

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In January of 2010, the Placer County Planning Commission (Commission) approved a Conditional Use Permit (CUP No. 20090391) and certified an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (State Clearinghouse No. 2007062084) which added the property formerly known as the Spears Ranch (979 acres) to the 221-acre portion of Hidden Falls Regional Park (HFRP) already open to the public. As part of the HFRP approvals, Placer County adopted Findings of Fact that indicated the EIR reflected the independent judgment of the County and that the Planning Commission reviewed the Final EIR (FEIR) and determined the FEIR considered a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives, sufficient to foster informed decision making, public participation and a reasoned choice.

The certified FEIR concluded all impacts associated with activities permitted under CUP No. 20090391 could be mitigated to less than significant levels except “Long-Term Changes in Visual Resources Associated with the Improvements to Garden Bar Road,” identified as significant and unavoidable. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 7-1: Revegetate and Restore All Disturbed Areas to Minimize Visual Quality Impacts, and 12-8: Protect Oak Woodland Habitat would reduce this impact; however, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable because no other screening options along Garden Bar Road were available and revegetation of the disturbed areas would not reduce visual impacts in the short-term. Included in the County’s Findings of Fact was a Statement of Overriding Consideration describing the social, economic, and recreational benefits offered to County residents, which were found to outweigh the impacts.

Presently, the County is considering expansion of the HFRP trail network system onto conservation lands either owned by Placer Land Trust (PLT) or held in a Conservation Easement by PLT, with associated trail easements held by the County, and onto land owned by the County or where the County has easements. The project would increase the regional trail network and would provide new access and parking areas for the public. The approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP No. 20090391) would be modified to account for the expansion.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS DRAFT SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

1.2.1 TYPE OF EIR

Once an EIR has been certified for a project, no new EIR need be prepared unless the project requires a discretionary action and a change in project or circumstances occurs that could:

- ▶ Add new significant impacts or
- ▶ Substantially increase the severity of previously identified significant impacts, or
- ▶ Add new information of substantial importance

If no new discretionary approvals required by lead or responsible agencies and conditions above occur, there is no need to conduct additional CEQA analysis. The proposed expansion and modification to existing CUP No. 20090391 were determined to be substantial new information that could increase impacts from those listed in the 2010 HFRP certified EIR.

Consequently, the County has elected to prepare this draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) on the proposed HFRP Trails Expansion Project (Proposed Project, or Project). It has been prepared for the Placer County (County) Department of Public Works Parks Division in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.), the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15000 et seq.), and the Placer County Environmental Review Ordinance found in Chapter 18 of the County Code.

The focus of this SEIR is to determine whether the Project and associated improvements would result in impacts not discussed in the prior Certified EIR, substantially increase the effect compared to that discussed in the prior Certified EIR or would be consistent with the findings of the prior Certified EIR. This SEIR will also identify additional alternatives to address the significant impacts of the proposed HFRP trail expansion. Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, the analysis contained in the SEIR is limited to the incremental changes associated with construction and operation of the proposed trail expansion when evaluating whether the modifications to the original CUP would result in a significant impact. The existing HFRP is assumed to be part of the existing conditions. As required by CEQA, the County will consider the information presented in the SEIR when determining whether to approve, deny, or modify the proposed project.

1.3 SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

1.3.1 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Once a decision is made to prepare a SEIR, the lead agency must prepare a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform all responsible and trustee agencies (agencies) and interested persons that a SEIR will be prepared (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082). The purpose of the NOP is to provide stakeholders with sufficient information describing the proposed project and its potential environmental effects to enable agencies and the public to make a meaningful response related to the scope and content of information to be included in the SEIR.

The County originally issued a NOP for the proposed Project in January of 2017. Subsequent to the release of the January 2017 NOP, the County approved the terms of a purchase and sale agreement that could lead to the acquisition of additional land with direct access to the existing trail network and provide additional opportunities for parking. Because of the changes in the proposed HFRP expansion areas from those identified in the January 2017 NOP, the County elected to release a Revised NOP in June 2018. The County also held two public scoping meetings on February 21, 2017 and June 14, 2018 for the proposed project to receive verbal comments on the project and environmental review process.

