



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Governor's Office of Planning and Research/State Clearinghouse Unit, Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and Interested Parties

From: Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency

Date: October 2, 2008

Subject: **Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report on the Natomas Levee Improvement Program Landside Improvements Project Phase 2**

The Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) is preparing a subsequent environmental impact report (SEIR) for the Natomas Levee Improvement Program (NLIP) Landside Improvements Project (hereafter referred to as the Phase 2 Project). SAFCA certified the Phase 2 Project EIR (State Clearinghouse #2007062016) in November 2007 and is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the SEIR. In accordance with 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 allow the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), and responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties, with the opportunity to provide a meaningful response related to the scope and content of the SEIR, including any significant environmental issues, mitigation measures, or reasonable alternatives (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15082).

The SEIR will be subsequent to the Phase 2 Project EIR. A lead or responsible agency may choose to prepare an SEIR pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. In this instance, the provision that triggers the need for additional environmental review is State CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(a)(1): "Substantial changes are proposed in the project which require major revisions of the previous EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified environmental effects...." The proposed project modifications described herein meet the criteria for preparing an SEIR.

The Landside Improvements Project (the Phase 2 Project) is part of SAFCA's efforts to complete comprehensive flood control improvements to provide an urban-standard of "200-year" flood protection (i.e., protection from a flood of a magnitude that would happen once every 200 years) for the Sacramento area and is part of the NLIP evaluated in SAFCA's programmatic EIR on Local Funding Mechanisms for Comprehensive Flood Control Improvements for the Sacramento Area (Local Funding EIR) (State Clearinghouse #2006072098). Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152 on tiering, the Phase 2 Project EIR and the SEIR are "tiered" from the broader analyses provided in the Local Funding EIR.

The Landside Improvements Project and the overall NLIP are also subject to additional documentation pursuant to the Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). An environmental impact statement (EIS) pursuant to NEPA has been prepared and released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Sacramento District, for development and permitting of the Phase 2 Project. In addition, a joint EIS/EIR is being prepared for what is referred to as the Phase 3 Project. An EIS/EIR for the Phase 4 Project will be prepared in early 2009, when the site-specific details of the Phase 4 Project are available.

The project location, project description, and probable environmental effects that will be addressed in the SEIR are presented below. The SEIR will also include any additional, feasible mitigation measures that are necessary to avoid or substantially reduce the proposed project's significant adverse environmental effects.

A public scoping meeting will be held during the 30-day NOP public review period to provide public agencies and interested parties with an opportunity to provide comments on the scope and content of the SEIR. The scoping meeting will satisfy the meeting requirement for projects of statewide, regional, or areawide significance (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15082).

SCOPING MEETING

Date and Time: October 22, 2008, 4pm-7pm

Location: Teal Bend Golf Club
7200 Garden Highway
Sacramento 95837

Comments and suggestions are invited from all public agencies and interested parties. All comments must include the commenter's full name and address. Written comments or questions concerning the SEIR should be directed to SAFCA's project manager at the following address within 30 days from receipt of this notice, and no later than 5:00 p.m. on November 3, 2008:

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Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
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PURPOSE OF THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The purposes of this NOP are to:

1. provide background information, briefly describe the proposed project changes requiring the need for an SEIR, and summarize the probable potentially significant environmental effects associated with implementing these project changes and
2. solicit input by November 3, 2008, from public agencies and interested parties, regarding the scope and content of the SEIR, including alternatives to be considered, potentially significant environmental effects, and identification of responsible and/or trustee agencies.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

SAFCA's project purpose is to provide the Natomas Basin in Sacramento and Sutter Counties with at least 100-year flood protection as quickly as possible, while laying the groundwork to achieve at least 200-year flood protection over time. Improvements necessary to meet this purpose would substantially reduce the risk of an uncontrolled flood in the Natomas Basin that would result in a catastrophic loss of property (estimated at \$7 billion) and a prolonged interruption of commercial activity, including the operation of Sacramento International Airport (Airport) and closure of Interstate 5 (I-5), I-80, and State Route 99/70 (SR 99/70).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes the Phase 2 Project evaluated in the original 2007 Phase 2 Project EIR (November 2007) and the project modifications addressed in the SEIR. The project entails improving the levee system that protects the 53,000-acre Natomas Basin in northern Sacramento County and southern Sutter County, California, including a portion of the city of Sacramento. 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 1 shows the regional location, Exhibit 2).

