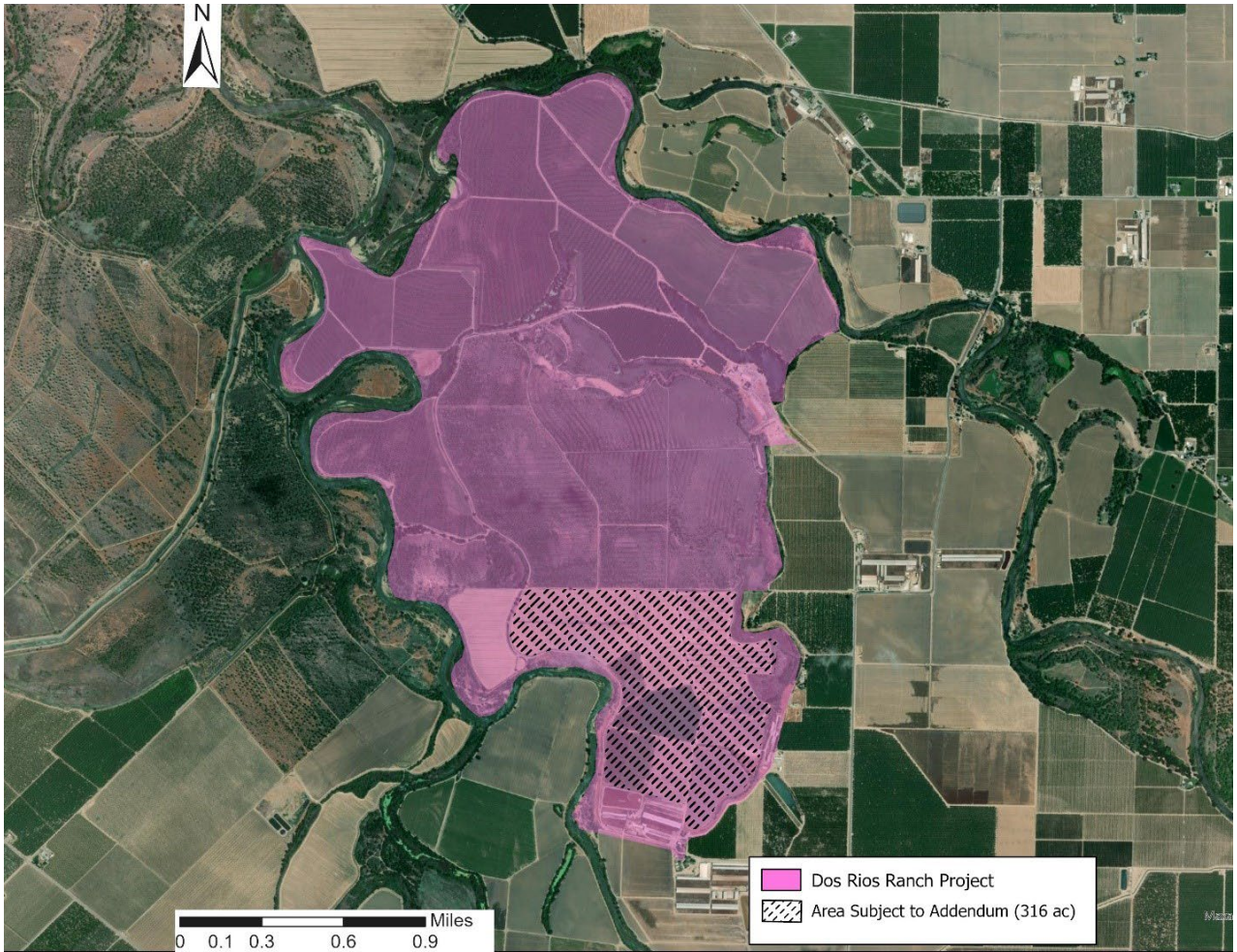


Figure 3. Area Subject to Addendum - Dos Rios Ranch Project



Anticipated Additional Approvals

No additional agency approvals are anticipated to be needed in order to proceed with the ecosystem restoration project as contemplated in the IS/ND and herein, other than the maintenance in good standing of an existing Stanislaus County Agricultural Commission – Restricted Materials Permit for the use of herbicides in maintenance activities.

