

NOTICE OF PREPARATION/NOTICE OF INTENT FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

TO: Responsible Agencies and Interested Parties

FROM: California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), U.S. Department of the Interior

LEAD AGENCIES: Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), CDFG and the Service, the respective CEQA and NEPA lead agencies propose to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Buena Vista Lagoon Restoration Project.

ACTION: Notice of Preparation/Notice of Intent for Buena Vista Lagoon Restoration Project

SUMMARY: The Buena Vista Lagoon Restoration Project would restore approximately 200 acres of wetland habitat at Buena Vista Lagoon, a coastal lagoon and State Ecological Reserve located in the cities of Carlsbad and Oceanside, CA, and that is managed by CDFG. The proposed action, for purposes of environmental analysis, is restoration of the lagoon to a predominantly tidal saltwater system (regime). This would increase shorebird and marine fish habitat, while taking advantage of the lagoon basin bathymetry to protect and enhance existing freshwater habitat at the lagoon's upper (easterly) end that supports sensitive bird species. Alternatives to the proposed action that will be evaluated in the EIR/EIS include: restoring and enhancing the existing freshwater regime; creating a mixed saltwater-freshwater regime; and no project/no action. Implementation of the proposed action or the mixed saltwater-freshwater alternative would involve the creation and management of a new ocean inlet/outlet. Potential infrastructure modifications that may be considered for the three action alternatives include the existing bridges over the lagoon for U.S. Interstate 5 (I-5), the railroad, and Carlsbad Boulevard ("Coast Highway"), along with culverts, and/or a weir. Additional information is available at www.buonavistalagoonfoundation.org.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to restore approximately 200 acres of wetland habitat at Buena Vista Lagoon, a coastal lagoon and State Ecological Reserve located in the cities of Carlsbad and Oceanside, CA. Historically (e.g., pre-1940s), the lagoon was in a dynamic equilibrium between a tidal-influenced saltwater system during dry conditions and a river-influenced freshwater system during wet weather. Over time the lagoon was converted to a freshwater system as a result of highway, roadway, and railroad construction and installation of a weir. The lagoon has been progressively degrading in terms of benefits and value to biological communities, habitats, and human uses. Without restoration, it would most likely become a vegetated freshwater marsh or riparian woodland-meadow within the next 30 to 50 years. This degradation would reduce or eliminate wetland functions and values, and result in increased concerns about vectors, water quality impairments, and impacts to aesthetic resources.

Project Location

The project site is located in the cities of Carlsbad and Oceanside, in northern San Diego County, CA. The lagoon is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west, Vista Way/State Highway 78 on the north, and Jefferson Street on the east and south.

Scoping Process

CDFG and the Service will seek public input on topics, issues, and alternatives to be considered in the EIR/EIS during a scoping meeting to be held in April, 2007. Scoping is an open process of eliciting comments on the content of the EIR/EIS from responsible and reviewing agencies, and interested parties. The Draft EIR/EIS (DEIR/S) will incorporate public concerns in the analysis of impacts associated with the proposed action and alternatives. The DEIR/S will be subject to a 45-day public review period, during which time both written and verbal comments will be solicited on the adequacy of the document. The Final EIR/EIS (FEIR/S) will address the comments received on the DEIR/S during public review, will be furnished to all who commented on the DEIR/S, and additionally made available to anyone that requests a copy during a 30-day FEIR/S comment period. The final step involves, for the state EIR, certification of the EIR and adoption of a Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Plan, and for the federal EIS, preparation of a Record of Decision (ROD). A certified EIR indicates that the environmental document adequately assesses the environmental impacts of the proposed project with respect to CEQA. The ROD is a concise summary of the decisions made by the Service from among the alternatives presented in the FEIR/S. The ROD can be published immediately after the FEIS public comment period ends.

Date and Address: The schedule and location of the public scoping meeting are as follow:

April 18, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the City of Carlsbad, Faraday Building, Room 173 A & B, 1635 Faraday Avenue, Carlsbad, CA, 92008.

RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF PREPARATION/NOTICE OF INTENT

Please submit your comments, concerns, mitigation measures, and any other pertinent information that may enable us to prepare a comprehensive, meaningful EIR/EIS for the project. Written input should be sent at the earliest possible date, but post-marked no later than 5 p.m. on May 24, 2007, to Ms. Terri Stewart, California Department of Fish and Game, 4949 Viewridge Avenue, San Diego, CA 92123, or Mr. Jack Fancher, Fish and Wildlife Service, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, CA 92011. Please include your name and address so that you can be contacted directly if clarification is needed.