Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Agencies and Interested Parties
From: Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
Date: June 15, 2012

The Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.) for a supplemental environmental impact report (SEIR) for the Natomas Levee Improvement Program (NLIP) Landside Improvements Project (hereafter referred to as the Natomas Project or Project). On November 29, 2007, SAFCA certified the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the NLIP Landside Improvements Project (State Clearinghouse #2007062016) (2007 Landside EIR). The SEIR is supplemental to the 2007 Landside EIR, and the analysis will be informed by four project-level EIRs, one SEIR, and five addenda. In accordance with California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, SAFCA has prepared this notice of preparation (NOP) to inform all responsible and trustee agencies, federal agencies, and interested parties that an SEIR will be prepared. The purpose of an NOP is to provide sufficient information about the proposed project and its potential environmental effects to enable the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), responsible and trustee agencies, and interested parties to provide a meaningful response related to the scope and content of the SEIR, including the potential environmental effects of the propose project, significant environmental issues, mitigation measures, or reasonable alternatives (State CEQA Guidelines, CCR Section 15082[b]).

An agency may choose to prepare a SEIR pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines CCR Section 15163 if any of the conditions that require preparation of a subsequent EIR (as described in State CEQA Guidelines CCR Section 15162) are met, and only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequately apply to the project in the changed situation. The Project modifications described in this NOP meet the criteria for preparing an SEIR.

The Project objectives and Project location have not changed substantially from the 2007 Landside EIR, and are briefly summarized below. The SEIR will focus on the modifications to the Project that could result in new, potentially significant environmental effects, or substantially more severe significant environmental effects, that were not analyzed in the 2007 Landside EIR and other environments documents prepared for the Project that are described below.

1 The previous environmental documents certified and adopted for the Landside projects are described in summary form on pages 2-7 of this NOP, below.
PURPOSE OF THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The purposes of this NOP are to:

1. Provide background information, briefly describe the proposed project modifications requiring the need for an SEIR, and summarize the probable potentially significant environmental effects associated with implementing these project modifications.

2. Announce a public scoping meeting, to facilitate public input, to be held between 4 and 6 p.m. on July 10, 2012, at the South Natomas Community Center, 2921 Truxel Road, Sacramento, California.

3. Solicit input by July 16, 2012, from public agencies and interested organizations and individuals regarding the scope and content of the SEIR, including alternatives to be considered, potentially significant environmental effects on the environment to be addressed, and identification of responsible and trustee agencies.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Natomas Project is part of SAFCA’s efforts to complete comprehensive flood control improvements for the Natomas Basin and is part of the NLIP analyzed in the 2007 Landside EIR. The NLIP involves improving the levee system that provides flood protection for the approximately 53,000-acre Natomas Basin in northern Sacramento and southern Sutter Counties, California, including a portion of the city of Sacramento (Exhibit 1). The Natomas Basin is generally bounded by leveed reaches of the Natomas Cross Canal (NCC) on the north, the Sacramento River on the west, the American River on the south, and the Pleasant Grove Creek Canal (PGCC) and Natomas East Main Drainage Canal (NEMDC)/Steelhead Creek on the east (Exhibit 2).

As stated in the 2007 Landside EIR, the overall project objectives of SAFCA’s regional flood control improvement program, including the Natomas Project, are to: (1) complete the projects necessary to provide 100-year flood protection for urbanized areas in the major floodplains of the Sacramento metropolitan area (Sacramento) as quickly as possible, (2) provide urban-standard (200-year) flood protection for urbanized areas in Sacramento’s major floodplains over time, and (3) ensure that new development in the undeveloped areas of Sacramento’s major floodplains does not substantially increase the expected damage of an uncontrolled flood. The first two objectives would meet the minimum requirements of federal and State law for urban areas like the Natomas Basin and thus significantly reduce the risk of an uncontrolled flood in the Natomas Basin that could result in a catastrophic loss of life, property (estimated at $7 billion) and a prolonged interruption of commercial activity, including the operation of the Sacramento International Airport (Airport) and closure of Interstate 5 (I-5), Interstate 880 (I-80), and State Route (SR) 99. The third objective is a long-term objective of SAFCA’s overall flood risk reduction policy.