Summary Description of Project Analyzed in 2007 Phase 2 Project EIR

The Phase 2 Project was described and analyzed in the 2007 Phase 2 Project EIR at a project level of detail, and the Phase 3 and 4 Projects were described and analyzed at a general, program level of detail. The Phase 3 and 4 Projects as described in the 2007 Phase 2 Project EIR are not being modified at this time and, therefore, will not be addressed in the SEIR. The Phase 3 and Phase 4 Projects will be evaluated in future project-specific EIRs. The general elements of the Phase 2 Project proposed and analyzed in the 2007 Phase 2 Project EIR are summarized as follows (a detailed project description is provided in the 2007 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 as follows:
 - Relocate a portion of the existing highline Elkhorn Main Irrigation Canal (Elkhorn Canal) north of the Natomas Central Mutual Water Company’s Elkhorn Reservoir. (“Highline” canals are water conveyances with bottoms roughly equal to the surrounding ground elevation.)
 - Construct a new canal designed to provide drainage and associated giant garter snake (GGS) habitat (the “GGS/Drainage Canal”) between the North Drainage Canal and the Elkhorn Reservoir to improve associated GGS habitat. (These features are intended to offset project impacts on GGS canal and ditch habitat.)
 - Remove a deep culvert at the location of Reclamation District (RD) 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.

Description of Proposed Changes to the Phase 2 Project Description

Since certification of the Phase 2 Project EIR in November 2007, SAFCA has continued to design and refine the features of the proposed Phase 2 Project, resulting in changes to the project description, as described below:

Borrow Sites and Haul Routes

- ▶ Three potential borrow sites—the Vestal, Spangler, and Nestor properties—have been removed from consideration. Two new borrow sites have been added as potential sources of soil material for work on the Sacramento River east levee (Reaches 1 through 4B):
 - **The Sutter Pointe borrow site.** Located at the southwest corner of Sankey Road and SR 99/70, this 817-acre private property is currently in rice cultivation. After the removal of borrow material, the land would be returned to rice production.
 - **Dunmore (formerly known as Stone) borrow site.** Located north of Elverta Road, east of Lone Tree Road, and west of SR 99/70, this 160-acre property is owned by SAFCA and is currently in rice production. It could be excavated for borrow material for the Sacramento River east levee, reclaimed, and returned to rice production.
- ▶ The Brookfield borrow site has been switched from potential to preferred for construction of the NCC improvements, whereas the RD 1001 borrow site has been retained as a backup site.
- ▶ The North Airport Bufferlands have been designated as a preferred borrow site for the Phase 2 Project construction along the Sacramento River east levee. It has been divided into six separate sites: Grassland Sites 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. This division was made to assist planning and engineering for specific reclamation and postproject land use targets. The division also provides flexibility for assigning borrow material to different phases of work along the Sacramento River east levee to avoid conflict between construction crews that may be working on different phases at the same time. Grassland Sites 1 and 2 are planned to be used for Phase 2 Project work:
 - **Grassland Site 1:** Grassland Site 1 is approximately 156 acres bordered on the west by the North Drainage Canal and on the south by the Pullman Irrigation Canal. Prichard Lake Road forms the boundary between Grassland Sites 1 and 2. The western half of Grassland Site 1 is located on Sacramento County Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 201-0010-015, and the southern half is located on Sacramento County APN 201-0020-018. Grassland Site 1 would be sloped downward toward a shallow drainage ditch along the western edge of the excavation limits. The drainage ditch would be sloped to the south and to the north, converging at a field drain near the southwest corner of the excavation limits. The field drain would connect the drainage ditch to the North Drainage Canal. The overall site is designed with a finish grade at a standard irrigation ground slope, which would also provide for efficient stormwater runoff. The existing drainage ditch that bisects Grassland Site 1 would be relocated to the eastern edge of the site and would flow south through a gate into the Pullman Irrigation Canal.
 - **Grassland Site 2:** Grassland Site 2 is approximately 175 acres south of Prichard Lake Road, east of the Airport Mitigation Site, north of the Central Main Flume, and west of Powerline Road. The northern half of Grassland Site 2 is located on Sacramento County APN 201-0010-015, and the southern half is located on Sacramento County APN 201-0130-032. An underground telephone line runs along the east side of Grassland Site 2, and an overhead electrical line runs along the north side of the site. These utility facilities would not be affected by the proposed grading activities.
- ▶ Sankey Road, Pacific Avenue, and Powerline Road have been eliminated as haul routes. The haul route on West Elverta Road has been extended eastward approximately 1 mile to provide access to and from the Dunmore borrow site.

