



CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT
INITIAL STUDY
(Article I---City CEQA Guidelines)

Council District: 12

Date: April 3, 2008

Lead City Agency: Department of Recreation and Parks

Project Title: Chatsworth Reservoir Wetland/Riparian Mitigation Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) provides an analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of a wetland/riparian mitigation program on approximately 44 acres of lands at the Chatsworth Reservoir property currently owned and managed by the City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power (DWP), and transfer of those and additional lands to the City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). The mitigation program will create and restore riparian and wetland habitat and establish a conservation easement over an approximately 44-acre area that includes both the newly created habitats and existing adjacent wetlands and riparian areas. Up to 140 acres of DWP property, including the conservation easement area, will be transferred from DWP to RAP. RAP will be the implementing agency for the proposed project.

ES-1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Purpose

The overall purpose of the project is to create, restore, enhance and preserve riparian and wetland habitat on a portion of the Chatsworth Reservoir property in the City of Los Angeles to mitigate for wetland and riparian habitat loss at the Sunshine Canyon Landfill near Sylmar, California. Browning Ferris Industries of California, Inc. (BFI) will compensate DWP for use of its land and protect the mitigation area in perpetuity through dedication of a conservation easement. Transfer of the conservation easement area and additional lands from DWP to RAP will assure appropriate long-term open space management and maintenance.

Proposed Project Area

The Chatsworth Reservoir property is located within the northwestern portion of the San Fernando Valley, northeast of the intersection of Roscoe Boulevard and Valley Circle Drive in the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California. The approximately 410-acre unused reservoir lies within a 1,318-acre property currently owned and managed by DWP.

The conservation easement area is located outside and generally to the west of the perimeter levee of the former reservoir. It is located in an area of gently rolling grasslands with a few rocky knolls, scattered oaks, a large (\pm 35-acre) basin area, and remnant stream channels, notably small, relatively natural reaches of Woolsey and Box Canyon Creeks. A channelized (rip-rapped sides, soft bottom) stream section along the western edge of the reservoir carries flows from both creeks and the reservoir's concrete-lined perimeter drain system through a tunnel drain and off the site via the Los Angeles County Flood Control District's Chatsworth Creek Channel.

Proposed Project Elements

The proposed project consists of the following:

- Compensation to DWP from BFI for use of a portion of Chatsworth Reservoir property as mitigation;
- The establishment of a conservation easement over an approximately 44-acre area to preserve and protect it as permanent open space in perpetuity;
- The transfer of up to 140 acres of Chatsworth Reservoir property, including the conservation easement area, from DWP to RAP;
- The design, development, construction and monitoring of the mitigation program by BFI;
- The establishment by BFI and acceptance by RAP of an interest bearing account for future maintenance of the conservation easement area.

There are five principal components to the mitigation program design: removal of a section of concrete channel and berm to create a natural channel; recontouring of an existing basin to create additional wetlands; restoration of stream channels associated with Woolsey Canyon and Box Canyon Creeks; enhancement of the existing wetlands; and creation of additional riparian woodland habitat. The excess soil generated from these activities will be placed in adjacent upland areas and will be planted with oak woodland and grassland vegetation.

ES-2 PROJECT SUMMARY

This Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) has determined that the proposed project may cause potentially significant impacts in the areas of air quality, biological resources, and cultural resources. The construction activities associated with removal of the concrete channel and recontouring of the existing basin have the potential to impact local air quality through the operation of gasoline and diesel powered on-road and off-road equipment (e.g. trucks, tractors, compactors) for a period of approximately five months. Construction will also result in emissions of fine particulate matter and dust (PM10) from grading and earthmoving activities. Site grading and construction activities could impact locations of Santa Suzanna tarplant (a special status plant) just outside of the construction area and could cause removal or disturbance of active migratory bird nests. The southwestern pond turtle and Sand Diego desert

woodrat could also be affected by construction activities if they are found within the construction area. Three documented archeological sites have been identified in the vicinity of but not within the proposed construction area.

Mitigation measures will be adopted as part of the proposed project in order to reduce impacts to air quality, biological resources, and cultural resources to a level of less than significant. The mitigation measures to reduce air quality impacts will include limiting the number and types of equipment used and the hours of operation. Impacts on biological resources will be reduced to a level of less than significant through utilizing qualified biologists to conduct preconstruction surveys, flagging sensitive locations and establishing appropriate construction buffers, fencing sensitive resources to avoid disturbance of these habitats, and having a qualified biologist monitor construction activities. Mitigation measures to reduce cultural resource impacts include utilizing a qualified cultural resource expert to monitor construction activities and to direct installation of construction fencing to avoid any sensitive areas identified. All other resource categories have been determined to have less than significant impacts or no impacts.

ES-3 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The proposed mitigation program will be implemented over the next five to six years. Construction and restoration activities are expected to occur over a period of five months and are anticipated to start in summer/fall 2008. A conservation easement will be established over the mitigation area no later than December 31, 2008. Planting will begin in the fall/winter of 2008/2009 with monitoring initiated in 2009 and continuing through at least 2014. All project activities will be in compliance with permits and regulations established by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and the State and Regional Water Quality Control Boards (SWRCB) (RWQCB).