



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Agencies and Interested Parties
From: Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
Date: May 15, 2014
Subject: **Notice of Preparation of a Combined Program Environmental Impact Report and Project Environmental Impact Report for the North Sacramento Streams, Sacramento River East Levee, Lower American River and Related Flood Improvements Project and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting at Sacramento County Board of Supervisors**
Date: May 28, 2014, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Notice is hereby given that the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) will prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the North Sacramento Streams, Sacramento River East Levee, Lower American River, and Related Flood Improvements Project (“Project”) and will hold a public scoping meeting to receive comments on the scope of the EIR, as described below. SAFCA will act as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in preparing the EIR for the Project. SAFCA requests the views of each responsible and trustee agency, and each federal agency involved in approving or funding the Project, as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency’s statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. SAFCA also accepts comments from members of the public as to the scope and content of the EIR, as well as suggested alternative projects that may be considered in the EIR.

INTRODUCTION

CEQA specifies that a public agency must prepare an EIR on any project that it proposes to carry out or approve that may have a significant direct or indirect effect on the physical environment.

SAFCA is proposing to implement flood system improvements to reduce flood risk along the Sacramento River, American River, Natomas East Main Drainage Canal (NEMDC), and Arcade Creek. SAFCA has determined that these flood control improvements may result in significant effects on the physical environment. Therefore, acting as the lead agency for CEQA compliance, SAFCA will prepare an EIR that evaluates the significant environmental effects of these flood risk reduction projects. The Project is divided into three categories of components depending on when the components would be implemented and in what locations, for purposes of environmental review. The proposed project components, that would be constructed before 2020 (“Category 1 components”) will be analyzed at a project-level. The longer-term improvements (“Category 2 and 3 components”), which are expected to be implemented between 2020 and 2050, will be evaluated at a program-level.

PURPOSE OF THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The purposes of this notice are to:

1. Provide background information; describe the range of flood control improvements that may be implemented, including proposed North Sacramento Streams improvements and Sacramento River East Levee improvements; and summarize the probable environmental effects of these proposals.
2. This scoping meeting will be held on May 28, 2014, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the Sacramento County Administration Building, 700 H Street, Hearing Room #1, Sacramento, CA 95814.
3. Solicit input by June 15, 2014, from public agencies, and interested organizations and individuals, about the content and scope of the EIR, including alternatives to be considered, potentially significant environmental effects on the physical environment to be addressed, and identification of responsible and/or trustee agencies.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

In August 2012, SAFCA initiated a civil engineering investigation to determine whether the levees protecting Sacramento along the Lower American and Sacramento Rivers and their tributaries (outside of the Natomas Basin) are adequate to meet the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the State of California's (State) recently adopted Urban Levee Design Criteria (ULDC).

In August 2013, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) withdrew its levee accreditation for these levee systems which include the American River North and South Levees, the NEMDC East Levee, the Arcade Creek North and South Levees downstream of Marysville Boulevard, the Sacramento River East Levee from the mouth of the American River to Freeport, and the Beach Lake Levee. As a result, SAFCA is evaluating the actions that would be needed to re-accredit these levee systems. SAFCA's civil engineering team has completed the first phase of this evaluation and reached the following conclusions:

- ▶ Up to eight (8) miles of the Sacramento River East Levee, including the Pocket and Little Pocket areas, may require significant work to meet embankment and foundation stability requirements;
- ▶ Approximately four (4) miles of the levees along the NEMDC East Levee and Arcade Creek North and South Levees may require significant work to meet embankment and foundation stability requirements;
- ▶ Approximately 3,000 feet of erosion work at several sites on the Sacramento River East Levee may require repair or monitoring; and
- ▶ Other issues including high hazard/unacceptable encroachments affect all levee segments to varying degrees and must be addressed to allow accreditation of these levee segments.

Using the results of the investigation, SAFCA and its engineering team are determining the corrective actions that may be needed to bring the area levees up to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and State standards.

The Levee Accreditation Program is a SAFCA-led effort that will allow floodplain managers at the City of Sacramento and the County of Sacramento to demonstrate that the levees protecting the urban area of Sacramento meet FEMA and State standards. Improvements that may be carried out under this accreditation program are a subset of the improvements being separately evaluated by USACE as part of the American River Common Features General Reevaluation Report (GRR).