- ▶ The amount of borrow soil needed for the project has increased, as detailed below.
- ▶ Most truck hauling would be rerouted to off-road haul routes of the Sacramento River east levee (Reaches 1–4B).

Levee Design, Seepage Remediation, and Drainage

- ▶ A limited portion of the NCC east of SR 99/70 would be modified through the installation of a partial waterside levee raise so as to limit the extent of the landside footprint of the project and reduce the need to relocate Howsley Road. An analysis of the hydraulic effects of this modification indicated that it would not diminish the NCC's conveyance capacity.
- ▶ The width of the seepage berm located between Sacramento River east levee Stations 57+00 and 85+00 would be extended from 100 feet to 300 feet. This modification would extend the feature farther eastward into the adjacent agricultural cropland so as to more effectively contain underseepage through a relatively shallow but lengthy layer of levee foundation sand and gravel material.
- ▶ In Reaches 1 and 2 of the NCC, in addition to being raised, the south levee would be widened to the land side to shift the levee prism away from the canal to reduce the need to remove waterside vegetation. The previous design would have potentially required a greater amount of vegetation removal in conformance with USACE design criteria. This design modification requires an increase in imported soil borrow of 285,000 cubic yards, from 400,000 to 685,000 cubic yards.
- ▶ The cutoff wall portion of the NCC south levee design has also been modified. It is now assumed that none of the excavated material would be suitable for the Soil-Bentonite (SB) mix, compared with the previous assumption that 25% of the excavated material would be suitable. Therefore, 100% of the soil material for the cutoff wall would have to be imported. The removal of the top portion of the levee required to install the cutoff wall has been increased from one-third of the levee height to one-half of the levee height. The removed soil is assumed to not be suitable for use in replacing the levee height. The combination of these two modifications has increased the imported soil borrow quantity requirement for construction of the cutoff wall from 42,000 cubic yards to approximately 195,000 cubic yards.
- ▶ The design of the Sacramento River adjacent setback levee has been modified to flatten the landside slope from an angle of 3H:1V to 5H:1V in Reaches 1, 4A, and 4B. The slopes in Reach 2 and Reach 3 would remain 3H:1V. The environmental impacts of the footprint of an adjacent setback levee with a slope of 5H:1V were analyzed in the 2007 EIR. These design changes have increased the requirement for soil borrow amounts by approximately 761,000 cubic yards, from 1,161,000 cubic yards to 1,922,000 cubic yards. Combined with the additions from the design modifications on the NCC, this increase in borrow material pushes the total borrow material required for the Phase 2 Project construction from approximately 1.6 million cubic yards to 2.8 million yards.
- ▶ In Reaches 2 and 3 of the Sacramento River east levee, seepage berms would be replaced by approximately 5,400 feet of cutoff walls up to 80 feet deep in the proposed adjacent setback levee. In Reach 1, approximately 4,800 feet of cutoff wall up to 35 feet deep would be constructed. In Reach 4B, approximately 1,500 feet of cutoff wall up to 80 feet deep would be constructed at RD 1000 Pumping Plant 2.
- ▶ The Sacramento River seepage berm footprint would be extended farther (500 feet as opposed to 200 feet) from the setback levee to accommodate a documented cultural resources site. No relief wells would be installed. Any necessary monitoring wells or trenches would be located outside of the extended berm footprint. The enlarged berm would provide a protective cap over much of an area known to contain sensitive cultural resources.