Analysis of Potential Environmental Effects

The 2015 IS/ND found that the Approved Project would result in no impacts or impacts that were less than significant. As described above, the proposed revision would extend the project area to adjacent commonly owned acreage without any other changes to the project goals or work practices implemented. This proposed revision and all available supplemental information were re-assessed against the findings in the 2015 IS/ND (Attachment A). The Revised Project would not change the analysis or conclusions reached in the IS/ND, as the justifications provided are directly applicable to the revised project area across the various potential impact categories.

The Revised Project would not result in new or different impacts, substantially increase the severity of previously identified potential impacts, nor require new mitigation measures. No new information has emerged that would materially change the analyses or conclusions set forth in the 2015 IS/ND.

Findings

Based on the foregoing and the attached, it is concluded that the analyses conducted and the conclusions reached in the approved 2015 Initial Study and Negative Declaration adopted on June 29, 2017 remain valid. The proposed revisions to the project would not cause new significant impacts not identified previously in the IS/ND.

The in-depth review of the Revised Project and all original documentation, scoping and planning documents etc. has allowed RD 2092 to determine the project revision would not result in previously unexamined environmental impacts or in an increase in the severity of any of the previously examined potential environmental impacts. No changes have occurred with respect to circumstances surrounding the project that would cause significant impacts to which the project might contribute considerably, and no new information has become available that was not at the time of the ND that shows the project would cause significant, new or increased cumulative environmental impacts.


Therefore, pursuant to CEQA Section 15162-15164, RD2092 finds that no new effects will occur and no new mitigation measures will be required as a result of the project and pursuant to 15164(b), this Addendum was prepared to document the matter. RD2092 has determined that a substantial revision to the project has not been made and therefore no further environmental review is required at this time.

Name Maggie Blankinship

Title Secretary

Organization Restoration District 2092

Date June 30, 2023

Signed 

References

cbec. 2015. Dos Rios Ranch Habitat Restoration Design Support: Design Report. Sacramento, CA.

Knopf, E L., R. R. Johnson, T. Rich, E B. Samson, and R. C. Szaro. 1988. Conservation of riparian ecosystems in the United States. *Wilson Bulletin* 100:272-284.

Manley, P. and Davidson, C. 1993. A risk analysis of neotropical migrant birds in California. USFWS Report, Region 5, San Francisco, CA.

MBK Engineering 2017. Dos Rios Ranch Floodplain Expansion and Ecosystem Restoration Project Hydraulic Impact Analysis Report. Stanislaus County, CA.

Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Web Soil Survey of Eastern Fresno County, California".
<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>.

RHJV (Riparian Habitat Joint Venture). 2004. The riparian bird conservation plan: a strategy for reversing the decline of riparian associated birds in California. California Partners in Flight. <http://www.prbo.org/calpif/riparian.v-2.pdf>

River Partners. 2015. Floodplain Expansion and Ecosystem Restoration at Dos Rios Ranch. Modesto, California.

Saab, V. 1999. Importance of spatial scale to habitat use by breeding birds in riparian forests: A hierarchical analysis. *Ecological Applications* 9: 135-151.

San Joaquin River Conservancy. 2000. San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan. San Joaquin River Conservancy, Fresno, CA.

Sawyer, J.O. and T. Keeler-Wolf. 1995. A manual of California vegetation. California Native Plant Society, Sacramento, CA.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1997. Conservation Guidelines for the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. US Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento, CA.

Attachments

Attachment A: 2015 CEQA Initial Study / Adopted Negative Declaration

Attachment B: 2015 Dos Rios Ranch Restoration Plan

Attachment C: MBK Hydraulic Impact Analysis Report

Attachment D: cbec 2015 Dos Rios Ranch Habitat Restoration Design Support Report

ATTACHMENT A

Dos Rios Ranch Project – 2015 CEQA Initial Study & Adopted Negative Declaration

ATTACHMENT B

2015 Dos Rios Ranch Restoration Plan

ATTACHMENT C

Dos Rios Ranch Project – MBK Hydraulic Impact Analysis Report

ATTACHMENT D

cbec 2015 Dos Rios Ranch Habitat Restoration Design Support Report