Additional project objectives stated in the 2007 Landside EIR include: (1) use flood control projects in the vicinity of the Airport to manage Airport lands in accordance with the Airport’s Wildlife Hazard Management Plan; and (2) use flood control projects to increase the extent and connectivity of the lands in the Natomas Basin being managed to provide habitat for giant garter snake, Swainson’s hawk, and other special-status species.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The 2007 Landside EIR covers three phases, which were identified as the Phase 2 Project, Phase 3 Project, and Phase 4 Project, of “landside” improvements to the levees protecting the Natomas Basin in Sacramento and Sutter Counties, California. The Phase 2 Project was analyzed at the project level and the remainder of the Landside Improvements Project (i.e., Phase 3, Phase 4a, and Phase 4b) was analyzed at the program level. The Phase 3, Phase 4a, and Phase 4b Projects were evaluated in separate project-specific environmental impact statement/environmental impact reports (EIS/EIRs) prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Sacramento District and SAFCA.
Source: CaSil, adapted by AECOM in 2012

Exhibit 1

Project Location
Exhibit 2

Natomas Basin Levee System

Source: Aerial image SACOG 2006, adapted by AECOM in 2012
The following discussion summarizes the description of the Project analyzed in previous environmental documents and describes the modifications to the Project since certification and approval of these documents.

Summary Description of the Project Analyzed in Previous Environmental Documents

2007 Landside EIR

The general elements of the project proposed and analyzed in the 2007 Landside EIR and updated based on current plans at the time of preparation of the 2007 Landside EIR are summarized as follows (a detailed project description is provided in the 2007 Landside EIR):

► Levee raising and seepage remediation: NCC south levee—Raise and realign the NCC south levee to provide additional levee height and more stable waterside and landside slopes and to reduce the need for removal of waterside vegetation. Construct a seepage cutoff wall through the levee crown in Reaches 3 through 7.

► Levee raising and seepage remediation: Sacramento River east levee—Construct an adjacent setback levee from the NCC to the downstream end of Sacramento River east levee Reach 4B, raised where needed to provide adequate levee height, with a combination of cutoff walls, seepage berms, and relief wells for seepage remediation where required.

► Improvements to major irrigation and drainage infrastructure: These improvements are described below.
  • Relocate a portion of the existing highline Elkhorn Main Irrigation Canal north of the Natomas Central Mutual Water Company’s Elkhorn Reservoir. (“Highline” canals are water conveyances with bottom elevations roughly equal to the surrounding ground elevation.)
  • Construct a new canal designed to provide drainage and associated giant garter snake habitat (the “GGS/Drainage Canal”) between the North Drainage Canal and the Elkhorn Reservoir to improve associated giant garter snake habitat. (These features are intended to offset project impacts on giant garter snake canal and ditch habitat.)
  • Remove a deep culvert at the location of Reclamation District 1000 Pumping Plant No. 2 on the Sacramento River east levee, and reconstruct Pumping Plant No. 2.

► Right-of-way acquisition: Acquire right-of-way through fee title or easement interest within the footprint of the project features and at the borrow sites to prevent encroachments into the flood control system.

The levee raise along the Sacramento River involved construction of an “adjacent setback levee,” consisting of a new levee crown and embankment adjoining the land side of the existing levee. Construction of an adjacent setback levee shifts the jurisdictional levee landward, thereby providing more flexibility with respect to the management of structures and vegetation on the water side slope compared with raising the levee in place. The adjacent setback levee also provides the levee height and seepage remediation where required.

The seepage remediation uses a combination of seepage berms, cutoff walls, and relief wells. As part of the Project, SAFCA would acquire additional rights-of-way to construct the improvements and to prevent encroachment into the flood control system. These improvements include contouring the levee slopes where necessary to provide at least a 3:1 horizontal-to-vertical (3H:1V) waterside slope and a 3H:1V (preferred) or 2H:1V (maximum) landside slope.
On January 29, 2009, SAFCA certified the SEIR on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program Landside Improvements Project—Phase 2 Project (State Clearinghouse #2007062016) that analyzed the following modifications to the Phase 2 Project:

► construction of cutoff walls in place of seepage berms in several areas between Reaches 1 through 4A along the Sacramento River east levee;

► cutoff wall construction on a 24-hours-per-day, 7-days-per-week basis;

► a change in the baseline at the Airport north bufferlands from active rice cultivation to idle conditions;

► additional details regarding construction of new collection facilities for storm drainage to convey surface water beneath Garden Highway to the Sacramento River; and

► the addition of 90 acres of high-quality foraging habitat that would be created or preserved by acquisition and reclamation of land used for borrow materials.

Addenda to 2007 Landside EIR

► June 2009. On June 8, 2009, the SAFCA Board of Directors considered the Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program—Phase 2 Landside Improvements Project. The first addendum addressed construction and operation of four new wells within Reaches 1, 2, and 3 of the Sacramento River east levee. One well was to be used to provide short-term water supplies for woodland plantings that would be cultivated for mitigation of project impacts, and the remaining three wells would replace existing agricultural well and water supply infrastructure affected by the Project.

