



RECORDING REQUESTED
WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO:

County of Sacramento
Planning and Environmental Review
827 Seventh Street, Room 225
Sacramento, CA 95814
CONTACT PERSON: Joelle Inman
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SPACE ABOVE RESERVED FOR RECORDER'S USE

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

Project Title:

Rooney 2 Preserve

Control Number:

PLER2023-00031

Project Location:

The project site is located on the northwest side of Sloughouse Road approximately 1.3 miles southwest of Jackson Highway in the Cosumnes community.

APN:

126-0060-059

Description of Project:

The project includes a request for a grading permit to support a vernal pool restoration project which will result in the creation of 117 vernal pools and swales totaling approximately 10.7 acres within the 107 acre Rooney 2 Preserve. The project area will ultimately become a preserve with a recorded conservation easement managed by the South Sacramento Conservation Agency (SSCA) designed to protect and preserve South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan (SSHCP) covered habitat and species. The project site contains 1.698 acres of wetland habitat in its existing condition and the preserve will contain approximately 12.4 acres of wetland habitat in total upon completion. The layout of the new aquatic features has been designed to avoid the existing features so that impacts to existing habitat is minimized. The proposed preserve is located within the Mather Core Recovery Area (MCRA) of the Southeastern Sacramento Valley of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Vernal Pool Recovery Plan. The project area will be preserved in perpetuity funded by a management endowment and managed in accordance with a management plan approved by the SSCA.

Name of public agency approving project:

Sacramento County – ceqa@saccounty.net

Person or agency carrying out project:

South Sacramento Conservation Agency
ATTN: Kim Hudson
827 7th Street, Room 225, Sacramento, CA 95814
916-874-5849
HUDSONK@saccounty.gov

Exempt Status:

Statutory Exemption: Public Resources Code section 21080.56 (statutory exemption for restoration projects).

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project is exempt from the provisions of CEQA as it meets the requirements specified by Public Resources Code section 21080.56 as detailed below.

Section 21080.56(a). The project is exclusively one or both of the following: (1) a project to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend, or (2) a project to restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined the project is exclusively a project to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend and a project to restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife. The project is exclusively a project to protect and establish vernal pools within the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan area. A benefit of the project is that it will also yield a net increase in vernal pool habitat available for the threatened and endangered vernal pool invertebrates and plants within the Mather Core Recovery Area of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Vernal Pool Recovery Plan.

Section 21080.56(b). An eligible project may have incidental public health benefits, such as public access and recreation.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined the project may have incidental public benefits. Although no new recreational facilities will be constructed, healthy biodiverse wetlands, including vernal pools, will enhance beneficial biodiversity to the region. Further, a management goal of the long term management plan associated with the project is "to allow compatible uses such as recreation and education while minimizing effects to biological resources within the Preserve." Non-profit entities such as "Splash" have been working to provide children in the Sacramento area with a better understanding of the value of our natural world. This includes field trips to other wildlife preserve areas such as vernal pools around Mather Field. It is reasonable to assume this type of educational activity may also occur on-site in the future and would provide incidental public benefits.

Section 21080.56(c). The project does both of the following: (1) results in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery; and (2) Includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined that the proposed project will result in long-term benefits to climate resiliency by restoring crucial wetland habitat. Wetland restoration has been identified as key aspect in mitigating climate change, specifically by reducing emissions and sequestering carbon.

Additional benefits to climate resiliency would be limiting further development within the region. The proposed preserve (107 acres in area) will essentially result in an expansion of the existing 142-acre Rooney 1 Preserve (an existing vernal pool and valley grassland preserve), creating a large continuous preserve of 249 acres. This relatively large preserve is located within the SSHCP Urban Development Area (UDA), and therefore

helps contain development, and gives the SSCA increased opportunities for future expansion of the preserve system in this portion of the SSHCP plan area.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined that the project will result in long-term benefits to biodiversity as the project will result in the creation of a preserve consistent with the provisions of the SSHCP and link intact landscapes that include high quality habitat; maintain or improve physical, chemical, and biological functions of aquatic resources; preserve, re-establish, and establish natural land covers that provide habitat for special status species; maintain or improve habitat value of natural land covers that are preserved; and maintain and expand the existing distribution of each SSHCP Covered Species.
- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined that the project will result in long-term benefits to sensitive species recovery. The establishment of the preserve will result in the creation of additional vernal pool land cover thereby creating additional high quality habitat for SSHCP Covered Species. The proposed preserve is located directly east of (and attached to) an established preserve and is also located in the USFWS MCRA; an area known for many occurrences of SSHCP Covered Species and high quality vernal pool grasslands. The proposed preserve would also help create a corridor between the MCRA and the Cosumnes/Rancho Seco Core Recovery Area and minimizes the potential fragmentation of the immediately local and intact habitats.

The proposed creation and preservation of SSHCP land cover types within the proposed preserve will benefit sensitive species recovery by preserving and providing in perpetuity necessary breeding, foraging and/or sheltering habitat for SSHCP Covered Species as well as common non-protected species associated with these land cover types. The land cover types to be protected are the same as those that will be impacted in this and other portions of the SSHCP Plan Area due to future development (covered activities).

The above-described creation/preservation of SSHCP land cover types within the proposed preserve will help to ensure that habitat for numerous SSHCP Covered Species persists within the SSHCP area in perpetuity, and that unoccupied but suitable habitat for several SSHCP Covered Species is preserved or created to provide for future SSHCP Covered Species population growth and dispersal. The proposed preserve not only serves to preserve existing habitat, but also to create aquatic resources that may serve as habitat for SSHCP Covered Species in the future. Management of the preserve (as well as assured funding for such management) is an important component of the preserve proposal, and will help ensure that the proposed preserve is available for use by SSHCP Covered Species in perpetuity.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined that the project includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment. Ongoing management for the protection of the environment within the preserve would include interim (10-year) and in perpetuity management of the preserve implemented by the SSCA pursuant to the Final Wetland Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan proposed as part of the preserve creation. Interim management will include measures to ensure performance criteria are met including regular maintenance (weed removal, seed dispersal, or minor adjustments to site conditions). It is expected that performance standards for the total acreage of wetland and vernal pool habitat creation will be met within the initial 10-year period and will perform at or above those levels for three

consecutive years. Following the completion of the mitigation monitoring period, monitoring/maintenance of the preserve will occur in perpetuity in accordance with the strategies outlined in the Long-term Management Plan for the property. The SSCA will serve as Preserve Manager. The SSCA is also generating an overarching program-level long-term management plan, and it is anticipated that the SSCA may decide to cover the preserve in this larger plan. The determination on how best to manage the preserve in the long-term will be made by the SSCA and SSHCP Interagency Review Team (IRT).

Section 21080.56(d). The project does not include any construction activities, except for the construction activities solely related to habitat restoration.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined that the project does not include any construction activities, except for construction activities solely related to habitat restoration. This project is exclusively a restoration project for establishing Covered Species Habitat of the SSHCP.

Joelle Inman
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ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR OF
SACRAMENTO COUNTY, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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