SAFCA anticipates that it will likely take several years for USACE to receive congressional authorization for construction of the improvements identified in the GRR, and it could take additional time following federal authorization before actual construction is initiated and completed. A long delay in implementing the improvements necessary for levee accreditation could make it difficult to maintain the current FEMA mapping status of the area. In order to maintain the current FEMA mapping status and provide adequate flood protection to the residents of the City and County of Sacramento in a timely manner, SAFCA is proposing to construct levee improvements ahead of federal authorization. This approach is consistent with past SAFCA actions to implement flood protection measures in a timely manner.

SAFCA will use the EIR as a basis for implementing the levee accreditation program. The EIR will be closely coordinated with the USACE GRR. These reports could overlap in time and subject matter with the GRR focusing broadly on the long-term federal and State commitments needed to upgrade the levee systems protecting the Sacramento area, and the EIR focusing on the work needed in the near term to meet FEMA and State criteria for levee accreditation.

The EIR will include analysis of three categories of improvements. These three categories are described in more detail below, and illustrated in Exhibit 1.

To make it possible for a first phase of levee improvement activity to proceed in 2015/2016 (assuming receipt of all environmental clearances, authorizations, and permits), the EIR will include a project-specific analysis of the environmental effects of implementing “Category 1” project components. These components would be constructed in the next 5 – 6 years. These components are illustrated in Exhibit 2 and include:

- ▶ Approximately 12 miles of seepage cutoff walls along portions of the Sacramento River East Levee, the Arcade Creek North and South Levees, and the NEMDC East Levee;
- ▶ Constructing bank protection improvements along several reaches of the Sacramento River East Levee totaling approximately 3,000 feet of bank protection improvements;
- ▶ Installing relief wells and associated drainage infrastructure in several reaches of the Sacramento River East Levee, NEMDC East Levee, and Arcade Creek North Levee;
- ▶ Constructing landside berms along one or two reaches of the Sacramento River East Levee;
- ▶ Constructing toe drains for other drainage features on the landside toe of the levee along limited reaches of the Sacramento River East Levee;
- ▶ Removing “high-hazard” level vegetation and encroachments;
- ▶ Removing vegetation and encroachments in the construction footprint;

- ▶ Implementing other smaller improvements (including modification of utility encroachments); and
- ▶ Developing and implementing a conservation strategy that presents SAFCA’s overall approach to satisfying environmental and regulatory mitigation requirements for Category 1 project components through on- and off-site mitigation.

The EIR will also include a program-level analysis of “Category 2” and “Category 3” project components. These program-level components would be constructed between 2020 and 2035. The Category 2 and Category 3 project components will require further CEQA review when more site-specific engineering detail is available to analyze the project components at the project-level. However, as long as the project components are within the scope of the programmatic elements of this program EIR, SAFCA plans to tier the follow-on CEQA documents from this EIR.

Category 2 components proposed for construction between 2020 and 2035 include:

- ▶ Placing additional bank and levee erosion protection along the Lower American and Sacramento Rivers; and
- ▶ Increasing the capacity of the Yolo Bypass to accept higher flow volumes diverted from the Sacramento River channel.

The Yolo Bypass work could entail widening the Sacramento Weir and realigning the north levee of the Sacramento Bypass; improving existing levees in the lower portion of the Yolo Bypass; providing increased flood protection to the City of Rio Vista; relocating/extending the Sierra Northern Railroad track and trestle located in the Yolo Bypass; and abandoning an old landfill in the lower Elkhorn Basin at the juncture of the Yolo and Sacramento Bypass levees.

Category 3 components proposed for construction between 2020 and 2050 include:

- ▶ Addressing low-risk vegetation and encroachment issues that have the potential to diminish the reliability of levee systems over time; and
- ▶ Implementing a range of measures to improve levee monitoring capabilities along the landside of project area levees.

The program-level analysis will also address alternatives for achieving ULDC 200-year standards along the east side of the Natomas Basin. Related levee improvement work was considered as part of the Natomas Levee Improvement Program (NLIP) and covered in prior NLIP environmental documents.¹ However, this EIR will address possible actions including:

- ▶ Addition of structural protection to the landside levee slope (e.g., widening the levee slope and engineering the slope to be an erosion-resistant surface) to avoid increasing freeboard and protect against overtopping failure. No land acquisition or vegetation removal beyond what was identified in earlier NLIP environmental documents is anticipated.

