



DATE: September 26, 2024

FROM: Chris Lim, Executive Director, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District

TO: Interested Parties, Responsible Agencies and Community Members

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation (Notice) of an Environmental Impact Report for the Marsh Creek Restoration Project

SUMMARY:

The Contra Costa Resources Conservation District (District) is issuing this notice to advise other agencies and the public that the District will be preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Marsh Creek Restoration Project (Project), located at and near the John Marsh State Historic Park in unincorporated Contra Costa County and within the City of Brentwood. The EIR will be prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq.) and its interpreting regulations (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000, et seq.) (collectively “CEQA”). The District will serve as the CEQA lead agency for preparation of the EIR and is the public agency with the principal responsibility for approving and carrying out the Project. The District has determined that an EIR will be the required CEQA document for the proposed Project.

The District is issuing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to alert interested parties and solicit agency and public input regarding the scope and content of the environmental analysis, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation to be considered in the EIR. It is also intended to advise the public that outreach activities conducted by the District and its representatives will be considered in the preparation of the EIR. The NOP provides information describing the proposed Project and its potential environmental effects.

DATES: Due Date for Comments

Written comments on the scope of the Marsh Creek Restoration Project EIR, including the project objectives, impacts to be evaluated, methodologies to be used in the evaluations, and the alternatives to be considered, and any related questions must be received by the District in writing by no later than **5:00 PM on October 28, 2024**. Comments and questions must be addressed to the District contact provided below.

Responses to this NOP should focus, specific to this Project, on the potentially significant environmental effects that the Project may have on the physical environment, ways in which those effects might be minimized, and potential alternatives to the Project that should be addressed in the EIR. This focus aligns with the purpose of the EIR to inform the public about these factors of the Project.

CONTACT:

Requests for further information as well as written comments on the scope or content of the EIR should be sent to:

Ben Weise, Agricultural Program Director
Contra Costa Resource Conservation District
5552 Clayton Rd,
Concord, CA 94521

Or, via email with the subject line “Marsh Creek Restoration Project EIR” to: bweise@ccrcd.org

SCOPING INFORMATION:

Scoping

The District invites all interested individuals, organizations, public agencies, and Native American Tribes to comment on the scope of the EIR, including the project objectives, the alternatives to be studied, the impacts to be evaluated and the evaluation methods to be used. Comments should focus on alternatives that may have fewer environmental impacts while achieving similar objectives and the identification of any significant social, economic, or environmental issues related to alternatives.

The Proposed Project and Ongoing Environmental Studies

The Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD), in partnership with the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) Diablo Range District, and the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (CCCFCFD), is proposing a project to address creek and streambed erosion and expand riparian vegetation along approximately 0.5-miles of Marsh Creek on both the Marsh Creek State Park (Park) property in Brentwood, CA and an immediately upstream portion of the creek on unincorporated County-owned (CCCFCFD) lands. (See Figure 1)

The proposed restoration project is intended to remediate creek and streambed erosion, restore healthy riparian systems, and protect historic and cultural resources. These goals would be achieved through various methods that respond to the specific creek conditions within the project alignment. These include setting back the creek banks, planting native riparian vegetation, removing invasive vegetation, and excluding cattle from the creek corridor.

The upstream portion of the project runs from the Marsh Creek Reservoir outfall structure to the Cowell Ranch dam and has steep, eroding banks. The project proposes a comprehensive stream restoration of this segment. Restoration efforts along the right bank include setting back the bank along 1,000-linear feet,

creating a 2-year-flood floodplain along 900-linear feet, and planting native riparian vegetation. Along the left bank, the project includes planting the toe of the bank with cottonwood and willow and creating a swale and depression to address erosion from the Reservoir's emergency spillway. Approximately 10 native trees would be removed along this reach. Overall flood capacity upstream and downstream of the project would be unchanged.

Approximately 25,000-cubic yards of soil would be excavated for the bank grading, most of which would be from creation of the higher-flow floodplain within the channel. This soil would be re-located to the permanent "soil disposal area", on the adjacent Park property between the Reservoir dam and the ranch buildings, which is currently used as ranch corrals. This soil relocation would eliminate the need for soil off-haul, and would create a mound with a maximum height of seven feet. The soil disposal mound would be revegetated with oak savanna species.

Approximately 1,200-cubic yards of rock for the constructed riffles (to mimic natural riffle-and-pool function) and approximately 400-cubic yards of riprap (to reinforce steep slopes and prevent erosion in susceptible areas) would be imported and placed in the channel and along banks, respectively.

A small runoff detention basin would be constructed above the creek below the dam spillway to detain and infiltrate "nuisance runoff" from the spillway area. A rip-rapped channel would direct excess flows from the basin to an area about 10 vertical feet above the creek channel, where it would be expected to infiltrate or flow overland into the creek. While there still may be some "nuisance" flows into the creek from the spillway area, the total quantity and frequency of those flows would be less than at present.

Where this upstream portion approaches the Cowell Ranch dam, the right bank is extremely steep. The top of this bank would be set back and include rock slope protection as an erosion control measure. In order to achieve the desired setback, the project would demolish two ranch buildings.

