



Municipal Services Agency
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Administrator

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

JOYCE HORIZUMI
Director,
Environmental Coordinator

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

MAY 21, 2007

TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

**SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR
DEER CREEK HILLS PRESERVE MASTER PLAN.**

Sacramento County will be the CEQA Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a project known as DEER CREEK HILLS PRESERVE MASTER PLAN. This Notice of Preparation has been sent to responsible and trustee agencies and involved federal agencies pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. Agencies should comment on the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agencies' statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

The project description, location, and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials and may also be viewed online at:

<http://www.DERA.SacCounty.net>.

Please send your Agency's response to this Notice to:
Joyce Horizumi, Environmental Coordinator
Department of Environmental Review and Assessment
827 7th Street, Room 220, Sacramento, CA 95814
or via e-mail at: DERA@saccounty.net.

Your response should include the name of a contact person in your agency.

Agencies with specific questions about the project should contact Marianne Biner, DERA Project Manager, at (916) 874-7520 for further information.

PROJECT TITLE:
DEER CREEK HILLS PRESERVE MASTER PLAN

CONTROL NUMBER:
05-PRE-0732

PROJECT PROPONENT(S):

Owner:
Sacramento Valley Conservancy
County of Sacramento

Applicant:
Sacramento Valley Conservancy
County of Sacramento Regional Parks Department

PROJECT LOCATION:

The project site is comprised of 4,062 acres located along the eastern boundary of Sacramento County. The Deer Creek Hills Preserve is bordered on the west by Scott Road and on the east by Michigan Bar Road. The Rancho Murieta community is situated immediately south of the property. Latrobe Road bisects the land diagonally from west to east. Preserve access is obtained via Latrobe Road from the southwest and Michigan Bar Road along its eastern border. See Plate NOP A, Regional Location Map.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION :

The Deer Creek Hills Preserve Master Plan (Master Plan/Plan) proposes a management plan to guide the uses of the Preserve, which include open space, habitat preservation, cattle grazing, and public recreation. The Master Plan includes the following:

- Inventories and assessments of conditions and resources at the Preserve.
- Planned future uses of the Preserve.
- Implementation strategies for funding, operations and development.

The Deer Creek Hills Preserve (the Preserve) is under the joint ownership of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy (the Conservancy), the County of Sacramento (County), and the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR). The Conservancy has primary management and operations responsibility.

The Preserve is intended to protect and enhance the biological, cultural and agricultural resources of Deer Creek Hills for current and future generations as well as for the intrinsic values.

The list below itemizes components of Phase I and Phase II of the Master Plan that would result in physical alterations to the land. These developments will be evaluated in the EIR analysis for their potential to impact the environment. Physical developments that may occur beyond Phase II are not specifically analyzed and may require further CEQA environmental documentation. See Plates NOP B and C for proposed developments.

Phase I

1. Installation of boundary signs and “no trespassing” signs,
2. Utilization of a part-time volunteer ranger for security,
3. Installation of Deer Creek Hills entry signs,
4. Development of a portable information kiosk,
5. Installation of gravel in north parking area (corral vicinity),
6. Provision of portable chemical toilets in the north parking area on scheduled public access days,
7. Development of a self-guided interpretive trail and picnic area in the Southwest Area, and
8. Implement habitat resource improvements.

Phase II

1. Installation of gates and/or closure of Latrobe Road,
2. Improvement of the segment of Latrobe Road that provides access to the Preserve, including an all-season bridge over Crevis Creek at the west entry,
3. Development of the ADA accessible self-guided trail and interpretive displays in the Southwest or Northwest Area,
4. Continuation of habitat and resource improvements,
5. Development of a group assembly and outdoor activity facility in the Southwest Area,
6. Extension of the self-guided trail system with additional trail segments and interpretive stations,
7. Improve the segment of Latrobe road that provides address to the Preserve, including an all-season bridge over Crevis Creek at the west entry, and

It is important to note that the Objectives of the Master Plan include application of adaptive management principles to make adjustments to the Plan if needed to avoid adverse impacts to environmental resources. Therefore, the implementation of Phase I and Phase II may be modified or fine tuned if necessary.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

1. Preserve a natural resource area that serves biological, habitat, hydrological and other natural functions and continues to serve as a refuge and sanctuary for indigenous plant and animal species, as well as cultural and archeological resources;

