



Resource Conservation District Ventura County

CEQA Notice of Preparation

Date December 19, 2008

Program Title Calleguas Creek Watershed Arundo/Tamarisk Removal Program (CCARP)

Lead Agency Ventura County Resource Conservation District (VCRCD)
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County Ventura

Program Location The CCARP will occur within the riparian corridors of the Calleguas Creek watershed (Watershed) in Ventura County, California, including the cities of Simi Valley, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, and Camarillo. Implementation of CCARP through individual removal projects would occur at sites within these riparian corridors that have established stands of arundo (*Arundo donax*) and/or tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.), or that become infested in the future.

1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The VCRCD proposes the development of the CCARP, a program to guide stakeholders in implementing non-native invasive plant removal projects, with an emphasis on arundo and tamarisk, within the Calleguas Creek watershed. CCARP stakeholders include federal, state, and local agencies and private individuals and organizations. The CCARP will develop a Long-Term Implementation Plan (LTIP) that includes a set of methods for the removal and disposal of arundo and tamarisk, and the revegetation of removal areas. Best management practices will be described in the LTIP to reduce potential impacts from individual CCARP removal projects. In addition, the CCARP will provide a programmatic review and permitting process on a watershed-wide basis, including a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to evaluate the potential impacts associated with adopting and implementing a programmatic-level document to guide in the removal of arundo and tamarisk.

There are numerous negative effects associated with the establishment of arundo and tamarisk in riparian areas, including: decreased water quality and supply; increased flooding; fire and erosion hazards; displacement of native vegetation and habitat; and a reduction in diversity and abundance of riparian-dependent wildlife. In addition, several regulatory agencies have jurisdiction over riparian areas in the Calleguas Creek watershed. Each agency has a separate permitting process with different timelines and fee structures. The financial burden and coordination time of preparing environmental compliance documents and obtaining permits for individual removal projects can be prohibitive.

Therefore, the inception of the CCARP programmatic review and permitting process will facilitate the removal of arundo and tamarisk on a watershed-wide basis. Primary examples of the benefits offered by programmatic review and permitting include: public agencies, environmental groups, and other stakeholders have ample opportunity to voice concerns about the potential removal methods; the overall cost of environmental review is reduced; funding for removal projects becomes more readily available; and the amount of on-the-ground work that can be performed is increased for the same cost as individually permitted projects. In addition, without the CCARP, areas infested by arundo and tamarisk and the negative impacts these species generate will continue to increase in the Watershed. The planning and permitting required for individual removal projects will remain an obstruction to a collaborative watershed-wide removal effort.



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2. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

An Initial Study identifying the potential impacts of the program has been prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063. A copy of this Initial Study can be obtained online at the link listed in section three below. This study determined that CCARP projects may cause potentially significant impacts to air quality, biological resources, coastal beaches and sand dunes, ambient noise levels, water resources, agricultural resources, paleontological resources, cultural resources, hydraulic hazards, fire hazards, and public health. In addition, this study found the potential for less than significant impacts to visual resources, transportation and circulation, and recreation. Therefore, a determination to prepare an EIR was made by the VCRCDC, the lead agency for the CCARP.

The CCARP is expected to result in a net environmental benefit to the Watershed due to the removal of arundo and tamarisk. Potential long-term positive impacts from the removal of these species include an increase in water levels in the natural corridors of the Watershed, a reduction of water temperature and salinity, increase in native habitat for wildlife, improvement of stream flow, and decrease in erosion and fire hazards.

As part of the environmental analysis for the CCARP, the EIR will evaluate all mitigation measures and best management practices described in the LTIP and determine whether additional or modified measures and practices are necessary to reduce the potential impacts from implementation of removal projects for the CCARP. The EIR will also include an analysis of project alternatives and cumulative impacts. Stakeholders and other agencies will utilize this programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to evaluate the potential impacts associated with adopting and implementing a programmatic-level document to guide the removal of arundo and tamarisk.

3. NOTICE AND COMMENTS

In compliance with state guidelines for the implementation of CEQA, this **Notice of Preparation** is hereby sent to inform agencies and interested parties of the development of the CCARP EIR. All agencies, organizations, and individuals will need to use this EIR prepared by the VCRCDC when considering your permit or other approval for removal projects as part of the CCARP. California state law mandates the response from agencies and the public must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this Notice of Preparation. Due to the holiday season, the VCRCDC is extending this response period to the date listed below. Responses may be submitted in writing, or by providing oral comments at a scoping meeting that will be held within the above comment period. The date and location for this meeting will be posted on the following website: www.wildscaperestoration.com.

Requests for noticing and written comments should be directed to Noreen Cabanting at Wildscape Restoration at the address provided above, and should be received no later than **5:00 pm, Monday, February 2, 2009**.

This NOP and the Initial Study for the CCARP can be found online using the following links:

www.wildscaperestoration.com/pdfs/CCARP_Initial_Study.pdf

www.wildscaperestoration.com/pdfs/CCARP_NOP.pdf

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Title: District Manager

Agency: Ventura County Resource Conservation District

Signature: 

Date: December 19, 2008