



SPECIAL PUBLIC NOTICE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT

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Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District In-Lieu Fee Program, Amendment 3 Western Riverside County, CA

Public Notice/Application No.: SPL-2009-00143-JEM

Comment Period: May 5, 2014 through June 6, 2014

Project Manager: James Mace; 951.276.6624x263; James.E.Mace@usace.army.mil

Applicant

Shelli Lamb
RCRCD
4500 Glenwood Drive
Riverside, California 92501-3042

Contact

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Location

The location of the proposed Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) In-Lieu Fee Project (ILF Project) is in Lower Temescal Creek, which is a tributary within the Santa Ana River watershed in the western portion of Riverside County, California (see attached Figures 1 and 2). The property is generally located southeast of the intersection of Dos Lagos Drive and Temescal Canyon Road, east of Interstate 15, between the Cities of Corona and Lake Elsinore.

Activity

The review of the RCRCD Development, Interim Management and Long-Term Management Plans (ILF Project Plans) in Lower Temescal Creek and Amendment No. 3 to the RCRCD ILF Instrument. For more information see page 3 of this notice.

Interested parties are hereby notified that the ILF Project Plans have been received to establish an ILF Project to comply with the framework of the established RCRCD ILF Program. Interested parties are invited to provide their views on the proposed ILF Project Plans, which will become a part of the record and will be considered in the decision to authorize or not authorize the ILF Project. Comments should be mailed to:

LOS ANGELES DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
RIVERSIDE REGULATORY FIELD OFFICE
ATTN: JAMES MACE
1451 RESEARCH PARK DRIVE, SUITE 100
RIVERSIDE, CA 92507-2154

Alternatively, comments can be sent electronically to: James.E.Mace@usace.army.mil

Evaluation Factors

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. The District Engineer (DE) will review the comments received in response to this notice and make a written initial evaluation as to the potential of the proposed ILF Project to

provide compensatory mitigation. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. In addition, all comments will be distributed to the members of the Inter-agency Review Team (IRT) and the sponsor within 15 days of the close of the comment period. The DE and the IRT members will also have the opportunity to comment to the sponsor. After considering comments from the DE, the IRT, and the public, if the RCRCDC chooses to proceed with the ILF Project, the RCRCDC will prepare a draft amendment to the RCRCDC ILF Instrument and submit it to the DE.

Background

On April 10, 2008, the Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency published the Final Rule on Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources (“Mitigation Rule”), which went into effect June 9, 2008. The rule replaced most previous guidance concerning compensatory mitigation, including the previous ILF guidance of 2000. The new rule includes requirements that prospective ILF program providers meet substantially the same standards as mitigation banks and undergo the same Interagency Review Team review and approval process as mitigation banks.

The RCRCDC, a public agency special district formed under the State of California Public Resources Code to provide soil, water, and wildlife resource management, wishes to implement an ILF Project consistent with the existing RCRCDC ILF Program Instrument, previously reviewed under the Mitigation Rule. The Mitigation Rule allows ILF Projects associated with approved ILF programs and Instruments to provide compensatory mitigation for Department of the Army permits. Consistent with the requirements of the rule at 33 CFR § 332.8(d), RCRCDC has submitted the ILF Project Plans to the Corps for the purpose of implementing and managing an ILF Project. The Corps seeks comments from interested parties on the ILF Project Plans.

This public notice provides a summary of the ILF Project Plans submitted by RCRCDC. The full ILF Project Plans may be obtained from the Corps by contacting James Mace at (951) 276-6624x263, or by contacting Ward Simmons at (951) 826-8366.

Objectives of the Project and Location

The ILF Project Plans were developed to comply with RCRCDC’s In-Lieu Fee Program to be used for the buffer and enhancement of riparian, wetland and upland areas within the RCRCDC’s Lee Lake Conservation Easement (the “Project”) in the Temescal Wash area of the Santa Ana River Watershed.

The purpose of the mitigation is to buffer and enhance the functions and values of watersheds lost due to impacts from human activities by buffering and enhancing degraded areas of the Project. The ILF Project Plans consider both the ecological and geomorphologic functions of the mitigation site in order to confirm that the functions of the restoration will exceed those of the existing habitat.

The objective of the ILF Project Plans is to enhance the Project area by raising the scores derived using the California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) in the following metrics: Horizontal interspersions, Vertical Biotic Structure, and Buffer condition. The enhanced areas would be designed to contain stable, self-sustaining populations, communities and ecosystems which would require little or no support once established. This would be fulfilled by using plant materials that have originated from the local ecoregion and that would provide improved food, cover and reproductive opportunities for wildlife.

The proposed service area would continue to be the same as in the approved RCRC D ILF Program, which is generally the Santa Ana Watershed. The National Wetlands Inventory classifies the Project area as a mix of semi-permanently flooded unconsolidated bottom lower perennial riverine, seasonally flooded unconsolidated shore lower perennial riverine, seasonally flooded scrub-shrub palustrine, and diked/impounded temporary flooded scrub-shrub palustrine, as well as some associated upland slope area. The upland portion of the Project site consists of degraded coastal sage scrub and invasive annual weeds and is currently a seed source for invasive annuals that can negatively affect other restoration sites within the easement as well as restoration efforts being conducted downstream. The riparian wetland portion of the Project site consists of functioning woodland dominated by *Salix goddingii* (black willow) and *Salix laevigata* (red willow) that is slightly degraded by trash accumulation and invasive plants. The riparian area of the Project site consists of a functioning shrubland dominated by *Baccharis salicifolia* (Mulefat) that is located on a sandy area that forms a low terrace during the dry season and is part of the braided alluvial system during the rainy season.

The Project area was selected because it is a section of the conservation easement that could benefit from increasing the habitat value of the buffer areas, decreasing invasive plant species cover values, and enhancement of the habitat within the wash. Currently, the land use surrounding the mitigation site is 20% small agriculture, 40% open space, 20% industrial, 10% residential, and 10% urban. The proximity and connectivity of aquatic resources that occur upstream and downstream of the site allow for inflow and outflow of water during flood events and low flow periods.

The Project site is owned by the Lee Lake Water District, but has been encumbered by a conservation easement granted to the RCRC D. This Conservation Easement would continue to protect the Property in perpetuity and would conform to ACOE requirements for site protection. RCRC D is requesting approximately 8.99 of ILF Program credits which equates to approximately 8.99 acres of land that would be enhanced or used for a buffer area.

Qualifications of the Sponsor

RCRC D has combined staff experience of over 70 years in biology, ecology, fisheries, water conservation and related fields. RCRC D has worked with over 3,000 landowners on field and technical activities including erosion control, mitigation, restoration, and water management. Additional information about the qualifications of RCRC D were documented in the ILF Program Prospectus and Instrument.

For additional information please call James Mace of my staff at 951-276-6624 x263 or via e-mail at James.E.Mace@usace.army.mil . This public notice is issued by the Chief, Regulatory Division.



Regulatory Program Goals:

- To provide strong protection of the nation's aquatic environment, including wetlands.
- To ensure the Corps provides the regulated public with fair and reasonable decisions.
- To enhance the efficiency of the Corps' administration of its regulatory program.

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