Potential Significant Impacts

A draft Initial Study (IS) has been prepared, and found that the project may have potentially significant impacts on archaeological resources, biological resources, erosion, and water quality. The IS identified best management practices and, where needed, mitigation measures that would reduce all of these potential impacts to less than significant levels. However, the California Department of Parks and Recreation has determined that the two barn structures proposed for removal may be historically significant as possible contributors to the Marsh Creek Historic District. Under CEQA, destruction of an historic structure is a significant unmitigable impact requiring an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to be prepared. Therefore, EIR proposes to focus solely on Historic Resources. The remaining environmental topics will be addressed in the Initial Study, which will be attached as an appendix to the EIR and summarized in an "Other Issues" section of this EIR. Mitigation measures identified in the IS also will be carried forth into the EIR.

Alternatives to be Evaluated in the EIR

The EIR proposes to include three project alternatives: no project, constructing the project with a steeper slope to retain the barn structures, and relocating the barn structures (if feasible).

Document Availability

The NOP for the Project and other Project documents are available for public review at the following locations (physical locations during normal business hours):

- Contra Costa Resources Conservation District Office, 5552 Clayton Rd, Concord, CA 94521
- District website: www.ccrd.org/marsh-creek-restoration
- Via email by emailing Ben Weise at bweise@ccrd.org with the subject line “Marsh Creek Restoration Project EIR”

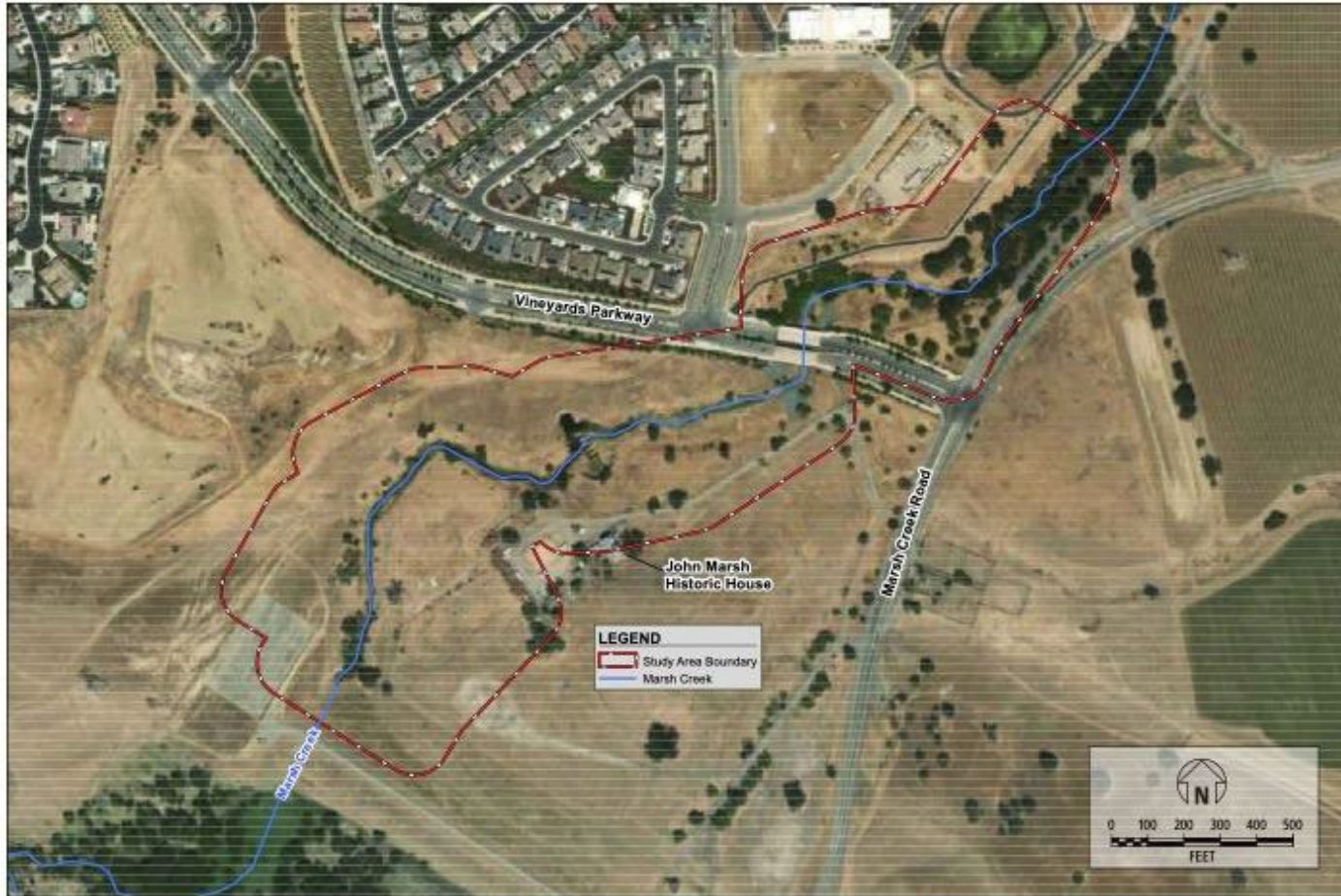


Figure 1
Project Site Overview

Source: Nomad Ecology

