

RANDALL ROAD DEBRIS BASIN

FINDINGS PURSUANT TO PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE SECTION 21081 AND THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT GUIDELINES SECTIONS 15090 AND 15091

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I. OVERVIEW

A. Project Objectives

The objectives of the project are as follows:

1. Maximize coarse sediment and debris retention capacity to the extent feasible to address post-fire storm events in the watershed.
2. Avoid change in land use, unless supported by affected property owners and the community.
3. Facilitate steelhead passage in San Ysidro Creek to the extent feasible.
4. Minimize debris basin maintenance requirements.

B. Project Description

The proposed project consists of the construction and long-term periodic maintenance of a new debris basin on San Ysidro Creek to capture sediment and debris transported from the watershed upstream of the project site. The design of the project provides an area for deposition of large sediment loads and woody debris during/following larger storm events while maintaining natural sediment transport during smaller storm events. The proposed debris basin design spans San Ysidro Creek, with most of the debris basin located west of the San Ysidro Creek channel and a smaller portion of the debris basin located east of the channel. Post-construction habitat restoration is proposed on the berm along East Valley Road, along the creek and the basin slopes. The debris basin would be constructed as an “off channel” basin, meaning the basin would only receive flows and material (sediment and debris) once the designed channel capacity has been exceeded which correlates to the water surface elevation generated in a 5-year flow event. Water flows of equal or lesser intensity than a 5-year event would remain in the channel to facilitate fine sediment transport and migratory fish passage. Flows above a 5-year event would exceed the channel capacity and leave the channel and expand into the debris basin. The San Ysidro Creek channel would be recontoured along approximately the existing alignment and width of the existing channel. Streambed material (including mixed grade boulders, cobbles, gravel and fine sediment) would be retained in the recontoured channel to create a streambed similar to natural conditions. The existing banks, which are currently steep and near vertical in some locations, would be graded and re-contoured to create wider, more gently sloped banks.

About 97,000 cubic yards of earth material would be excavated to construct the debris basin, with a portion re-used on-site to re-configure the streambed and banks, line the lower slopes of the debris basin with rock, and construct access ramps and surface access roads. However, most of this material would be trucked off-site following any required sorting and rock crushing.

The proposed debris basin would be included in the District’s Debris Basin Maintenance Program and subject to standard practices and mitigation measures identified in the Debris Basin Maintenance Plan. It is anticipated that desilting of the debris basin would occur about every four to seven years but could occur several times in one year following a major fire in the watershed and/or intense storm seasons. Maintenance of the creek channel may occur every 1-2 years but is likely to be less frequent.

II. INTRODUCTION TO CEQA FINDINGS

The District prepared a Draft and Final Environmental Impact Report for the Randall Road Debris Basin (collectively, the “EIR”). The EIR addresses the potential environmental effects associated with the project, and the No Project Alternative. The Findings are provided below and are recommended for adoption by this Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) as the County’s findings under the CEQA (Public Resources Code, Sec. 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., Title 14, Sec. 15000 et seq.). The Findings provide a written analysis and conclusions regarding the project’s environmental impacts, mitigation measures and alternatives to the project, which justify the approval of the project.

A. Procedural Background

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared according to the State CEQA Guidelines and distributed to responsible and trustee agencies and interested members of the public on February 14, 2019. A Draft EIR was prepared and distributed for review by public agencies and interested members of the public from May 4 through June 19, 2020. The Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR was filed with the State Office of Planning and Research under State Clearinghouse no. 2019029104. A Notice of Availability of the Draft SEIR and Notice of Public Hearing was also published in a newspaper of general circulation (Santa Barbara News Press). The Notice was posted on-line at the District’s website and at the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors. Notice was also direct mailed to properties within 1,000 feet of the project site.

A public hearing was held via the ZOOM application (due to COVID-19 concerns) on May 20, 2020 to accept oral and written testimony regarding the adequacy of the Draft EIR. In total, five oral comments were received at the public hearing and seven comment letters/emails were received during the public comment period and written responses have been prepared and incorporated into the Final EIR (Section 9.0).

III. CEQA FINDINGS

FINDINGS PURSUANT TO PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE SECTION 21081 AND THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT GUIDELINES SECTIONS 15090 AND 15091:

A. Consideration of the EIR

The Final EIR was presented to the Board of Supervisors which has reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final EIR prior to approving the project. In addition, the Board of Supervisors have reviewed and considered testimony presented at the public hearing on May 20, 2020. The Final EIR reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board of Supervisors and is adequate for this proposal.

B. Full Disclosure

The Board of Supervisors finds and certifies that the Final EIR constitutes a complete, accurate, adequate and good faith effort at full disclosure under CEQA. The Board of Supervisors further finds and certifies that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA.

C. Location of Record of Proceedings

The documents and other materials which constitute the record of proceedings upon which this decision is based are in the custody of the Project Manager: Mr. Andrew Raaf at 130 E. Victoria Street, Suite 200, Santa Barbara, CA 93101.

D. Findings that Certain Unavoidable Impacts are Mitigated to the Maximum Extent Feasible

The Final EIR for the Randall Road Debris Basin did not identify any environmental impacts which cannot be fully mitigated and considered unavoidable (Class I). Therefore, findings related unavoidable significant impacts are not required.