► August 2009. On August 20, 2009, the SAFCA Board of Directors considered the 2nd Addendum to the Environmental Impact Report on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program, Landside Improvements Project—Phase 2 Project. The second addendum addressed the replacement of the outfall structure associated with Reclamation District (RD) No. 1000 Pumping Plant No. 4, the removal of a portion of the NCMWC Central Main Flume, and additional vegetation removal associated with the connection of Prichard Pumping Plant with Elkhorn Canal. The replacement of the outfall structure involved the construction of a cofferdam on the waterside of the NCC south levee to dewater the area surrounding the outfall. The removal of the portion of the Central Main Flume was determined to be necessary to accommodate the footprint of the adjacent levee and seepage berm.

Phase 3 EIR/EIS

The Phase 3 Project addresses underseepage, riverbank erosion, encroachment, and levee height deficiencies along the Sacramento River east levee Reaches 5A–9B, the PGCC west levee, and a portion of the NEMDC west levee (between Elkhorn and Northgate Boulevards).

In February 2009, USACE and SAFCA issued the Phase 3 DEIS/DEIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2008072060) for public review and comment. Following public review, SAFCA prepared an FEIR (SAFCA 2009b) to provide responses to comments on the Phase 3 DEIS/DEIR. The SAFCA Board of Directors certified the Phase 3 FEIR and approved the Phase 3 Project on May 21, 2009. Separately, USACE prepared an FEIS to provide responses to comments received on the Phase 3 DEIS/DEIR and issued the FEIS.

Addenda to Phase 3 EIR

In August 2011, the SAFCA Board of Directors considered an Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program—Phase 3 Landside Improvements Project. This addendum addressed the hauling of approximately 30,000 cubic yards (cy) of fill material from an existing stockpile of soils...
located along Mack Road in the City of Sacramento, which was previously associated with the South Sacramento Streams project, to Reach 9B of the Sacramento River east levee improvements.

**Phase 4a EIR/EIS**
On November 13, 2009, the SAFCA Board of Directors certified the Phase 4a FEIR and approved the Phase 4a Project. The Phase 4a Project includes levee raising and seepage remediation along the Sacramento River east levee (Reaches 10–15) and in two locations of the NCC south levee as well as relocation and extension of the Riverside Canal. Parcels within the Fisherman’s Lake Borrow Area are the primary source of soil borrow for Phase 4a Project construction. Additional borrow may be obtained from the Interstate 5 (I-5) Borrow Area, and borrow areas previously addressed in the Phase 3 EIS/EIR; those areas excavated for borrow material would be reclaimed as agricultural land, grassland, or managed marsh depending on their location and existing land use. Separately, USACE prepared an FEIS to provide responses to comments received on the Phase 4a DEIS/DEIR and issued the Phase 4a FEIS in February 2010.

**Addenda to Phase 4a EIR**
- **February 2011.** On February 17, 2011, the SAFCA Board of Directors considered the Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program—Phase 4a Landside Improvements Project. The first addendum addressed habitat design and refinements and additional canal construction in the Fisherman’s Lake area as well as the addition of woodland habitat and a preservation corridor in Sacramento River east levee Reach 9B.
- **April 2012.** On April 19, 2012, the SAFCA Board of Directors considered a 2nd Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program—Phase 4a Landside Improvements Project. The second addendum addressed the removal of 20,000 cy of spoil material along the West Drainage Canal between Power Line Road and the RD 1000 Pumping Plant No. 5 Inlet Channel and transport of that material to Sacramento River east levee Reaches 10-12B along the Sacramento River.

**Phase 4b EIR/EIS**
The Phase 4b Project addresses underseepage, stability, erosion, penetrations, and levee encroachments along approximately 3.4 miles of the Sacramento River east levee, approximately 1.8 miles of the American River north levee, approximately 6.8 miles of the NEMDC west levee, approximately 3.3 miles of the PGCC west levee, and the gaps left in the improvements of previous phases at levee penetrations and road crossings on the NCC south levee. The SAFCA Board of Directors certified the Phase 4b FEIR and approved the Phase 4b Project on November 12, 2010. Separately, USACE prepared an FEIS to provide responses to comments received on the Phase 4b DEIS/DEIR and issued the Phase 4b FEIS in October 2010.