¹ A more detailed listing of the NEPA and CEQA documents for NLIP Phases 2 – 4B can be found at: http://www.safca.org/Programs_Natomas.html

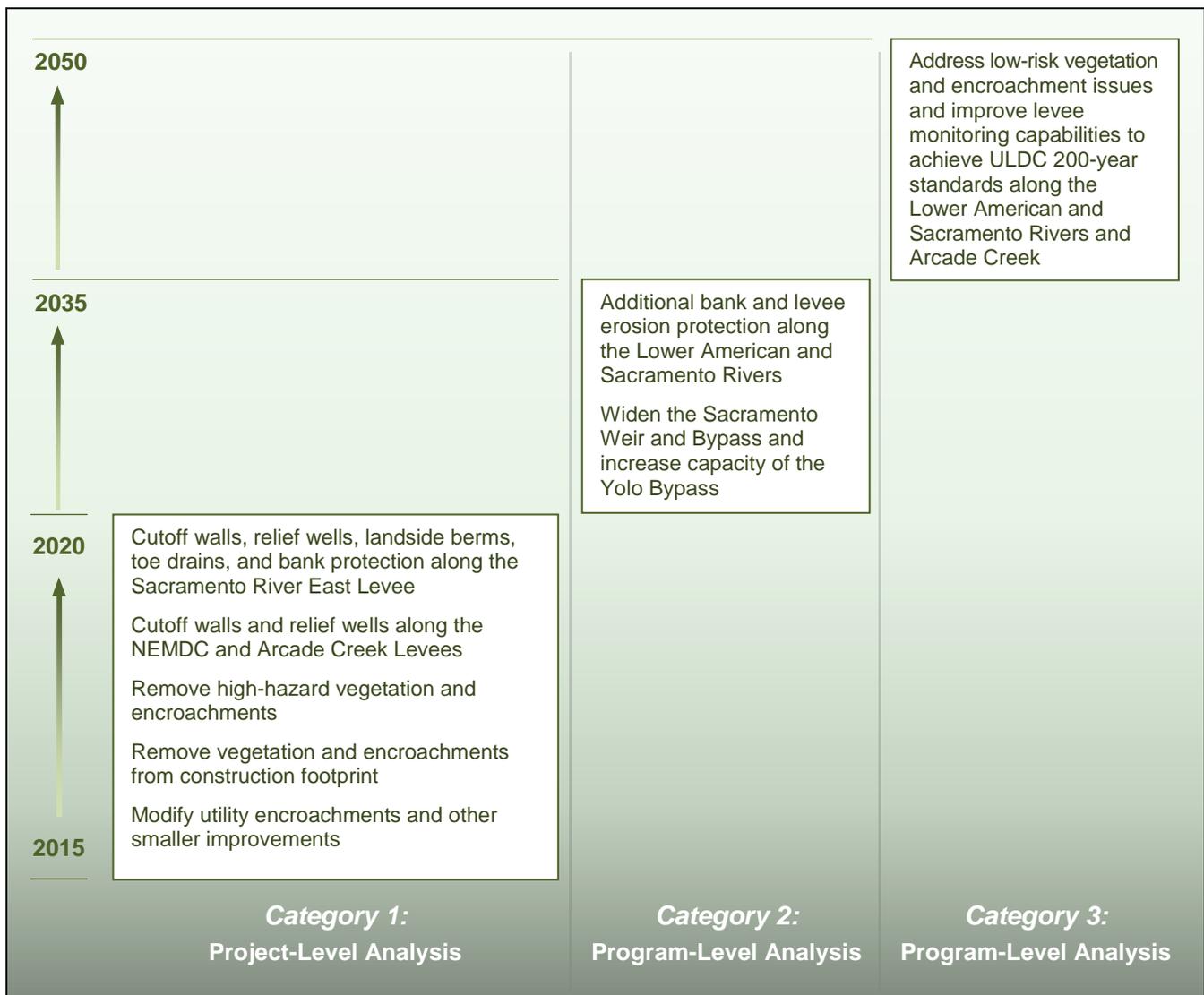


Exhibit 1 **Timeline of Proposed Categories of Improvements and Level of Analysis**

- ▶ Construction of a spur levee on the north side of Sankey Road (extending east to high ground to prevent flows from crossing Sankey Road). This could alter flooding patterns in the Pleasant Grove area in south Sutter County by reducing flows entering the upper reach of the NEMDC south of Sankey Road.

