



SPECIAL PUBLIC NOTICE

**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

LOS ANGELES DISTRICT

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF THE DRAFT PROGRAM EIS/EIR for the San Diego Creek Watershed Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)

Public Notice/Application No.:

199915966-4-CJF

Comment Period:

March 7, 2008 through April 21, 2008

Project Manager:

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ACTIVITY: Draft Program Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)/Watershed Alteration Streambed Agreement (WSAA) Process for the San Diego Creek Watershed, Orange County, California

AGENCY: Department of Defense, Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District Regulatory Division is the Federal Lead Agency, with the State Lead Agency California Department of Fish and Game, Habitat Conservation Planning, South Coast Section

ACTION: Notice of Availability for a Draft Program EIS/EIR and of associated Public Meeting

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Division, along with the State lead agency California Department of Fish and Game, Habitat Conservation Planning, South Coast Section, has completed the Draft Program EIS/EIR for the San Diego Creek Watershed Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)/Watershed Streambed Alteration Agreement (WSAA) Process. The San Diego Creek Watershed SAMP is a plan, which is comprised of the following elements: an Analytical Framework for Corps and Department decisionmaking; modified, watershed-specific permitting processes, including the Corps and the Department's watershed- and resource-based permitting protocols and a mitigation framework; a Strategic Mitigation Plan, which is based upon a riparian ecosystem restoration plan; a Mitigation Coordination Program to achieve implementation of the Strategic Mitigation Plan and foster a coordinated approach to aquatic resource management in the Watershed; and an implementation plan for the SAMP. The SAMP establishes alternative (aquatic resource-based and watershed-specific) permitting procedures for projects within the San Diego Creek Watershed that will alter the bed, bank or channel of rivers, streams, and lakes and associated riparian habitats under the

Department's jurisdiction, and discharge dredged or fill material into waters of the United States subject to the Corps jurisdiction. The SAMP permitting procedures will improve the capacity of the Corps and the Department to evaluate such projects, as compared to the process each agency would normally follow in permitting such projects on a case-by-case basis.

The Notice of Availability was published within the Federal Register. This Special Public Notice notifies individuals and organizations that may not regularly access the Federal Register of the publication of the Notice of Availability, and as such, provides duplicate information found in the Federal Register notice.

Bound copies of the Draft Program EIS/EIR will be made available to the public for review at the following library reference desks: University of California at Irvine, Langson Library (Irvine, California); Newport Beach Central Library (Newport Beach, California); Heritage Park Regional Library (Irvine, California); and Santa Ana Public Library (Santa Ana, California).

Comments on the Draft Program EIS/EIR will be accepted through the review period, beginning March 7, 2008 through 5:00 p.m. on April 21, 2008. This comment period is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Officials. Comments received during the public review and comment period will be considered in preparation of the Final Program EIS/EIR. Questions or comments concerning the Draft Program EIS/EIR should be directed to:

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We encourage your input and participation in this environmental process. **A public meeting will be held at Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center located at 2301 University Drive, Newport Beach, California 92660 on April 1, 2008 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. to obtain verbal and/or written comments on the SAMP and the Draft Program EIS/EIR.**

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the Corps is authorized to issue permits for activities that discharge dredged and/or fill materials into waters of the U.S., including wetlands, for roads, developments, utilities, and other activities. The SAMP Analytical Framework balances aquatic resource protection with reasonable economic development and infrastructure needs. The SAMP is

an improvement over the current, incremental case-by-case approach to permitting, which is limited by its inability to have a true watershed-wide, landscape-based perspective and is less effective at considering the needs of future permit applicants. The SAMP involves characterizing aquatic resource conditions and processes throughout the Watershed, establishing alternative permitting procedures more appropriate for the given aquatic resources in the Watershed, and promoting a coordinated aquatic resources management framework.

If you would like additional information or an electronic copy of the Draft Program EIS/EIR, please contact Ms. Corice Farrar by phoning (213) 452-3296, by sending an electronic mail to Corice.J.Farrar@usace.army.mil, or by visiting the Corps Los Angeles District's Internet website at <http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/samp/sandiegocreeksamp.htm>. This public notice is issued by the Chief, Regulatory Division.