**Project Status**
Construction of the Natomas Project began with Phase 1 in 2007, Phase 2 construction started in 2008, Phase 3 construction began in 2009, and Phase 4a construction started in 2011. As of January 2012, Phase 1 construction (improvements to Reaches 1-7 of the NCC) is complete. Phase 2 construction, which involves additional improvements to Reaches 1-7 of the NCC and Reaches 1-4B of the Sacramento River east levee, is largely complete with minor improvements and final grading and structural checks remaining. Construction of the levee improvements and irrigation and drainage infrastructure within Reaches 5A through 9B of the Sacramento River east levee also is nearly complete, with some minor pump station and canal improvements to be made. Phase 4a improvements to portions of the Sacramento River east levee (Reaches 10-12B) is approximately 50 percent complete. Phase 4b, which involves improvements to portions of the Sacramento River east levee (Reaches 16-20), American River north levee (Reaches 1-4), the NEMDC west levee, the PGCC west levee, and remaining portions of the NCC south levee, is anticipated to be constructed by USACE following Congressional authorization of federal participation.
Since certification and adoption of the previous environmental documents, SAFCA has continued to finalize the design and refine the features of the Natomas Project, resulting in modifications to the project description which are the subject of the SEIR. The proposed modifications are as follows:

► **American River Mile 0.5 Mitigation Site.** In order to address potential seepage concerns along a portion of the Sacramento River east levee in Reach 19A (also known as USACE Reach A) approximately 60,000 cubic yards [cy] of fill material would be extracted from River Mile (RM) 0.5 site along the north bank of the American River and used to construct a seepage berm along the landside toe of the Reach 19A levee. It should also be noted that the RM 0.5 site, which is located within Discovery Park east of I-5 would also serve as mitigation for waterside impacts associated with drainage outfall improvements constructed along the east levee of the Sacramento River in Phases 2, 3 and 4a of the NLIP. Upon removal of the fill material, the RM 0.5 site would be restored to provide improved fish and wildlife habitat, including increasing floodplain depth during spring and winter to provide additional habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon, delta smelt, and steelhead.

► **Additional Levee Height.** Within Reaches 1 through 11B along the Sacramento River east levee, the Project design calls for construction of an adjacent levee that is higher than the existing Garden Highway levee. In order to provide adequate freeboard, accommodate surface drainage, allow for pipes and other infrastructure to cross over the adjacent levee above the design water surface elevation, account for potential levee settlement, and provide an adequate driving surface on the crown of the adjacent levee, the design height of the adjacent levee exceeds the height of the existing Garden Highway levee by up to seven feet in several locations and by two to five feet in most locations. This is a greater height differential than identified in previous environmental documents.

► **Removal of Existing Pumps.** Previously, the NCMWC Bennett Pump Station and Northern Pump Station were contemplated for modification and/or replacement. Subsequent to the Phase 2 EIR, NCMWC obtained funding and is nearing completion of the Sankey diversion and Sankey Canal project under the American Basin Fish Screen Project. With these improvements in place, the Bennett and Northern pump stations are no longer necessary and would be removed instead of being replaced. Each site would be regraded and revegetated upon completion of station removal. The grading at the Bennett pump station would also involve a realignment of the Vestal Drain at the pump station site. The filling of the existing drain and construction of a new drain further away from the landside toe of the NCC south levee was evaluated as part of the Phase 4b DEIS/DEIR.

► **Modification of Design of Discharge Piping at Siddiqui Pump Station.** As a result of continued engineering refinements to the raising of the discharge piping at the Siddiqui private river pump within Reach 11A, the installation of new and additional support piles is necessary to raise the height of the discharge piping above the 200-year water surface elevation. The raising of pipes was previously contemplated as part of NLIP, but the installation of the piles was not evaluated previously as part of construction.

**POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT NEW ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

On the basis of preliminary evaluation, SAFCA has determined that the Project modifications that will be evaluated in the SEIR may have the following probable environmental effects described below. The SEIR will identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce significant environmental impacts, where appropriate.

► **Agriculture and Forestry Resources.** The SEIR will address the amount of forest land anticipated to be affected and assess whether the net change, as mitigated to the extent feasible, would constitute a significant impact. The 2007 Landside EIR and Phase 2 SEIR were prepared in 2007 and 2008, respectively, and did not address potential impacts to forestry resources because these documents were prepared before the 2010 amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines pertaining to forestry resources. Therefore, the analysis in the
SEIR analysis will address the project level and cumulative impacts to forestry resources of the Landside Project.

- **Air Quality.** The SEIR will address temporary, short-term construction-generated emissions of criteria air pollutants and fugitive dust associated with the Project modifications. The Project modifications that could affect air quality include the use of trucks on paved and unpaved haul roads and the use of heavy construction equipment during the extraction of fill and restoration at the American River Mile 0.5 mitigation site, construction of the seepage berm at Reach 19A, removal of existing pump stations, and installation of piles to raise discharge piping at the Siddiqui Pump Station.