E. Findings that Certain Impacts are Mitigated to Insignificance by Conditions of Approval

The Final EIR identified several subject areas for which the project is considered to cause or contribute to significant, but mitigable environmental impacts (Class II). For each of these Class II impacts identified by the Final EIR, feasible changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect, as discussed below:

1. Aesthetics/Visual Resources

The Final EIR (Section 4.1.2.2) identified one significant impact related to aesthetics/visual resources that would result from implementation of the project. The Board of Supervisors finds that mitigation measures provided would reduce this impact to a less than significant level.

- Impact AES-1: Debris basin construction would temporarily degrade the scenic quality of public views from East Valley Road. Mitigation measure **MM AES-1** (visual screening) has been provided to screen the construction site from public view.

2. Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Final EIR (Section 4.2.2.2) identified one significant impact to air quality that would result from implementation of the project. The Board of Supervisors finds that mitigation measures provided would reduce this impact to a less than significant level.

- Impact AQ-2: Routine maintenance of the proposed debris basin would generate air pollutant emissions that would adversely impact local and regional air quality. Mitigation measure **MM AQ-1** (emission reduction measures) has been provided to reduce routine maintenance-related emissions below significance thresholds.

3. Biological Resources

The Final EIR (Section 4.3.2.2) identified two significant impacts to biological resources that would result from implementation of the project. The Board of Supervisors finds that mitigation measures provided would reduce these impacts to a less than significant level.

- Impact BIO-3: The proposed project would result in the loss of up to 49 mature native trees. Mitigation measure **MM BIO-1** (tree replacement) has been provided to replace mature native trees removed at a 3:1 ratio.
- Impact BIO-9: Proposed debris basin construction and/or routine maintenance activities may disrupt breeding of migratory birds. Mitigation measure **MM BIO-2** (avoidance of active nests) has been provided to minimize adverse effects on breeding birds.

4. Cultural Resources

The Final EIR (Section 4.4.2.2) identified one potentially significant impact related to cultural resources that would result from implementation of the project. The Board of Supervisors finds that mitigation measures provided would reduce this impact to a less than significant level.

- Impact CR-1: Debris basin construction has the potential to adversely affect unreported archeological resources. Mitigation measure **MM CR-1** (stop work, notification, evaluation) has been provided to avoid and minimize potential impacts to unreported buried cultural resources.

5. Noise and Vibration

The Final EIR (Section 4.7.2.2) identified three significant impacts related to noise and vibration that would result from implementation of the project. The Board of Supervisors finds that mitigation measures provided would reduce these impacts to a less than significant level.

- Impact N-1: Noise generated by debris basin construction activities would temporarily adversely affect nearby noise-sensitive land uses (residences). Mitigation measures **MM N-1** (construction hours restrictions, no work on State holidays, mufflers) and **MM N-2** (rock crushing hours limitation and noise barriers) have been provided to avoid and minimize construction noise impacts.
- Impact N-3: Noise generated by routine maintenance activities would periodically adversely affect nearby noise-sensitive land uses (residences). Mitigation measure **MM N-1** (work hours restrictions, no work on State holidays, mufflers) has been provided to avoid and minimize routine maintenance noise impacts.
- Impact N-5: Blasting-related noise may adversely affect residents in the project area. Mitigation measure **MM N-3** (blasting hours restrictions, noticing) has been provided to minimize blasting noise impacts.

6. Transportation/Traffic

The Final EIR (Section 4.9.2.2) identified two potentially significant impacts related to truck traffic that would result from implementation of the project. The Board of Supervisors finds that mitigation measures provided would reduce these impacts to a less than significant level.

- Impact T-1: Trucking of earth material/debris removed during debris basin construction may exacerbate peak hour traffic congestion at affected intersections. Mitigation measure **MM T-1** (peak hour truck trip restriction) has been provided to minimize congestion at affected intersections.
- Impact T-3: Trucking of earth material/debris removed during debris basin excavation or routine maintenance may reduce traffic safety due to poor sight distance. Mitigation measure **MM T-2** (traffic control and noticing) has been provided to ensure safe ingress and egress by trucks at the project site.

F. Findings that Identified Project Alternatives are not Feasible

The Final EIR prepared for the project evaluated only the No Project Alternative because no other feasible alternative was available. Other potential alternatives considered included:

- Widening San Ysidro Creek
- Expansion of the existing San Ysidro Creek Debris Basin
- Alternative debris basin site on San Ysidro Creek

The Board of Supervisors finds that these alternatives are not feasible, would not accomplish the basic objectives of the project and would not avoid or lessen the impacts of the proposed project.

No Project Alternative

The proposed debris basin would not be constructed. In the absence of the proposed project, it is anticipated that removal of remaining sediment from the project site and limited re-contouring (grading) would be performed by the current property owners or agents thereof. Dead trees near East Valley Road would likely be removed for safety reasons. The parcels would not be acquired by the District and private land uses would continue, likely to include construction of single-family residences consistent with existing zoning.

The No Project Alternative does not meet the purpose of the project or any of the District's project objectives. Properties adjacent to San Ysidro Creek in the project area would be subject to hazardous debris flows.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING AND MONITORING PROGRAM

Public Resources Code §21081.6 requires the County to adopt a reporting or monitoring program for measures it has adopted or made a condition of approval to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The project description and mitigation measures described in the Final SEIR, with the corresponding monitoring requirements entitled "Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program" (see Attachment 3) is attached hereto, and by this reference, is incorporated herein.