

SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) identifies and evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase I (Proposed Project).

1.1 PURPOSE AND USE OF THE PEIR

This PEIR was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code §§ 21000-21177) and the Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA (California Administrative Code §§ 15000 *et seq*).

CEQA requires that the potential environmental impacts of a project be identified and that mitigation measures be recommended that may reduce significant impacts. CEQA requires the Lead Agency, in this case the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA), to consider the information contained in the PEIR prior to taking any discretionary action. This PEIR may also be used by other public agencies that must take discretionary actions related to the Proposed Project.

This PEIR is intended to provide information to the WCA, other public agencies, and the general public regarding the potential significant direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project. The PEIR process also requires investigation and development of feasible mitigation measures to reduce significant adverse environmental effects of the Proposed Project to levels below significance. CEQA requires a Lead Agency neither approve nor implement a project unless significant environmental impacts have been reduced (CEQA Guidelines §15091), or, if a Lead Agency approves the project even though significant impacts identified in the PEIR cannot be fully mitigated, the Lead Agency must state in writing the reasons for its action by adopting Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations.

The Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase I includes sixteen projects that would close gaps in the Emerald Necklace's regional trails network and increase access to the trails to hundreds of thousands of people in the project area. Adoption of the implementation plan does not constitute a commitment to any specific project details, construction schedule, or funding priority. Rather, the implementation plan describes a program of potential development for the Emerald Necklace. The funding, scheduling, and detail for each project would be subject to individual approval by the WCA. Therefore, the EIR for the Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase I is a Program EIR, which evaluates at a program level the environmental effects that would result from the development of the sixteen projects.

A PEIR is defined in the CEQA Guidelines as an EIR “which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either geographically, as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program....” (CEQA Guidelines §15168). Projects would be built as funding becomes available. Details of projects that would be implemented under the Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase I are unknown. Under CEQA, these future projects will rely on the PEIR as the base environmental document for environmental review. Prior to implementation, when greater

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detail is known, each project must go through another CEQA review process. Projects will be examined in light of the Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase I and PEIR to determine if the project falls within the scope of the Implementation Plan as examined in the PEIR. If the Lead Agency finds that the subsequent activity would be consistent with the Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase I, and would not result in new effects or require new mitigation measures, the Lead Agency can approve the activity as being within the scope of the project covered by the PEIR and no new environmental document would be required (CEQA Guidelines §15168). Otherwise, subsequent environmental documentation must be prepared. If subsequent documentation is prepared, the environmental analyses would be tiered from this PEIR by incorporating by reference its general discussions and the analysis of cumulative impacts. Subsequent environmental documents would be focused on project- and site-specific impacts.

This PEIR may also be used by other public agencies to issue approvals related to the Implementation Plan – Phase I. A list of the anticipated agency approvals required to implement the Proposed Project is provided in Table 1-1. The types of actions that the WCA, as well as other agencies not included on this list, may take in connection with this PEIR include, but may not be limited to:

- ◆ Approve, adopt, or amend applicable plans, policies, or programs
- ◆ Make findings of consistency
- ◆ Approve and issue permits
- ◆ Approve agreements
- ◆ Provide authorization and approval of funding
- ◆ Provide service

**Table 1-1
Anticipated Agency Approvals and Reviews**

AGENCY	PERMIT OR APPROVAL
Watershed Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Certification of the PEIR ◆ Approval of the Implementation Plan – Phase I ◆ Approval of Feasibility Study
County of Los Angeles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Conditional Use Permit ◆ Site Plan Review
Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), Los Angeles Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stormwater Construction General Permit - including the development and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) ◆ Clean Water Act Section 401
United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clean Water Act Section 404 ◆ Clean Water Act Section 408 ◆ Right-of-Way Acquisition (Project 5)
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fish and Game Code Section 1601
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Encroachment Permit(s)

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AGENCY	PERMIT OR APPROVAL
Cities of Arcadia, Irwindale, El Monte, South El Monte, Rosemead, and City of Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Conditional Use Permit◆ Development Agreement◆ Development Plan◆ Design Review