Additionally, the EIR will contain an analysis of cumulative impacts due to the proposed actions in combination with closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects such as:

- ▶ Implementation of other general systemwide flood improvements;
- ▶ Constructing the final phase of the NLIP, which covers improvements to the Sacramento River East Levee Reaches 12-20, American River North Levee Reaches 1-4, and NEMDC West Levee (Sankey Road to Northgate Boulevard), Pleasant Grove Creek Canal West Levee, West Drainage Canal, Riverside Canal, Natomas Cross Canal South Levee, and various borrow sites within the Natomas Basin to support NLIP;
- ▶ Improving Folsom Dam; and

- ▶ Constructing/improving West Sacramento's perimeter levee system, including the levees protecting the Port of West Sacramento and its Deep Water Ship Channel.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The project-level EIR analysis will focus on examining the potential environmental impacts associated with the improvements implemented as part of the near-term levee accreditation program and identifying the measures that can be implemented to minimize or avoid such impacts.

The program-level EIR analysis will describe the significant environmental effects of the proposed longer-term improvements to the flood control system. The EIR will also evaluate growth-inducing and cumulative effects of the proposed flood system improvements when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

On the basis of preliminary evaluations, SAFCA has determined that the proposed improvements could have the following potentially significant environmental effects:

- ▶ **Aesthetics.** Temporary, short-term, and long-term changes in scenic views or visual character of project sites.
- ▶ **Agriculture and Forest Resources.** Temporary and long-term conversion of farmland for weir/bypass improvements, use of borrow material, or creation of habitat.
- ▶ **Air Quality.** Temporary and short-term increases in pollutant emissions associated with construction activities.
- ▶ **Cultural Resources.** Potential disturbance or destruction of known or unknown historic or archaeological resources during construction.
- ▶ **Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.** Temporary and short-term construction effects on special-status fish species or their habitats; modification of habitat at erosion treatment sites.
- ▶ **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** Temporary and short-term increases in greenhouse gas emissions associated with construction activities.
- ▶ **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Potential introduction of contaminants into water courses as a result of construction activities. Potential hazards related to location on a Cortese-listed site and closed landfill site.
- ▶ **Noise.** Temporary and short-term increases in noise levels near sensitive receptors during construction.
- ▶ **Paleontological Resources.** Potential disturbance or destruction of previously undiscovered fossils.
- ▶ **Recreation.** Temporary and short-term disturbance of land- and water-based recreational activities in areas adjacent to construction sites.
- ▶ **Terrestrial Biological Resources.** Disturbance or loss of riparian vegetation, jurisdictional wetlands, or other sensitive natural communities or special-status species habitats; construction disturbance or take of special-status terrestrial species.

- ▶ **Transportation and Circulation.** Temporary and short-term disruption of traffic circulation or emergency access during construction and traffic effects of haul routes, including haul routes via barge.
- ▶ **Utilities and Service Systems.** Potential disruption of service during construction and need for the relocation of utilities within the project footprint.
- ▶ **Water Resources and River Geomorphology.** Temporary and short-term effects on water quality during construction; long-term local drainage effects; downstream hydraulic effects on the Sacramento River.

SCOPING MEETING

A Public Scoping meeting will be held, as discussed above under “Purpose of the Notice of Preparation.” The objective of the meeting is to brief interested parties about the proposed project, and obtain the views of agency representatives and the public on the scope and content of the Draft EIR, including the alternatives to be addressed and potentially significant environmental impacts.