2. Balance appropriate public uses with habitat restoration and preservation, and grazing management purposes;
3. Continue livestock grazing practices that preserve, sustain, or improve the condition of the natural resources;
4. Provide a place for innovative public/private research, educational and interpretive opportunities;
5. Increase the availability of outdoor recreation and access opportunities for the local region;
6. Ensure the compatibility of the Preserve and its management and uses with regards to the surrounding ownerships and uses;
7. Provide good stewardship of public assets;
8. Ensure the best use of financial resources;
9. Apply adaptive management principles to all existing and proposed uses in order to track conditions resulting from actions and adjust as necessary or appropriate.

ENVIRONMENTAL/LAND USE SETTING:

The property has over 4,000 acres of open space and represents one of the largest stands of blue oaks remaining in the County of Sacramento.

The Preserve consists of gently rolling hills covered by a mix of annual grasslands intermittent and perennial streams, vernal pools and varying densities of blue oak woodlands inhabited by the terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Preserve lands straddle the Deer Creek and the Cosumnes River drainage systems. Rookeries have formed around water impounds that were developed for cattle grazing; beef-cattle graze the land in the spring and winter months. Historic and prehistoric resources are present throughout the property.

The Preserve is currently zoned AG-80. Land use in the area surrounding the Deer Creek Hills Preserve is primarily agricultural with the exception of the Rancho Murieta community, which is a planned residential development. Other nearby exceptions to the agricultural land uses in the region are the Kiefer Landfill facility which is located at the junction of Grant Line Road and Kiefer Boulevard the Carson Creek Boys Ranch, a juvenile detention facility.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS/EIR FOCUS:

The EIR will analyze the relative aspects of the Deer Creek Preserve Master Plan, which is a policy document that establishes the planning framework for the future design, implementation, and management of the Preserve. To the extent possible, potential environmental effects will also be analyzed at a project specific level for Phase 1 and Phase 2 developments. It is anticipated that the topical areas most affected by the policies for the management of the Deer Creek Hills Preserve will involve land use,

agriculture/grazing, recreation, aesthetics, access, hydrology, wetlands, trees, special status species, cultural resources, and naturally occurring asbestos.

Land Use

Land use impacts and consistency with the Sacramento County General Plan, the Sacramento County Zoning Code and other applicable plans will be determined.

Agricultural Resources

Grazing activities will continue at the Preserve. The Master Plan will be analyzed for its compatibility with agricultural activities and vice versa.

Aesthetics

Oak woodlands, ponds and riparian areas are seen as attractive sites for people to recreate and build. The pleasant look of a meandering creek and ample amounts of shade from large trees all contribute toward the popularity of this type of habitat. Impacts would come about when a project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. The Master Plan will be analyzed for its consideration of aesthetics issues.

Public Services

The proposed Master Plan will be analyzed for its compatibility with public services and requirements to serve the proposed uses.

Public Safety

The proposed Master Plan will be analyzed for its effect on public safety. Issues such as emergency vehicle access will be addressed.

Hydrology

The project includes bridge crossings over Crevis Creek and development of trails within the local flood plain. Hydrology within the Preserve has been impacted by past mining and agricultural activities; the Master Plan proposes to restore the hydrologic processes to decrease erosion and improve habitat values. The EIR will address the regulations and potential impacts associated with working within the stream channels.

Biology

Biological resources will be analyzed to identify impacts to resources in the area. Mitigation measures will be suggested as appropriate and consistent with local, state and federal policies.

Cultural/Historical Resources

Riparian areas are known to be historically active sites where early peoples and settlers would have obtained fresh water, hunted, gathered foods, and placed buildings. Given the sensitivity of the area, the Master Plan will be analyzed for its compatibility with cultural and historical resources.

Naturally Occurring Asbestos

Portions of the preserve may contain naturally occurring asbestos. Health risks associated with exposure to asbestos will be discussed.

