

Lyons Canyon Ranch
Draft Environmental Impact Report

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

2.1 PURPOSE

The County of Los Angeles is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is responsible to have prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Lyons Canyon Ranch Project (State Clearinghouse No.2003031086). This EIR has been prepared in conformance with CEQA (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.), State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, and Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.), and Section 15084, and the Los Angeles County Environmental Guidelines for CEQA. The principal State CEQA Guidelines sections governing content of this document are Sections 15120 through 15132 (Content of an EIR), and Section 15161 (Project EIR).

The purpose of this Draft EIR is to present the existing conditions, analyze potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, and identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant effects of the proposed project, located in the unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County adjacent to the southwestern portion of the City of Santa Clarita.

In accordance with Section 15121 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the primary purpose of this EIR is to provide decision-makers and the public with specific information regarding the environmental effects associated with development of the site according to the proposed project design, identify ways to minimize the significant effects and describe reasonable alternatives to the proposed project. Mitigation measures are provided to reduce the significance of impacts resulting from the project. In addition, this EIR is the primary reference document in the formulation and implementation of a mitigation monitoring program for the proposed project.

This document analyzes the environmental effects of the proposed project to the degree of specificity appropriate to the current proposed actions, as required by Section 15146 of the CEQA Guidelines. This analysis considers the actions associated with the project and determines the short-term and long-term effects associated with their implementation. This EIR discusses both the direct and indirect impacts of this project, as well as the cumulative impacts associated with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. CEQA requires the preparation of an objective, full disclosure document to inform agency decision makers and the general public of the direct and indirect environmental effects of the proposed action, provide mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate significant adverse effects, and identify and evaluate reasonable alternatives to the proposed project.

2.2 CEQA COMPLIANCE & EIR SCOPING PROCESS

In compliance with the State CEQA Guidelines, the County of Los Angeles has taken steps to maximize opportunities to participate in the environmental process. During the preparation of the Draft EIR, an effort was made to contact various Federal, State, regional, and local government agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments and inform the public of the proposed project. This included the distribution of the Notice of Preparation (NOP), including the Initial Study.

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The Draft EIR is subject to a 45-day review period by responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties. In accordance with the provision of Sections 15085(a) and 15087(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, as amended, the County of Los Angeles, serving as the Lead Agency: 1) published a notice of availability of a Draft EIR in a newspaper of general circulation, which states that the Draft EIR will be available for review at the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning, located at 320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles CA, and three Los Angeles County public library branches (Newhall, Valencia, and Canyon Country branches); and 2) prepares and transmits a Notice of Completion (NOC) to the State Clearinghouse.

Any public agency or members of the public desiring to comment on the Draft EIR must submit their comments in writing to the individual identified on the document's NOC prior to the end of the 45-day public review period or the close of public testimony before the Regional Planning Commission (RPC). The Los Angeles County RPC will then hold a public hearing to consider the project and the adequacy of the Draft EIR. Upon the close of the public hearing, the Lead Agency will then proceed to evaluate and prepare responses to written comments received from both citizens and public agencies during the public review period.

The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR, revisions to the Draft EIR, a Mitigation Monitoring Program, and responses to comments addressing concerns raised by responsible agencies or reviewing parties. The Final EIR, including the responses to comments made by public agencies on the Draft EIR, will be provided to the commenting agencies at least ten (10) days prior to its certification.

2.2.1 INITIAL STUDY

In accordance with Section 15063(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, as amended, the County undertook the preparation of an Initial Study. The Initial Study determined that a number of environmental issue areas may be potentially impacted by implementation of the Lyons Canyon Ranch Project. As a result, the Initial Study determined that this Draft EIR should address the project's potential significant impacts on a variety of environmental issue areas.

This EIR addresses impacts in the following areas:

- ◆ Geology, Soils and Seismicity
- ◆ Hydrology, Drainage and Water Quality
- ◆ Hazards
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Biological Resources
- ◆ Cultural Resources
- ◆ Energy and Mineral Resources
- ◆ Aesthetics/Visual Resources
- ◆ Traffic and Circulation
- ◆ Water and Wastewater
- ◆ Schools/Education
- ◆ Fire Services

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- ◆ Sheriff Services
- ◆ Solid Waste
- ◆ Electricity
- ◆ Natural Gas
- ◆ Library Services
- ◆ Parks and Recreation
- ◆ Land Use and Planning

2.2.2 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Pursuant to the provision of Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, as amended, the County of Los Angeles circulated a NOP to public agencies, special districts, and members of the public requesting such notice for a 30-day period commencing July 11, 2005 to August 9, 2005. The purpose of the NOP was to formally convey that the County of Los Angeles is preparing a Draft EIR for the Lyons Canyon Ranch Project, and was soliciting input regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. The Initial Study was circulated with the NOP.