- ▶ In Reach 4B of the Sacramento River east levee, the 300-foot seepage berm has been extended through an area occupied by a small grove of trees that is approximately located between Station 214+00 and 218+00. This area occupies about 1.3 acres and is subject to deep and extensive underseepage. Approximately 11 relief wells were originally proposed to temporarily retain these trees near the seepage berm until trees planted in the woodland corridor had reached a sufficient level of maturity. However, further analysis raised concerns that this design might not offer consistent resistance to underseepage, particularly along the seams between the wells and the berms. Additional geotechnical data have indicated that temporary retention of these trees is not recommended.
- ▶ Additional design and construction details have been developed for surface drainage outlets across the Garden Highway. Between the Sacramento River adjacent setback levee and the Garden Highway pavement, new storm drainage collection facilities would be constructed to convey surface water beneath the Garden Highway and toward the Sacramento River. A surface collection system (drainage swale) would convey runoff water to drop inlets, and new pipe laterals would convey the water beneath the Garden Highway to new outfalls in the berm along the east bank of the Sacramento River. In most locations, the outfalls would be placed above the 2-year water surface elevation. The location of the cross culverts would be selected to minimize impacts on existing residential properties. These discharge pipes would require minor landscape improvements to prevent erosion and ensure that applicable water quality standards are met. Excavation of a trench across the Garden Highway would be required, and those segments where excavation occurs would have to be reconstructed. Single-lane traffic controls and through-traffic detours would be required during this phase of construction. This work would be conducted in two headings (work sites) simultaneously.
- ▶ The alignment of the proposed Elkhorn Canal-GGS/Drainage Canal in Reaches 4B through 6A would be modified to remove several bends. The total footprint of the Phase 2 Project canal work would remain the same.
- ▶ The NCC south levee would be widened on the land side to avoid removing waterside vegetation in conformance with USACE design criteria.
- ▶ The Sacramento River east levee improvement would be extended approximately 14,000 feet from Station 214+00 to approximately Station 228+00

Construction Phasing and Timing

- ▶ The limit of Phase 2 Project construction on the Sacramento River east levee has been shifted approximately 14,000 feet south within Reach 4B from station 214+00 to approximately station 228+00.
- ▶ The start of Phase 2 Project construction has been delayed 1 year, from May 2008 until at least May 2009. It is highly possible that the Phase 2 Project construction may overlap with the Phase 3 Project construction during 2009.
- ▶ To complete construction of cutoff walls before the flood season while providing sufficient drying and curing time to ensure high-quality cutoff walls, SAFCA may conduct cutoff wall construction on a 24-hours-per-day, 7-days-per-week basis.

Land Use and Habitat

- ▶ As noted above, the existing conditions at the Airport North Bufferlands borrow sites changed from "active rice cultivation," which existed at the time the NOP for the Phase 2 Project EIR was issued, to "fallow field" because the agricultural leases for these lands have expired. To comply with Federal Aviation Administration requirements, SCAS has indicated that it will not be bringing these lands back into rice production.
- ▶ SAFCA no longer proposes to create managed marsh on 118 acres of the Airport North Bufferlands.

- ▶ The Novak property at Powerline Road and the Sacramento River east levee would be used for mitigation for loss of field crops.

