



PUBLIC NOTICE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT**

STATE ROUTE 71/STATE ROUTE 91 INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

LOCATION: The State Route (SR) 71/SR-91 Interchange Improvement Project (previously approved Project) is located along SR-71 and SR-91 and at the existing SR-71/SR-91 interchange at the western edge of Riverside County, near the City of Corona, in southern California. The project area is within the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle for Prado Dam, California and is partly within Sections 19, 20, and 29 and un-sectioned areas in Township 3 South, Range 7 West.

PROPOSED PROJECT: A Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for use by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to supplement the EA that was prepared for the previously approved Project in 2014. As addressed in the 2014 EA, the previously approved Project would improve the SR-71/SR-91 interchange by constructing a new direct flyover connector from eastbound (EB) SR-91 to northbound (NB) SR-71. The Project also included bridge widening and restriping of SR-91 EB lanes, modification or construction of new drainage facilities, grading of hillside slopes, construction of retaining walls, SR-71 realignment and widening, and modification of access driveways. Some components of the Project are proposed on Federal land west of and downstream of the Prado Dam and Reservoir along the Santa Ana River, which is part of the Federal levee system.

The Supplemental EA analyzes the environmental impacts of design refinements and their associated changes to the previously proposed modifications to Federal land that would accompany the previously approved Project. Although the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) currently holds an easement on a portion of Federal land in this area as part of the existing SR-71 and SR-71/SR-91 interchange, additional easements are needed for the Project. This Supplemental EA specifically analyzes the environmental effects of changes to the previously approved Project's proposed improvements on Federal land. Proposed design changes which were not previously considered in the 2014 EA include:

- Sukut driveway redesign
- Bridge column footing redesign
- Additional rock slope protection along the Wardlow Wash channel
- Grading changes
- Utility line relocations
- SR-71 median barrier gap closure
- Associated changes to USACE easements

This Supplemental EA fulfills USACE's commitment to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) through the analysis of the potential effects of implementing the Project, as revised, prior to any approval or permit for the project. It also includes any new or revised avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures to reduce new or more severe impacts associated with project changes, as necessary.

PROJECT HISTORY: The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and Caltrans require access to Federal land west of and downstream of the Prado Dam and Flood Control Basin and along the Santa Ana River to construct and maintain components of the Project, which is a Federal Highway Administration authorized project. The Prado Dam and Flood Control Basin and the Santa Ana River are on Federal land managed by USACE. Per USACE policy, the siting of project components on Federal land must be compatible with the

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purposes of the Prado Dam and Reservoir. Any alteration or modification of the Prado Dam and Reservoir and the Santa Ana River channel would require approvals and permits from USACE. The proposed alterations associated with the previously approved Project to areas west of and downstream of the Prado Dam and Reservoir are considered relatively minor and would not adversely impact the Santa Ana River Mainstem Flood Control Project (SARP) performance.

USACE's purpose is to ensure that the Proposed Project:

- Is not adverse to the public interest;
- Is compatible with Federal flood risk management projects;
- Avoids adverse effects to the Federal flood risk management project, including changes associated with increased water surface elevation and hydrology;
- Does not interfere with Operations and Maintenance (O&M) or reduce accessibility to the Prado Dam and Flood Control Basin and the Santa Ana River;
- Assesses whether the request to occupy Federal land is justified and, if so, whether the use of Federal lands is necessary for the requested use;
- Is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative to accomplish Caltrans' and RCTC's objectives.

BACKGROUND AND AUTHORITY: Pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2668, USACE is authorized to issue easements to non-Federal agencies for the right to use Federal land if the proposed use is determined to be compatible with the Federal project, complies with Federal laws and regulations, and will not be against the public interest. As part of the Project, the RCTC and the Caltrans are requesting to use additional Federal land west of and downstream of the Prado Dam and Flood Control Basin and along the Santa Ana River for construction and O&M activities associated with the new flyover connector from EB SR-91 to NB SR-71, along with proposed changes to the SR-71 alignment, SR-71 access driveways, maintenance easements, and other project components that would be located near the Prado Dam and Reservoir on the Santa Ana River.

The proposed Project would alter/modify a completed USACE flood risk management project, occupy Federal land, and result in the discharge of dredged or fill materials into Waters of the United States (WOTUS). Per USACE policy, a non-recreational outgrant would be required to allow for the alteration or modification of a completed USACE flood risk management project, provided the proposed alteration or permanent occupation or use of a Federal project is not injurious to the public interest and will not impair the usefulness of the Federal project. As such, USACE is serving as the Federal lead agency for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review and compliance prior to their issuance of the outgrant for the Project. The outgrant will allow the use of a portion of Federal land for construction and maintenance activities and access for the Project.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT COMPLIANCE: In 2011, Caltrans and the RCTC completed the environmental documentation requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and NEPA for the Project. A CEQA Initial Study (IS) was prepared and circulated for public review, culminating in approval of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) on June 29, 2011, by Caltrans. Subsequent to that action, Caltrans, as delegated by FHWA, prepared a NEPA Categorical Exclusion (CE) for the proposed Project and received a CE determination on the same date. While Caltrans may have identified a CE for the project, there is no applicable CE contained in USACE's Civil Works NEPA implementation regulations (33 CFR Part 230). As such, USACE did not recognize the CE for the Proposed Action; and the 2014 EA was prepared to comply with NEPA, prior to USACE issuing permits for the project.



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In compliance with CEQ regulations (40 CFR § 0502.16), the EA for the Project addressed the potential impacts on the affected environment within the project area for two alternatives: No Action Alternative and Onsite Alternative. The EA analyzed temporary impacts (e.g., lasting the duration of construction activities [approximately 2 years]) and permanent impacts for the near term and the foreseeable future, up to a period of 15 years after construction of the Interchange Project (2035). The EA was approved by USACE in August 2014 and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued in September 2014.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS: The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; and other interested parties. Comments will be accepted from April 16, 2021 to May 16, 2021.

Comments should be sent electronically to: Emily.A.Lester@usace.army.mil

Alternatively, comments can be mailed to:

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