1.2 PEIR ORGANIZATION

- ◆ **Section 1.0** of the PEIR provides an introduction to the Proposed Project, the purpose of the PEIR, a description of the organization of the PEIR, the intended uses of the PEIR, and a description of the public review process.
- ◆ **Section 2.0** provides a description of the Proposed Project.
- ◆ **Section 3.0** provides the environmental analysis of the Proposed Project. This includes the description of the environmental and regulatory setting, the analysis of environmental impacts, and a discussion of mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate any significant environmental impacts.
- ◆ **Section 4.0** discusses the alternatives and potential environmental impacts of implementing alternatives to the Proposed Project.
- ◆ **Section 5.0** addresses long-term effects of the Proposed Project, including cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, and significant irreversible and/or unavoidable impacts.
- ◆ **Section 6.0** provides a list of agencies and persons consulted.
- ◆ **Section 7.0** includes the references used to prepare the PEIR.
- ◆ **Section 8.0** provides a list of the PEIR preparers.
- ◆ **Section 9.0** includes a list of acronyms and abbreviations.

The Notice of Preparation (NOP), Initial Study, and responses received during the scoping period are presented in Appendix A. Technical reports for some resource areas are also provided in the appendices.

1.3 AVAILABILITY OF THE PEIR/PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, the WCA, as Lead Agency, prepared an Initial Study and NOP for a PEIR on the Proposed Project. A copy of the Initial Study and NOP are provided in Appendix A. The Initial Study and NOP were distributed for review and comment to the State Clearinghouse and interested parties for a 30-day comment period (March 20, 2013 to April 18, 2013). Letters received from agencies and the public during the scoping period are provided in Appendix A.

During the scoping period, a scoping meeting was held on April 3, 2013 at Bassett Park in the City of La Puente. Comments received at that meeting are also provided in Appendix A. After the scoping period, Project 4 from the Implementation Plan was carried forward for separate CEQA review. It is not included as part of this PEIR.

Under CEQA, the analysis in an EIR may be focused on issues determined in the Initial Study to be potentially significant, whereas issues found to have no impact or a less than significant impact do not require further evaluation. Based on the analysis contained in the Initial Study,

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this PEIR analyzes in detail the environmental impacts of the Proposed Project on the following environmental factors:

- ◆ Aesthetics
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Biological Resources
- ◆ Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- ◆ Geology and Soils
- ◆ Greenhouse Gas
- ◆ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- ◆ Hydrology and Water Quality
- ◆ Land Use and Planning
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Public Services
- ◆ Recreation
- ◆ Transportation/Traffic
- ◆ Utilities and Service Systems

The Initial Study determined that the following issues did not warrant further analysis in the PEIR:

- ◆ Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- ◆ Population and Housing

After completion of the Initial Study it was determined that issues related to mineral resources would be discussed in the Land Use and Planning section of the PEIR; therefore, a separate mineral resources section is not included in the PEIR.

This Draft PEIR is being distributed for comment to the same public agencies and interested groups and individuals as the Initial Study and NOP, in addition to any others that have requested to be on the project mailing list. The Draft PEIR is also available for review at www.wca.ca.gov/emerald_necklace_greening_and_trails and at the following location:

Watershed Conservation Authority
100 North Old San Gabriel Canyon Road
Azusa, CA 91702

A period of 45 days has been established for public review of the Draft PEIR for the Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase I. Agencies, organizations, and individuals are invited to comment on the information presented in the Draft PEIR during this period. Specifically, comments are requested on the scope and adequacy of the environmental analysis presented herein. All comments on the Draft PEIR should be sent to the following WCA contact:

Rob Romanek, Project Manager
Watershed Conservation Authority
100 North Old San Gabriel Canyon Road
Azusa, California 91702

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Following the 45-day public review period, the WCA will prepare responses to all comments and will compile these comments and responses into a Final PEIR. The WCA's Board of Directors will consider the information in the Draft and Final PEIR during project review and when making a decision to approve or deny the Proposed Project. The Final PEIR will need to be certified as complete by the Board of Directors prior to making a decision to approve or deny the Proposed Project.

1.4 DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

An EIR may incorporate portions or all of any publicly available document by reference (CEQA Guidelines §15150). The following documents are available for public review at the WCA, 100 North Old San Gabriel Canyon Road, Azusa, CA 91702, and are hereby incorporated by reference into this PEIR:

- ◆ Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase I
- ◆ Emerald Necklace Feasibility Study

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