2.3 FORMAT OF THE EIR

The Draft EIR is organized into 11 sections.

Section 1.0, Executive Summary, provides a brief project description and summary of the environmental impacts and mitigation measures.

Section 2.0, Introduction and Purpose, provides CEQA compliance information.

Section 3.0, Project Description, provides a detailed project description indicating project location, background and history, and project characteristics, phasing and objectives, as well as associated discretionary actions required.

Section 4.0, Basis for the Cumulative Analysis, describes the approach and methodology for the cumulative analysis.

Section 5.0, Environmental Analysis, contains a detailed environmental analysis of the existing conditions, project impacts, recommended mitigation measures and unavoidable adverse impacts. The analysis of each environmental category in this Section is organized as follows:

- “Existing Conditions” describes the physical conditions which exist at this time and which may influence or affect the issue under investigation;
- “Significance Threshold Criteria” provides the thresholds which are the basis for conclusions of significance. The primary resource for the criteria is the Initial Study prepared by the County of Los Angeles.

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- “Project Impacts” describes potential environmental changes to the existing physical conditions which may occur if the proposed project is implemented;
- “Cumulative Impacts” describes potential environmental changes to the existing physical conditions which may occur with the proposed project together with all other reasonably foreseeable, planned, and approved future projects;
- “Mitigation Measures” are those specific measures which may be required of the project in order to avoid a significant adverse impact; minimize a significant adverse impact; rectify a significant adverse impact by restoration; reduce or eliminate a significant adverse impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations; or compensate for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environment. The measures presented in this EIR are separated into those that would be implemented as part of project design and measures that would mitigate project impacts above and beyond any reduction in potential impacts accomplished by project design features; and
- “Level of Significance After Mitigation” discusses whether the project and the project’s contribution to cumulative impacts can be reduced to levels that are considered less than significant.

Section 6.0, Alternatives, describes a reasonable range of alternatives to the project or to the location of the project which could feasibly attain the basic project objectives.

Section 7.0, Long-Term Implications of Proposed Project, discusses direct and indirect growth inducing impacts (including Population, Housing, and Employment) and irreversible changes associated with the proposed project.

Section 8.0, Significant Environmental Effects Which Cannot be Avoided if the Proposed Action is Implemented, discusses significant environmental changes that would be involved in the proposed action, should it be implemented.

Section 9.0, Effects Found Not to Be Significant, provides an explanation of potential impacts which have been determined not to be significant.

Section 10.0, Organizations and Persons Consulted, identifies all Federal, State or local agencies, other organizations and individuals consulted.

Section 11.0, Bibliography, identifies reference sources for the EIR.

Section 12.0, Mitigation Monitoring Program, identifies timing of mitigation measure implementation and establishes appropriate monitoring agency.

Appendices, contains technical documentation for the project.

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2.4 RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

Public agencies with jurisdiction over the project site, or from which permit approval for the project is or may be required include the following:

- ◆ United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE);
- ◆ United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS);
- ◆ California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG);
- ◆ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans);
- ◆ Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB);
- ◆ Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA);

2.5 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Pertinent documents relating to this EIR have been cited in accordance with Section 15148 of the State CEQA Guidelines, which encourages “incorporation by reference” as a means of reducing redundancy and length of environmental reports. The following documents, which are available for public review at the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning, are hereby incorporated by reference into this EIR. Information contained within these documents has been utilized for each section of this EIR. A brief synopsis of the scope and content of these documents is provided below:

County of Los Angeles General Plan. The County of Los Angeles General Plan is the long-range planning guide for growth and development of Los Angeles County. The General Plan has two basic purposes: 1) to identify the goals for future physical, social and economic development of the County; and 2) to describe and identify policies and actions adopted to attain those goals. It is a comprehensive document that address all mandatory elements/issues in accordance with state law.

Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan. The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan is a coordinated statement of public policy by the County of Los Angeles for use in making critical public decisions relating to the future of the Santa Clarita Valley. This document was originally adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 1984, and was updated in 1987 and in 1991 to address additional community specific issues and to include updated population and housing information.

County of Los Angeles Land Use Policy Map. This exhibit was adopted along with the County General Plan. This map establishes certain land use designations based on a number of factors, including but not limited to, topography, natural hazards, accessibility, population, biological habitat values, availability of public services, etc.

Castaic Lake Water Agency 2005 Urban Water Management Plan. The Urban Water Management Plan is a planning tool that generally guides the actions of water management agencies. The Plan is intended to provide assistance to water agencies in carrying out their long-term resource planning responsibilities to ensure adequate water supplies to meet existing and future demands for water.