POTENTIALLY NEW SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The SEIR will evaluate any new direct or indirect significant environmental effects of the proposed project modifications. The SEIR also will evaluate the cumulative effects of the proposed project modifications when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and probable future projects, including other SAFCA projects. Consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15163, the environmental analysis in the SEIR will be subsequent the 2007 Phase 2 Project EIR. The SEIR will incorporate by reference general discussions from the 2007 Phase 2 Project EIR and will focus on the project changes and new potentially significant effects resulting from modifications to the 2007 EIR's project description.

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

- ▶ **Agriculture.** The SEIR will address conversion of farmland to temporary and permanent nonagricultural use. Because of the change in status of the Airport land from rice production to fallow, the total acreage of this impact may decline.
- ▶ **Air Quality.** The SEIR will address temporary increases in pollutant emissions associated with construction activities. The changes to the project description that could affect air quality include cutoff wall construction and the potential for the Phase 2 and Phase 3 Project construction to occur simultaneously. The potential for increases in emissions and dust will be evaluated in the SEIR.
- ▶ **Noise and Vibration.** The SEIR will address temporary increases in noise and vibration levels near sensitive receptors during construction. The changes to the project description that could affect noise include cutoff wall construction and the potential for the Phase 2 and Phase 3 Project construction to occur simultaneously. The resulting increase in noise will be evaluated in the SEIR.
- ▶ **Transportation and Circulation.** The SEIR will address temporary disruption of traffic circulation during construction. The changes to the project description that could affect traffic include cutoff wall construction and the potential for the Phase 2 and Phase 3 Project construction to occur simultaneously. The resulting increase in traffic will be evaluated in the SEIR.
- ▶ **Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.** The SEIR will address disturbance or loss of sensitive natural communities or special-status species habitats, as well as disturbance or take of special-status aquatic species, from the proposed project modifications.
- ▶ **Terrestrial Biological Resources.** The SEIR will address disturbance or loss of riparian vegetation, woodland vegetation, waters of the United States, other sensitive natural communities, or special-status species habitats, as well as construction disturbance or take of special-status terrestrial species from the proposed project modifications. Impacts on the Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan and two of its covered species, the Swainson's hawk and GGS, will be addressed.
- ▶ **Cultural Resources.** The SEIR will address disturbance of known and unknown historic or archaeological resources from the proposed project modifications. Portions of the Phase 2 footprint have been specifically redesigned to avoid impacts on known sensitive cultural resources.
- ▶ **Water Resources.** The SEIR will address temporary effects on water quality during construction and long-term effects on groundwater associated with the cutoff walls and water quality issues associated with stormwater outfall locations.

