



County of San Diego

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MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

September 14, 2015

Project Title: San Diego River Trail Segment – El Monte Road to Historic Flume and Lake Jennings Campground Connection

This Document is Considered Draft Until it is Adopted by the Appropriate County of San Diego Decision-Making Body

This Mitigated Negative Declaration is comprised of this form along with the Environmental Initial Study that includes the following:

- a. Initial Study Form
- b. Environmental Analysis Form and attached extended studies for Biological Resources, Cultural Resources and Hazardous Materials

1. California Environmental Quality Act Mitigated Negative Declaration Findings:

Find, that this Mitigated Negative Declaration reflects the decision-making body's independent judgment and analysis, and; that the decision-making body has reviewed and considered the information contained in this Mitigated Negative Declaration and the comments received during the public review period; and that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the project applicant would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur; and, on the basis of the whole record before the decision-making body (including this Mitigated Negative Declaration) that there is no substantial evidence that the project as revised will have a significant effect on the environment.

2. Required Mitigation Measures:

Refer to the attached Environmental Initial Study for the rationale for requiring the following measures:

A. Biological Resources

- BR-1. In order to reduce potential impacts to the California gnatcatcher to less than significant and to comply with the County's Biological Mitigation Ordinance, all brushing, clearing and/or grading will be restricted (i.e., none will be allowed) within 300 feet of coastal sage scrub habitat during the breeding season of the California gnatcatcher (March 1-August 15). The County DPR Director may waive this condition with concurrence from the agencies.
- BR-2. Potentially significant impacts on the nesting success of tree- and/or ground-nesting raptors shall be mitigated through seasonal restrictions and pre-construction surveys. In order to mitigate potentially significant impacts to nesting success of tree- and/or ground-nesting raptors, vegetation clearing or grading shall be restricted during the breeding season (January 15–July 15 and February 1 to July 31, respectively, annually) unless pre-construction surveys by a qualified biologist determine no nesting raptors would be impacted by the proposed work. If active nests are identified within the impact area, vegetation-clearing activities shall not occur within 500 feet of tree-nesting raptor nests and 800 feet of ground-nesting raptor nests until either the breeding season has ended or the nest is no longer active.
- BR-3. Pre-construction training for construction crews will be conducted to address sensitive species that occur or have potential to occur along the proposed trail.
- BR-4. Mitigation for trail impacts to sensitive vegetation will be accomplished by the restoration of 1.39 acres of Diegan coastal sage scrub at an offsite location at El Monte Regional Park.

B. Cultural Resources

- CR-1. Prior to Project construction, County DPR will place temporary construction fencing around all identified cultural resources in close proximity to project construction locations: the historic-period resources at the El Monte Pump Station (P-37-034482), elements of P-37-034486 in close proximity to the switchbacks, and the northern entrance to the El Monte Tunnel portion of CA-SDI-11296H. Temporary fencing during construction will reduce likelihood of unforeseen impacts to historical resources from construction activities.

CR-2. Prior to project construction, a professional archaeologist will provide cultural resources sensitivity training to construction personnel. Training will address both the types of resources that might be unearthed or otherwise encountered during construction activities, as well as the procedures to be followed in the event of an unanticipated discovery of cultural resources. Should cultural resources be encountered during construction, work will stop in the immediate vicinity of the find until a qualified archaeologist can assess the find and provide recommendations for avoidance (preferred) or further treatment, as required. Minimally, any newly identified features related to CA-SDI-11296H, the P-37-034486, or the historic El Monte Pump Station (P-37-034482) shall be added to the site record form for the resource. Although the likelihood for encountering unrecorded cultural resources is low, providing training to field personnel will ensure the proper identification and treatment of any materials should they be encountered.

CR-3. To help protect historic-period cultural resources in close proximity to project elements, County DPR shall install interpretive signage and fencing at the pump station and along the trail corridor near the El Monte Tunnel entrance portion of CA-SDI-11296H, and at the switchback segments in close proximity to P-37-034486. The signage should detail the significance or potential significance of the resources, and inform users of the importance of leaving the resources undisturbed. By increasing trail users' awareness of the presence and significance of the resources, the likelihood of any unforeseen impacts to the resources will be reduced. The signage at the two switchback points nearest to P-37-034486 will also inform trail users of the danger that P-37-034486 may contain asbestos and lead.

C. Hazardous Materials

HM-1. All lead/asbestos issues will be abated by HWD and SDRC prior to County DPR opening the parking area, trailhead and trail corridor for public use.

3. Critical Project Design Elements:

The following project design elements were either proposed in the project or the result of compliance with specific environmental laws and regulations and were essential in reaching the conclusions within the attached Environmental Initial Study. While the following are not technically mitigation measures, their implementation must be assured to avoid potentially significant environmental effects.

- As a condition of the project, HWD will be responsible for containing the lead-based paint on the pumphouse and for abatement of the dilapidated shed near the parking area. SDRC is responsible for installing a chainlink fence around a segment of the pipeline to prevent the public from disturbing the portions of the pipeline that contain asbestos. The fence will be located outside of County DPR's easement. Long-term maintenance of the fence will be the responsibility of HWD. County DPR will not open the site for public use until abatement has been completed.

- Ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the project area will occur during implementation of the El Monte County Park Resource Management Plan (RMP). County DPR will ensure trail maintenance is confined to the existing trail alignment and is conducted in such a manner as to avoid impacting biological and cultural resources within the project area. The trail corridor will be patrolled by Park Rangers, who will identify unauthorized trail use or other adverse effects associated with increased human use (e.g. trash). Such issues will be addressed through construction of fence segments, installation of signs, or other means to prevent ongoing impacts resulting from increased human use on the site or competition from domestic animals.

ADOPTION STATEMENT: This Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted and above California Environmental Quality Act findings made by the:

_____ (Decision-Making Body)

On _____ (Date/Item #)

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Department of Parks and Recreation