- **Biological Resources.** The SEIR will address disturbance or loss of riparian vegetation, woodland vegetation, jurisdictional wetlands, or other sensitive natural communities or special-status species habitats as well as construction disturbance or take of special-status terrestrial species, associated with the Project modifications. The Project modifications that could affect biological resources include extraction of fill at the American River Mile 0.5 mitigation site and construction of the seepage berm at Sacramento River east levee Reach 19A. It should also be noted that the RM 0.5 site would serve as mitigation for impacts associated with drainage outfall improvements constructed along the east levee of the Sacramento River as part of Phases 2, 3 and 4a of the NLIP, and restoration would provide improved fish and wildlife habitat.

- **Cultural Resources.** The SEIR will address temporary and/or permanent disturbance of known or unknown historic or archaeological resources associated with the Project modifications. The Project modifications that could affect cultural resources include extraction of fill and restoration at American River Mile 0.5 mitigation site and construction of the seepage berm at RM19A.

- **Global Climate Change.** The SEIR will address the amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions anticipated to be generated and assess whether the net change, as mitigated to the extent feasible, would constitute a substantial contribution to the significant adverse cumulative impact on global climate change. The 2007 Landside EIR and Phase 2 SEIR were prepared in 2007 and 2008, respectively, and addressed potential increases in GHG emissions prior to the 2010 amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines necessitating the evaluation of impacts related to GHGs. Therefore, the SEIR analysis is required to address only the projected increase related to the Project modifications.

- **Noise.** The SEIR will address temporary and short-term increases in noise and vibration levels near sensitive receptors associated with the Project modifications. The Project modifications that could affect noise include increased truck travel along local roadways and proposed haul routes and the use of heavy construction equipment for extraction of fill and restoration at the American River Mile 0.5 mitigation site, construction of the seepage berm at Sacramento River east levee Reach 19A, removal of the two existing pump stations, and installation of piles to raise discharge piping at the Siddiqui Pump Station.

- **Transportation and Circulation.** The SEIR will address temporary increases in traffic on local roadways and disruption of emergency services and access associated with the Project modifications. The Project modifications that could affect traffic include potential increases in truck trips on local roadways from off-site hauling during Project construction.

- **Visual Resources.** The SEIR will address long-term changes in scenic views or visual character associated with the Project modifications. The Project modifications that could affect visual resources include construction of an adjacent levee that is higher than the existing Garden Highway levee within Reaches 1 through 11B along the Sacramento River east levee.

- **Water Quality.** The SEIR will address temporary and long-term effects on water quality as the Project modifications would result in the disturbance of approximately 1,000 linear feet of existing shoreline and could increase localized turbidity and levels of suspended sediment during and shortly after construction.
ISSUE AREAS REMOVED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

This SEIR focuses on the additional modifications to the Project that could result in potentially significant environmental impacts on the physical environment that were not analyzed in the 2007 Landside EIR, Phase 2 EIR, Phase 2 SEIR, Phase 3 EIR, Phase 4a EIR, Phase 4b EIR, and the addenda described above. Therefore, the following issue areas will not likely be addressed in the SEIR because they are not expected to be significantly affected by the Project modifications: land use, geology and soils, hydrology and hydraulics, paleontological resources, recreation, utilities and service systems, hazards and hazardous material, and cumulative and growth-inducing impacts.

SCOPING MEETING

A public scoping meeting will be held during the 30-day NOP public and agency review period, as discussed above under “Purpose of the Notice of Preparation.” The objectives of the meeting are to brief interested parties on the proposed Project modifications, and obtain the views of agency representatives and the public on the scope and content of the SEIR on the Project modifications and the potentially significant environmental impacts. The meeting will be held between 4 and 6 p.m. on July 10, 2012, at the South Natomas Community Center, 2921 Truxel Road, Sacramento, California.

PROVIDING SCOPING COMMENTS

Interested parties may provide written or oral comments on the desired content and scope of the environmental information in the SEIR at the scoping meeting or may provide written comments directly to SAFCA. Because of time limits mandated by state law, written comments must be provided to SAFCA at the earliest possible date, but no later than 5 p.m. on July 16, 2012. Agencies that will need to use the SEIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed project should provide SAFCA with the name of a contact person. Comments provided by e-mail should include the name and mailing address of the sender and should indicate "Comments on NLIP Supplemental EIR Notice of Preparation" in the subject line. Please send all written and/or e-mail comments to:

Mr. John Bassett, Director of Engineering
Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
1007 Seventh Street, 7th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814
Telephone: (916) 874-7606
Fax: (916) 874-8289
bassettj@saccounty.net