A determination of which impacts would be potentially significant was made for this project based on a comparison of the information presented in the Certified EIR prepared for the HFRP project, comments received as part of the public review process for the proposed expansion, and additional research and analysis of relevant project data by environmental professionals. The County has determined that the proposed HFRP Trails Expansion Project has the potential to result in environmental impacts on the following resources, which are addressed in detail in this SEIR:

- ▶ Land Use and Agricultural Resources
- ▶ Soils, Geology, and Seismicity
- ▶ Cultural Resources, including Tribal Cultural Resources
- ▶ Visual Resources
- ▶ Transportation and Circulation
- ▶ Air Quality
- ▶ Noise
- ▶ Hydrology and Water Quality
- ▶ Biological Resources
- ▶ Public Services and Utilities
- ▶ Hazardous Materials and Hazards
- ▶ Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- ▶ Wildfire

The analysis in this SEIR assumes the application of mitigation measures adopted by the 2010 Certified HFRP when making determinations regarding the level of significance for impacts of the current Project. Where additional mitigation was needed, these new measures have been identified and the adopted mitigation monitoring and reporting program (MMRP) updated to incorporate this new information. Consequently, the MMRP prepared for the current Project will supersede the 2010 HFRP MMRP adopted by the County in 2010.

1.3.2 ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This SEIR is organized as follows:

Chapter 1.0, “Introduction,” summarizes the purpose, need, objectives, and scope of the proposed project; describes the purpose of the SEIR and provides an overview of the environmental review process for the project; discusses agency roles and authorities; and provides details on project scoping.

Chapter 2.0, “Executive Summary,” summarizes the conclusions of the environmental analysis and identifies mitigation measures where needed to address significant impacts.

Chapter 3.0, “Project Description,” describes the project’s location; discusses the project’s background, history, and objectives; and explains the components and features of the proposed project.

Chapters 4.0 through 16.0 provide impact evaluations for the respective resource areas identified in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines:

- ▶ Chapter 4.0, “Land Use and Agricultural Resources”
- ▶ Chapter 5.0, “Soils, Geology, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources”
- ▶ Chapter 6.0, “Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources”
- ▶ Chapter 7.0, “Visual Resources”
- ▶ Chapter 8.0, “Transportation and Circulation”
- ▶ Chapter 9.0, “Air Quality”
- ▶ Chapter 10.0, “Noise”
- ▶ Chapter 11.0, “Hydrology and Water Quality”
- ▶ Chapter 12.0, “Biological Resources”

- ▶ Chapter 13.0, “Public Services and Utilities”
- ▶ Chapter 14.0, “Hazardous Materials and Hazards”
- ▶ Chapter 15.0, “Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy”
- ▶ Chapter 16.0, “Wildfire”

Each Chapter begins with a summary of the environmental findings of fact from the prior EIR and, where applicable, lists the mitigation measures previously adopted by the County.¹ The sections next present updates to the environmental and regulatory setting where necessary and evaluate the environmental impacts of the Proposed Project, focusing on how the HFRP Trail Expansion areas and the increased number of park users generated by the proposed project would or would not change the conclusions of the prior environmental review. Where the Proposed Project would result in a more severe impact than the corresponding project impact described in the prior, certified EIR, additional mitigation measures are provided to reduce the impact. Finally, a residual impact determination is provided for each impact, as applicable: either “consistent with the prior analysis in the Certified EIR”, or a “new impact not previously considered”.

Chapter 17.0, “Alternatives,” describes the alternatives considered and eliminated for the proposed project; alternatives selected for further analysis, and the evaluation of the environmental effects of those alternatives.

Chapter 18.0, “Other CEQA-Required Sections,” describes significant unavoidable effects on the environment; irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources; growth-inducing effects; and cumulative impacts.

Chapter 19.0, “List of Preparers,” lists individuals who participated in the preparation of this SEIR, presented according to organization and agency.

Chapter 20.0, “References and Persons Consulted,” lists the sources of information cited throughout this SEIR.

1.4 DEFINITION OF BASELINE

According to Section 15125 of the State CEQA Guidelines, baseline conditions are normally defined as the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project as they exist at the time that the NOP is published. A lead agency may also use permit limits as baseline only where an action modifies a prior project that had CEQA review and the facts support it (i.e., reaching the limit is not hypothetical). In the case of this SEIR, baseline condition assumes the HFRP is fully developed and operational. Therefore, the environmental setting described in the SEIR is directed toward conditions within the HFRP Trail Expansion Project Area.² This approach to the environmental setting is consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125 which states the lead agency should use the baseline that provides the most accurate picture practically possible of the project’s impacts, including conditions expected when the project becomes operational.