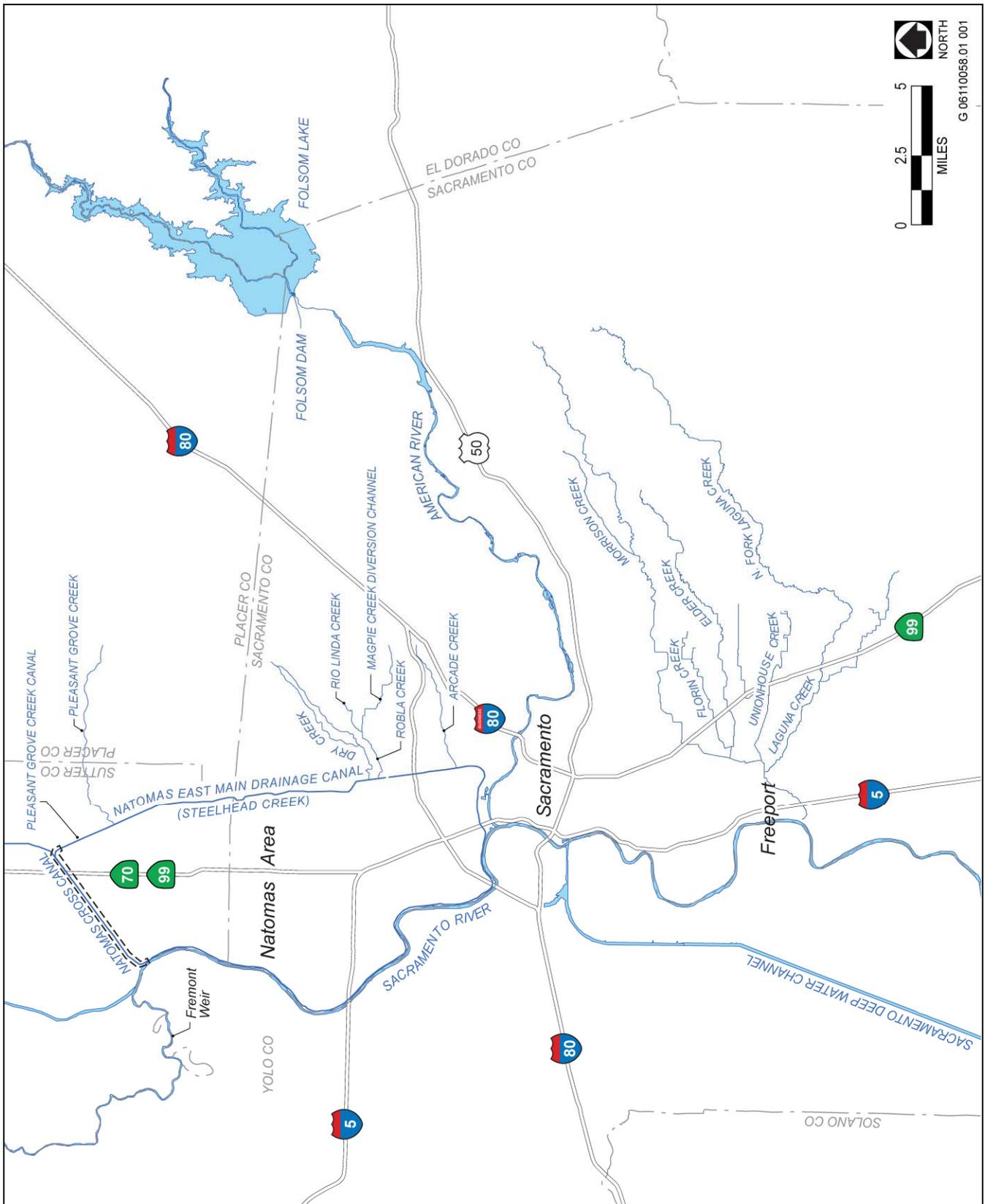
- ▶ **Geology and Soils.** The SEIR will address effects on geology and soils from the proposed project modifications.
- ▶ **Hazards.** The potential for encountering contaminated soils or groundwater at the new borrow sites will be addressed in the SEIR. Potential changes to aviation hazards attributable to potential bird strikes because of changes to the Airport Bufferlands, and/or public health and safety because of changes to the haul routes, will be analyzed in the SEIR.
- ▶ **Cumulative Impacts.** The SEIR will address cumulative impacts associated with any increase or decrease in the severity of impacts as a result of proposed project modifications.
- ▶ **Significant and Unavoidable Impacts/Significant Irreversible Impacts.** The SEIR will address the extent to which changes in the severity of impacts triggers the unavoidable or irreversible thresholds, as a result of the proposed project modifications.

ISSUE AREAS REMOVED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

The SEIR will likely not address the following issue areas because they are not expected to be significantly affected by the proposed project modifications. These issue areas were analyzed in detail in the 2007 Phase 2 Project EIR, and all effects were found to be less than significant: paleontological resources, visual resources, recreation, utilities and service systems, and growth-inducing effects.