Other Studies

Subsequent studies may be required including the following:

- Soil sampling for naturally occurring asbestos
- Extended cultural evaluations

INTENDED USES OF THE EIR:

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (Public Resources Code Division 13). The purpose of an EIR is to provide governmental decision makers and the public with detailed information about the effects that a proposed project is likely to have on the environment and to identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or reduced through the use of alternatives and/or mitigation measures. Prior to project approval, the public agency must protect the environment from any significant impacts identified in the EIR by one or more of the following methods: modify the project, impose conditions, adopt ordinances, or choose an alternative that would not cause a substantial adverse change in the environment. Otherwise, the public agency shall not approve a project unless it finds that changing the project is not feasible and the unavoidable significant damage to the environment is acceptable because of overriding considerations such as social or economic benefits.

Plate NOP A Regional Location Map

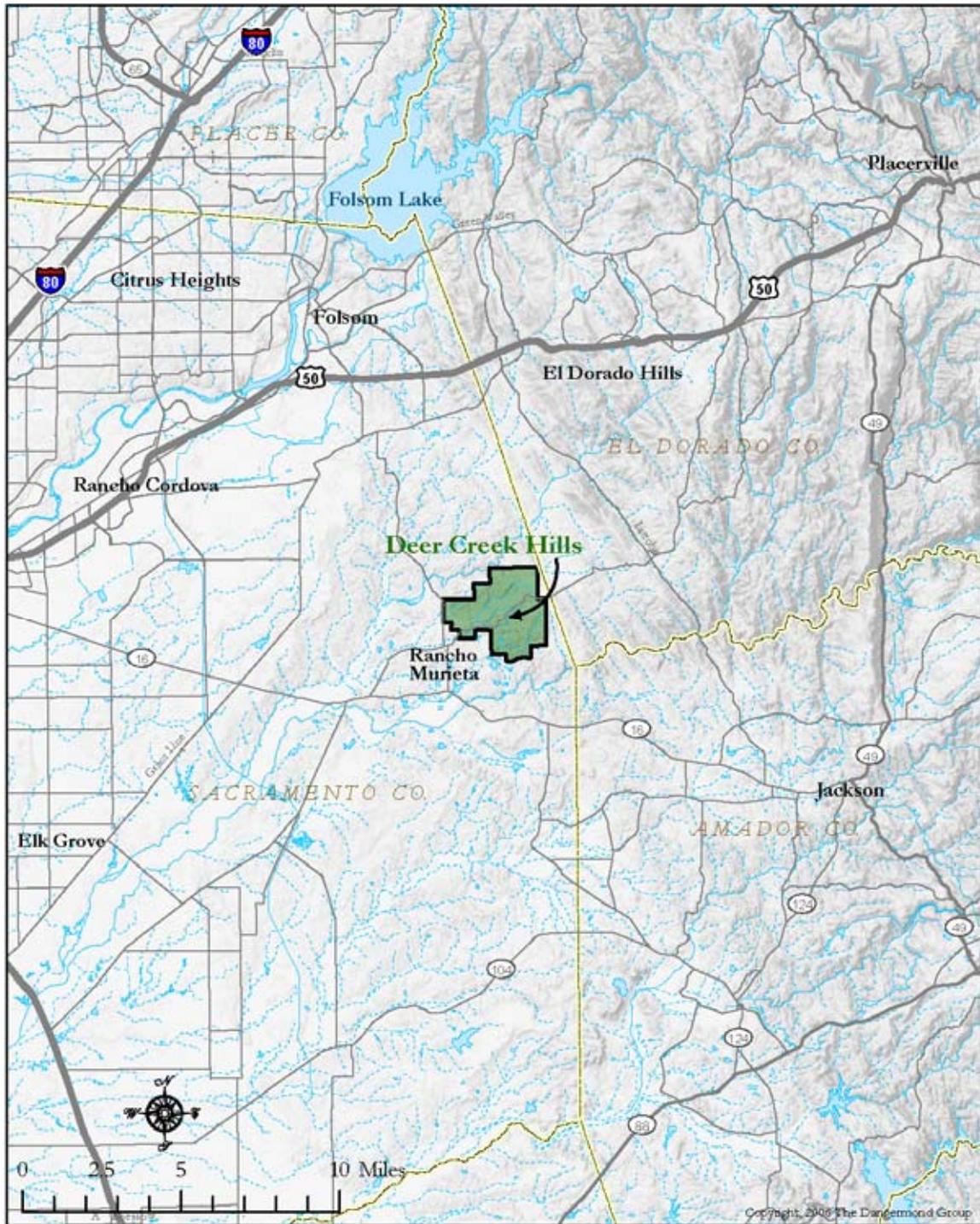


Plate NOP B Proposed Developments

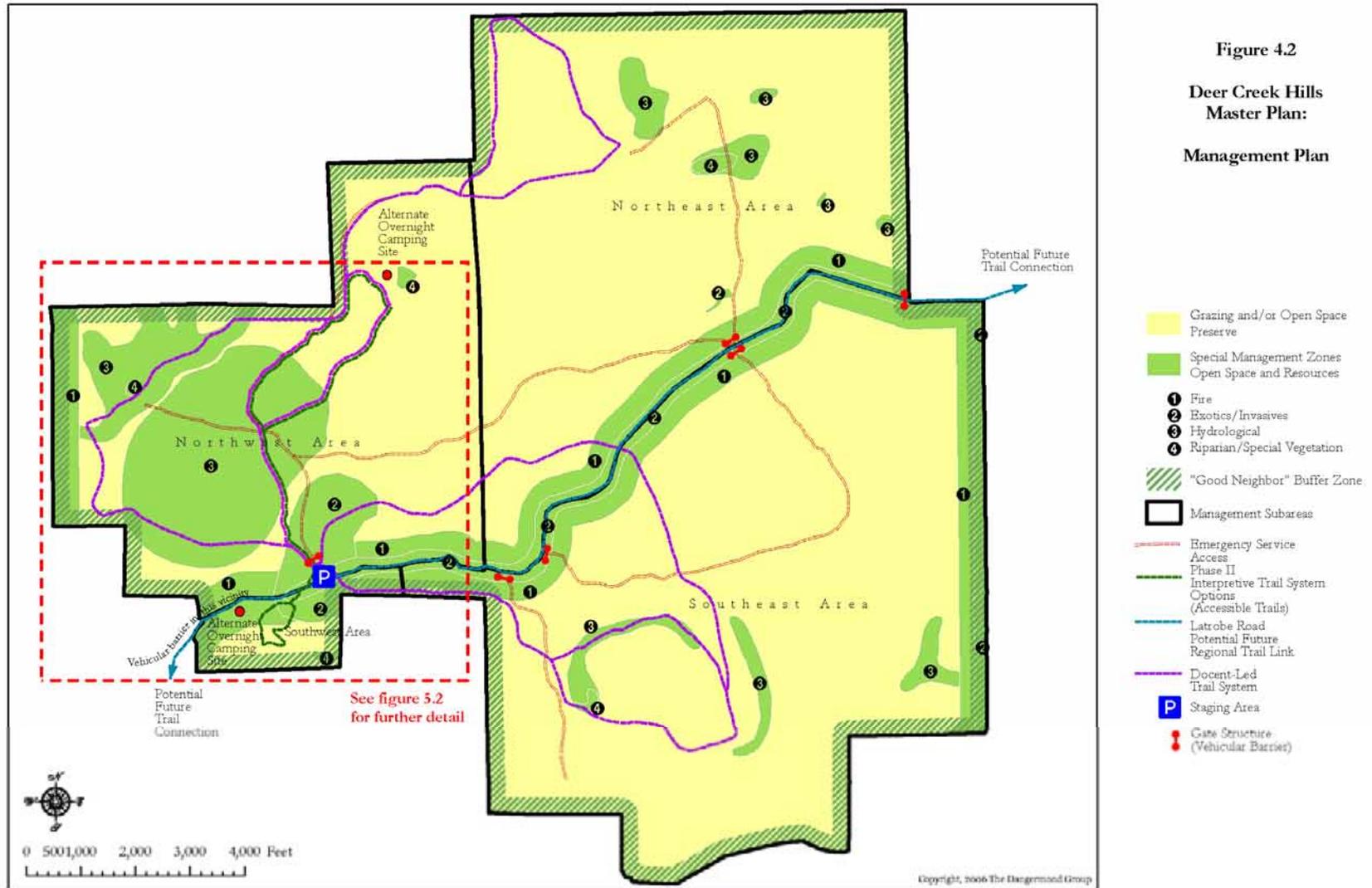


Plate NOP C Concept Plan Detail