¹ Chapter 6.0, “Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources,” presents an expanded analysis that includes tribal cultural resources, reflecting the addition of this resource area to State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G since certification of the prior EIR. Similarly, Chapter 16.0 “Wildfire” has been added to this SEIR.

² The SEIR assumes the findings made by the County on the HFRP are in place and does not reopen the prior analysis. In-depth review of the HFRP approvals has already occurred, and the right to build is vested.

1.5 PUBLIC INPUT

1.5.1 EXISTING HFRP

In September 2004, a mitigated negative declaration was adopted for the Didion Ranch portion of HFRP to satisfy the requirements of CEQA. In 2007 the County began preparation of an EIR for CUP No. 20090391 to combine the Didion Ranch and Spears Ranch properties and permit construction and operation of an expanded public trail system and ancillary activities for HFRP. The County, in determining the scope and content of the previously certified FEIR, reviewed public comments raised during the 2007 environmental review process. Areas of concern raised during that process included:

- ▶ Traffic and safety along Garden Bar Road
- ▶ Increased risk of wildfire
- ▶ Public safety related to hunting

1.5.2 PROPOSED TRAILS EXPANSION PROJECT

On January 31, 2017 the County issued a NOP to inform public agencies and the public of its intention to prepare a SEIR covering the HFRP trails expansion and adoption of a revised CUP. In an effort to reach as many people in the area of the expansion location as possible, the County went beyond the normal protocol of notifying people within 300 feet of the affected properties, and instead, mailed the NOP to nearly 6,000 property owners and residents within the north Auburn area. A public scoping meeting was held on February 21, 2017 to receive comments on the project. A revised NOP was subsequently issued on June 4, 2018 to account for modifications to the project description to reflect the potential use of 50 acres located at 5345 Bell Road in Auburn (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 026-110-012 and 026-110-018) (the "Twilight Ride property") for additional trailhead parking (approximately 100 automobile and 40 horse trailer spaces), as well as potential horse-boarding. The County held a second public scoping and informational meeting on June 14, 2018, in Auburn, California. Areas of concern raised by the public during these two public scoping time periods included:

- ▶ Traffic and safety along local roads
- ▶ Potential increase in trespassing
- ▶ Potential for wildland fire
- ▶ Potential impacts to grazing land
- ▶ Potential impacts to wildlife and habitat
- ▶ Potential impacts to water resources

Scoping reports including the NOPs, summaries of oral and written comment received, and copies of all written comments received from both public scoping processes are included in Appendix A of this SEIR.

1.5.3 SUBSEQUENT EIR PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

This Draft SEIR is being distributed to agencies and individuals to ensure that interested parties have an opportunity to express their comments about the potential environmental effects of the proposed project, and to ensure that information pertinent to project approval is provided to agency decision-makers. This Draft SEIR is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 60 days. During this period, the general public, organizations, and agencies can submit comments to the Lead Agency on the Draft SEIR's accuracy and completeness. Release of the Draft SEIR marks the beginning of a 60-day public review period pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15105.

Comments on the Draft SEIR should be sent to the following address:

Shirlee Herrington
Environmental Coordination Services
Placer County Community Development Resource Agency
3091 County Center Drive, Suite 190
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 745-3132
Fax (530) 745-3080

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail to cdraecs@placer.ca.gov. If comments are provided via e-mail, please include the project title in the subject line, attach comments in Microsoft Word format, and include the commenter's U.S. Postal Service mailing address.

Paper copies of the document are also available for review at the County offices, Auburn Library, Lincoln Library, and Placer County Clerk-Recorder's Office at the following addresses:

Auburn Library
350 Nevada Street
Auburn, CA 95603

Placer County Clerk-Recorder's Office
2954 Richardson Drive
Auburn, CA 95603

Lincoln Library
485 Twelve Bridges Drive
Lincoln, CA 95648

Placer County Community Development Resources Agency
3091 County Center Drive
Auburn, CA 95603

Electronic copies of the SEIR can be downloaded from the County's website at:

<https://www.placer.ca.gov/2537/Hidden-Falls-Regional-Park-Trail-Network>