

Notice of Intent and Notice of Availability of the MND for the Merced River Robinson Reach Maintenance Project

Notice is hereby given that the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Division of Regional Assistance, South Central Region Office intends to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Merced River Robinson Reach Maintenance Project.

Notice is also hereby given that the Draft Initial Study (IS) and Proposed MND prepared by DWR have been released for a 30-day public review.

Project: Merced River Robinson Reach Maintenance Project

Project Summary, Background, and Impacts: The proposed project is maintenance of the Merced River Salmon Habitat Enhancement Project Phase III-Robinson Reach (MRSHEP-Robinson) completed in 2002. DWR proposes to design, permit, and implement the following improvements to restore salmon spawning and rearing habitat in the floodplain and channel of the Robinson Reach of the Merced River:

- Stabilize seven hundred feet of eroded bank.
- Improve the capacity of 1,600 feet of channel by excavating deposited sediment and relocating a tree in the channel.
- Install a nine-hundred-foot shallow floodplain ditch to route low flows into the main river channel.
- Augment spawning habitat in two riffles in the downstream end of the reach.

The project will address impacts caused by the 2017 flood flows and restore habitat that has degraded since the MRSHEP-Robinson was completed

Historically, the Merced River was a productive salmon spawning and rearing habitat, but over time, the river has changed significantly because of agriculture, dam construction, flow regulation, and gold and gravel mining. Degraded habitat resulting from instream gravel mining drove development of the MRSHEP in the Robinson Reach — a reach of the Merced River contained within the larger Robinson Ranch property, a long-established agricultural operation. This reach of the Merced River is an important salmon habitat because it is near the end of their migration range.

The MRSHEP-Robinson was a joint salmon habitat restoration project between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DWR, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and was completed in early 2002.

Since completion of the MRSHEP-Robinson, the river has seen recurring overbank floods with peak flows of at least 4,800 cubic feet per second (cfs) roughly every five years. Following each flood event, the incremental changes to the channel and floodplain have been measured.

DWR has directed the preparation of an IS/MND on the proposed project in accordance with the requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. The IS/MND describes the proposed project and provides an assessment of the proposed project's potential significant adverse impacts on the physical environment. It concludes that the proposed project would have no impact on agriculture and forestry resources, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, and wildfire.

The IS did not identify any significant and unavoidable impacts. The IS analysis determined that the Project would result in potential adverse impacts associated with Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Noise, but that these impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant levels with implementation of mitigation measures.

Location: The project area is located on the Merced River, approximately five miles southwest of the town of Snelling; approximately two miles upstream and including the State Route 59 bridge; Merced County, California. The project site includes 7,000 feet of the Merced River Salmon Habitat Enhancement Project Phase III- Robinson Reach (MRSHEP-Robinson) constructed in 2001 and 2002.

Review: The 30-day public review period for this Draft IS and Proposed MND begins January 20, 2022 and ends February 22, 2022. The Draft IS and Proposed MND can be reviewed by accessing the following links below:

- [Draft IS/Proposed MND](#)
- [Notice of Completion](#)

Submit Comments

Comments regarding the Draft IS and Proposed MND should be submitted in writing to:

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Comments are due no later than 5 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time on Tuesday, February 22, 2022.

If comments are provided via email, please include the project title in the subject line, attach comments in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat format, and include the commenter's U.S. Postal Service mailing address.

PRIVACY NOTE: All comments received will be made available for public review in their entirety, including the names and addresses of the respondents. Individual respondents may request that their name and/or address be withheld from public disclosure. DWR will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment.