

1 INTRODUCTION

This draft environmental impact report (Draft EIR) evaluates the environmental impacts of the proposed New Zoo at Elk Grove Project. This Draft EIR has been prepared under the direction of the City of Elk Grove in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000-15387). This chapter of the Draft EIR provides information on:

- ▶ the project requiring environmental analysis (synopsis);
- ▶ the type, purpose, and intended uses of the Draft EIR;
- ▶ the scope of this Draft EIR;
- ▶ the agency roles and responsibilities;
- ▶ the public review process;
- ▶ the organization of the Draft EIR; and
- ▶ standard terminology.

1.1 PROJECT REQUIRING ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The Project consists of the construction and operation of a zoological park and associated support and operational facilities, restaurant, retail, lodging, and guest services facilities on the Project site. The Project would include a new Special Planning Area (SPA) referred to as the Zoological Park SPA. The reader is referred to Chapter 2, "Project Description," of this Draft EIR for a detailed description of the Project.

1.2 PURPOSE AND INTENDED USES OF THIS DRAFT EIR

According to CEQA, preparation of an EIR is required whenever it can be fairly argued, based on substantial evidence, that a proposed project may result in a significant environmental impact. An EIR is an informational document used to inform public-agency decision makers and the general public of the significant environmental impacts of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant impacts, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project while substantially lessening or avoiding any of the significant environmental impacts. Public agencies are required to consider the information presented in the EIR when determining whether to approve a project.

This Draft EIR has been prepared to meet the requirements of a project EIR as defined by Section 15161 of the State CEQA Guidelines. A project EIR focuses on the changes in the physical environment that would result from the implementation of a project, including its planning, construction, and operation. The State's intention is that a lead agency preparing a project EIR would not be required to provide further environmental analysis for additional regulatory approvals following approval of the project, absent conditions requiring a subsequent EIR, a supplement to the EIR, or an addendum. (See State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162–15164.)

1.3 SCOPE OF THIS DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR includes an evaluation of the following 14 environmental issue areas, as well as other CEQA-mandated issues (e.g., cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, significant unavoidable impacts, and alternatives):

- ▶ aesthetics;
- ▶ air quality;
- ▶ biological resources;
- ▶ cultural and tribal cultural resources;
- ▶ energy;
- ▶ geology and soils;
- ▶ greenhouse gas emissions and climate change;
- ▶ hazards and hazardous materials;
- ▶ hydrology and water quality;
- ▶ land use and planning;
- ▶ noise and vibration;
- ▶ public services;
- ▶ transportation; and
- ▶ utilities and service systems.

The remaining Appendix G questions are included in Section 3, "Environmental Setting." Under the CEQA statute and the State CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency may limit an EIR's discussion of environmental effects when such effects are not considered potentially significant (PRC Section 21002.1[e]; State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15128, 15143).

Information used to determine which impacts would be potentially significant was derived from review of the applicant's Project plans and technical studies, review of applicable planning documents and CEQA documentation, fieldwork, feedback from public and agency consultation, and comments received on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) (see Appendix A of this Draft EIR).

The NOP was distributed on November 18, 2022, to responsible agencies, interested parties, and organizations, as well as private organizations and individuals that may have an interest in the Project. A scoping meeting for the Project was held during the review period and posted online. The purpose of the NOP and the scoping meeting was to provide notification that a Draft EIR for the Project was being prepared and to solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental document. Through review of existing information and the scoping process, it was determined that each of the issue areas listed above should be fully discussed in this Draft EIR. Further information on the NOP and scoping process is provided below in Section 1.6, "Public Review Process."

1.4 AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.4.1 Lead Agency

The City is the lead agency responsible for approving the Project and for ensuring that the requirements of CEQA have been met. After the EIR public review process is complete, the City Council will determine whether to certify the EIR (see State CEQA Guidelines Section 15090) and approve the Project.

1.4.2 Trustee and Responsible Agencies

A trustee agency is a State agency that has jurisdiction by law over natural resources that are held in trust for the people of the State of California. The only trustee agency that has jurisdiction over resources potentially affected by the Project is the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Responsible agencies are public agencies other than the lead agency that have discretionary-approval responsibility for reviewing, carrying out, or approving elements of a project. Responsible agencies should participate in the lead agency's CEQA process, review the lead agency's CEQA document, and use the document when making a decision on project elements. The following agencies may have responsibility for, or jurisdiction over, the implementation of elements of the Project.

STATE AGENCIES

- ▶ California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- ▶ Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley RWQCB)

REGIONAL AND LOCAL AGENCIES

- ▶ Cosumnes Community Services District (CSD)
- ▶ Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD)
- ▶ Sacramento Area Sewer District (SacSewer)
- ▶ Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA)
- ▶ Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)

1.5 PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

As identified above in Section 1.4, "Scope of This Draft EIR," in accordance with CEQA regulations, a NOP was distributed on November 18, 2022, to responsible agencies, interested parties and organizations, and private organizations and individuals that could have interest in the Project.

The purpose of the NOP was to provide notification that an EIR for the Project was being prepared and to solicit input on the scope and content of the document. The public comment period for the NOP began on November 21, 2022 and ended on January 13, 2023. A recorded presentation on the NOP was given and posted online on November 18, 2022. The NOP and responses to the NOP are included in Appendix A of this Draft EIR.

This Draft EIR is being circulated for public review and comment for a minimum period of 46 days. During this period, comments from the general public, as well as organizations and agencies, on environmental issues may be submitted to the lead agency.

Upon completion of the public review and comment period, a Final EIR will be prepared that will include both written and oral comments on the Draft EIR received during the public review period, responses to those comments as required, and any revisions to the Draft EIR made in response to public comments. Together, the Draft EIR and Final EIR make up the EIR for the Project.

1.6 DRAFT EIR ORGANIZATION

This Draft EIR is organized into chapters, as identified and briefly described below. The chapters are further divided into sections (e.g., Chapter 3, "Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures," and Section 3.5, "Energy"):

- ▶ The Executive Summary: This chapter introduces the Project; provides a summary of the environmental review process and key environmental issues; and lists significant impacts and mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- ▶ Chapter 1, "Introduction": This chapter provides a synopsis of the Project; identifies the type, purpose, and intended uses of this Draft EIR; describes the scope of this Draft EIR; identifies the lead and responsible agencies; describes the public review process; describes the organization of this Draft EIR; and identifies standard terminology.

- ▶ Chapter 2, "Project Description": This chapter describes the location, background, and goals and objectives for the Project and describes the Project elements in detail.
- ▶ Chapter 3, "Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures": The sections in this chapter evaluate the expected environmental impacts generated by the Project, arranged by subject area (e.g., Hydrology and Water Quality). The introduction to this chapter describes the approach to the environmental analysis and also lists the effects found not to be significant and therefore not evaluated further in the subsections of Chapter 3. In each subsection of Chapter 3, the regulatory background, existing conditions, analysis methodology, and thresholds of significance are described. The anticipated changes to the existing conditions after development of the Project are then evaluated for each subject area. For any significant or potentially significant impact that would result from Project implementation, mitigation measures are presented, and the level of impact significance after mitigation is identified. Environmental impacts are numbered sequentially within each section (e.g., Impact 3.2-1, Impact 3.2-2, Impact 3.2-3 and so forth and so on). Any required mitigation measures are numbered to correspond to the impact numbering; therefore, the mitigation measure for Impact 3.2-2 would be Mitigation Measure 3.2-2.
- ▶ Chapter 4, "Cumulative Impacts": This chapter provides information regarding cumulative impacts that would result from implementation of the Project together with other past, present, and probable future projects.
- ▶ Chapter 5, "Other CEQA-Mandated Sections": This chapter evaluates growth-inducing impacts and the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources and discloses any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts.
- ▶ Chapter 6, "Alternatives": This chapter evaluates alternatives to the Project, including alternatives considered but eliminated from further consideration, the No-Project Alternative, and two alternative development options. The environmentally superior alternative is identified.
- ▶ Chapter 7, "Report Preparers": This chapter identifies the preparers of the document.
- ▶ Chapter 8, "References": This chapter identifies the organizations and persons consulted during preparation of this Draft EIR and the documents and individuals used as sources for the analysis.
- ▶ Chapter 9, "List of Abbreviations," defines terms used throughout this Draft EIR.

The appendices contain a number of reference items providing support and documentation of the analyses performed for this report.

1.7 STANDARD TERMINOLOGY

This Draft EIR uses the following standard terminology:

- ▶ "No impact" means no change from existing conditions (no mitigation is needed).
- ▶ "Less-than-significant impact" means no substantial adverse change in the physical environment (no mitigation is needed).
- ▶ "Potentially significant impact" means a substantial adverse change in the environment that might occur (mitigation is recommended because potentially significant impacts are treated as significant).
- ▶ "Significant impact" means a substantial adverse change in the physical environment that would occur (mitigation is recommended).
- ▶ "Significant and unavoidable impact" means a substantial adverse change in the physical environment that would occur and that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of all feasible mitigation.