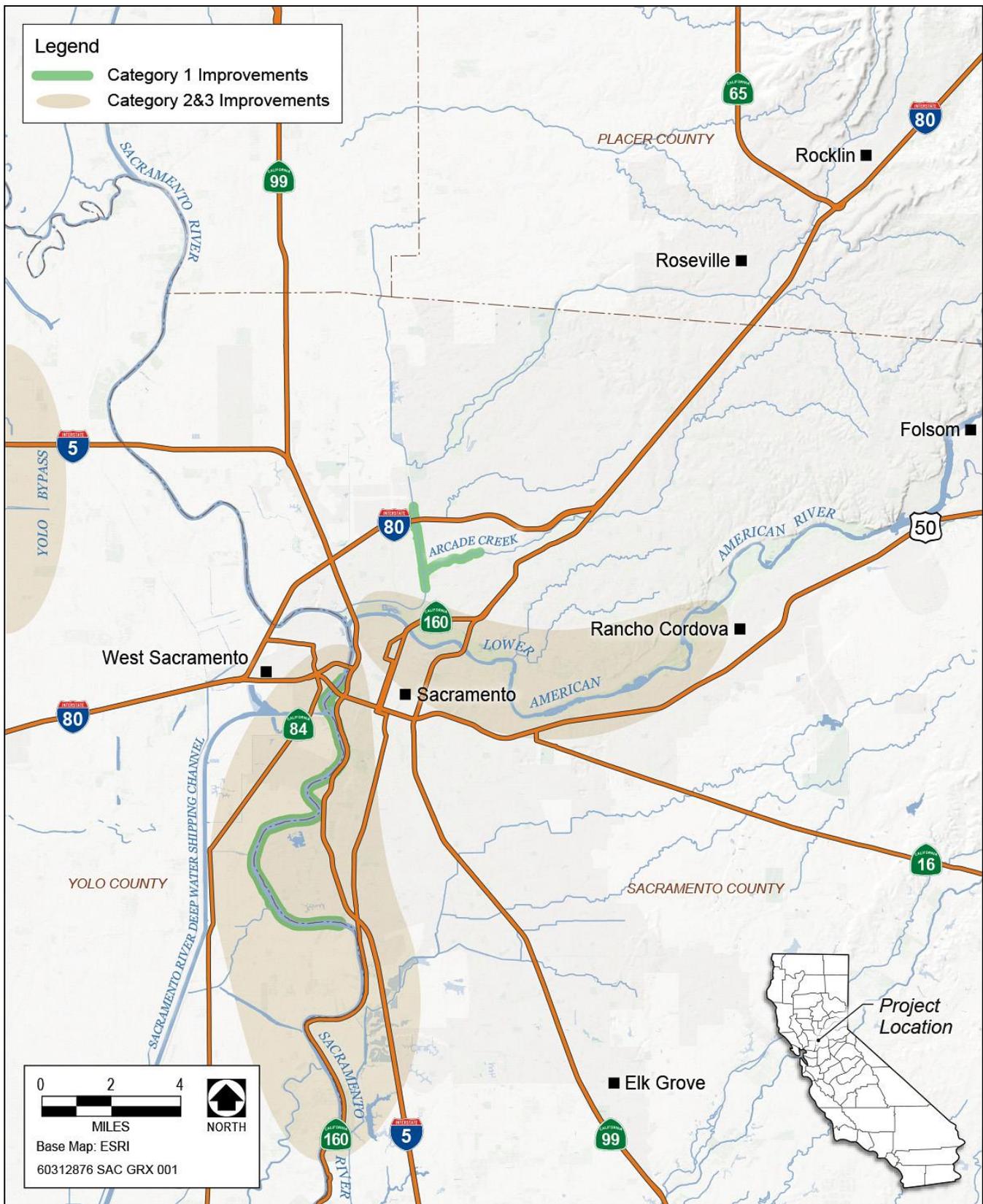
PROVIDING SCOPING COMMENTS

Interested parties may provide written or oral comments on the proposed content and scope of the environmental information in the EIR at the scoping meeting or 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 June 15, 2014.** Agencies that will use the EIR when considering permits or other discretionary approvals for the proposed project should provide SAFCA with the name of a contact person. Comments provided by email should include the name and address of the sender and include "Comments on Notice of Preparation of a Combined Program and Project Environmental Impact Report - Sacramento" in the subject line. Please send all written comments to:

Mr. Pete Ghelfi, Director of Engineering
Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
1007 7th Street, 7th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814
Telephone: (916) 874-7606
Fax: (916) 874-8289
Email: ghelfip@saccounty.net

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

SAFCA plans to prepare a Draft EIR, which will involve additional engineering and project analysis, and to release the Draft EIR for public and agency comment in the fall of 2014. Following the release of the Draft EIR, SAFCA will hold public meeting(s) during the 45-day comment period. This will allow the public and interested agencies to learn more about the significant environmental effects of the proposed activities. SAFCA will receive comments on the Draft EIR from agencies and the public during the 45-day comment period. SAFCA will then provide written responses to comments on environmental issues, and text changes to the Draft EIR as necessary, in the Final EIR. The Final EIR will be published, and the SAFCA Board of Directors will consider the Final EIR (including the Draft EIR and responses to comments) for certification prior to approving the proposed project. This matter will likely be presented to the Board in February 2015.



Source: Compiled by AECOM in 2014

Exhibit 2 Project Area for Proposed North Sacramento Streams and Sacramento River East Levee Improvements