SUBMISSION OF COMMENTS

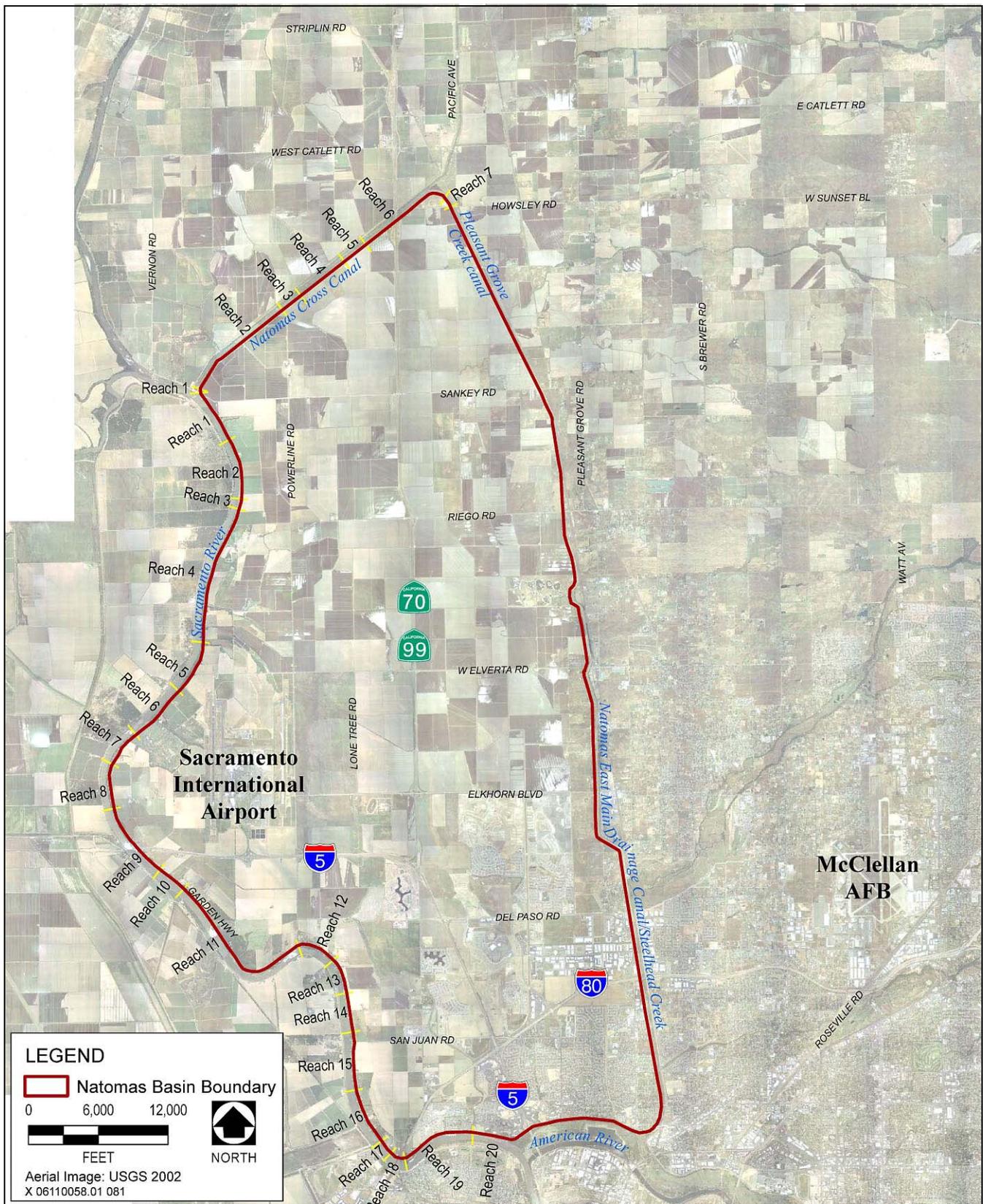
To ensure that the full range of project issues of interest to responsible and trustee agencies and the public are addressed, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Written comments or questions concerning the SEIR should be directed to John Bassett at the address provided on the first page of this NOP **no later than 5 p.m. on November 3, 2008**. Please provide the name and address of a contact person who should receive future correspondence regarding the project.



Source: Casil; EDAW 2006

Project Area for Comprehensive Sacramento Area Flood Protection

Exhibit 1



Natomas Levee Improvement Program Area

Exhibit 2