

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DISTRICT 7  
100 S. MAIN STREET, MS 16  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012  
PHONE (213) 266-3574  
FAX (213) 897-1337  
TTY 711  
www.dot.ca.gov



December 20, 2023

Donna Hebert  
Ventura County Public Works Agency – Watershed Protection  
800 South Victoria Avenue, #1600  
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Matilija Ecosystem Restoration  
Project – Reissued Notice of  
Preparation (NOP) of a Subsequent  
Environmental Impact Report (SEIR)  
SCH #2002011094  
GTS #07-VEN-2023-00576  
Vic. VEN 33 PM 15.45

Dear Donna Hebert,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review process for the above referenced project. In October 2000, the Ventura County Public Works Agency – Watershed Protection (VCPWA – WP), then the Ventura County Flood Control District, initiated the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Study as a joint effort between VCPWA – WP and the United States Army Corps of Engineers to develop a project resulting in the removal of Matilija Dam. The primary project objectives included: aquatic and terrestrial habitat improvement, facilitating the return of a viable and abundant run of steelhead trout; and restoration of natural sediment transport processes along Matilija Creek and the Ventura River. The secondary objective was enhancement of recreational opportunities along these two waterways. The joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) certified in 2004 evaluated project alternatives combining dam removal, sediment relocation, flood protection (levees), two bridge replacements, new recreation features, giant reed removal, and water supply improvements. Also in 2004, Alternative 4b was approved by Board of Supervisors of the Ventura County Flood Control District as the approved project. Technical studies to refine project features continued between 2008 and 2016, resulting in a new dam removal method and reevaluation of other project components. In June 2017, VCPWA – WP

received funding to implement the Matilija Dam Removal 65% Design Planning Project, comprising additional technical studies, construction design, and CEQA analyses. The VCPWA – WP has determined that preparation of a Subsequent EIR (SEIR) is warranted to provide a complete and objective analysis of the revised Project components. (This SEIR will focus on the Matilija Dam removal component of MDERP, as well as other Project components as necessary.) Per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(d), a subsequent EIR shall be given the same notice and public review as required for a draft EIR.

After reviewing the Reissued NOP, Caltrans has the following comments:

Caltrans concurs that an SEIR is warranted to evaluate substantial alterations to the Project and related changes to the 2004 certified EIS/EIR and to consider new environmental effects. It is expected that further evaluation of potentially significant impacts related to transportation and construction activities for the proposed project will be conducted in the SEIR.

Construction of the proposed project would involve deliveries of materials, components, and supplies to the various sites, and will involve oversized trucks. Although the Project may not generate significant long-term operational impacts to State facilities, construction would temporarily disrupt transportation and circulation patterns along the haul routes. The volume of trucks would create noise and safety impacts on the freeway. The primary impacts from the movement of trucks would include short-term and intermittent lessening of roadway capacities and temporary lane closures and possible detours during certain times.

As a result, prior to issuance of building or grading permits for the project site, the applicant shall prepare a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) for review and approval by City staff to reduce any impacts to less than significant levels. The Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTM) needs to specify the duration of construction period and provide construction analysis on significant impacts due to increase in construction truck traffic on highways not designated as truck routes. The EIR needs to specify any work that would affect the freeways and its facilities, and that Caltrans has the jurisdiction for review and approval. Transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials, which requires the use of oversized-transport vehicles on State highways, will require a transportation permit from Caltrans.

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Since the potential impact area runs along and across SR 33, SR 150, and US-101, encroachment permits will be required for any physical encroachment into State Right of Way. It is also expected that a maintenance agreement will be created between Caltrans and the Lead Agency to share the burden of costs for any proposed crossings.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Anthony Higgins, at [anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov](mailto:anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov) and refer to GTS #07-VEN-2023-00576.

Sincerely,

*Frances Duong*

Frances Duong  
Acting LDR/CEQA Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse