

San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area

Resource Management Plan/Preliminary General Plan

Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report



*US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation
California Department of Parks and Recreation*

*Public Review Draft
April 2005*



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Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report*

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**U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation**
South-Central California Area Office
1243 N. Street
Fresno, CA 93721-1813



California Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

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TO All Interested Agencies, Organizations, and Persons, and the Federal Register and State Clearinghouse

NEPA/CEQA NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

SAN LUIS RESERVOIR STATE RECREATION AREA DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report (EIR/EIS) has been prepared by U. S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) for the San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) and General Plan (GP). Reclamation and the Department are the lead agencies, responsible for preparation of this document.

Project Location

The project area is situated north and south of State Route (SR) 152 between U.S. 101 and Interstate 5, approximately two hours from San Francisco and approximately 12 miles west of Los Banos, CA., as shown on the following location map.



Project Description

A Resource Management Plan (RMP) and General Plan (GP) are being prepared for the San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area (SRA) and adjacent lands managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Department), California Department of Water Resources (DWR), and California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), on lands owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). This is being done through a cooperative agreement between Reclamation and the Department. Meeting the required needs of both the RMP and GP, the document includes the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR), combined in one action, known as the Plan. The project area consists of over 27,000 acres owned by Reclamation and includes the water surfaces of San Luis Reservoir, O'Neill Forebay, Los Banos Reservoir, and adjacent recreation lands in the vicinity of Los Banos, California. The EIS/EIR is a program-level analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with the adoption of the Plan. The Plan is designed to be self-mitigating. The Plan identifies general areas in which

development may occur. A key element of the Plan is to maximize avoidance of environmentally sensitive areas. Specific projects developed under the Plan will go through environmental review to determine specific impacts and additional mitigation, which may be required, at the time of their implementation.

Use of an integrated Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) is encouraged by both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA and its guidelines have numerous provisions allowing state and local agencies to use an EIS as a substitute for an EIR. The Plan for the project area including the environmental analyses is consistent with NEPA and CEQA requirements as per NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), CEQA (California Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.), and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Section 15000 et seq.).

The proposed federal action, for the (EIS/EIR) is the preparation and adoption of a program-level resource and recreation management Plan. The Plan identifies policies (in the form of goals and guidelines) and specifies the desired future condition of project area lands and waters for recreation and resource use and management. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) require Reclamation and the Department to explore a range of alternative management approaches and the environmental effects of these actions. Four management alternatives are evaluated and compared in Chapter 4 of the document. The purpose of the EIS/EIR is to assist Reclamation and the Department in finalizing a decision on a preferred alternative to implement the Plan.

Summary of Impacts

The EIS/EIR is a program-level analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with the adoption of the Plan. The Plan is designed to be self-mitigating and therefore, no significant environmental impacts would occur as a result of the proposed project.

Public Comment Period

The 45-day public comment period for this Draft EIS/EIR will commence on April 27, 2005 and conclude on June 10, 2005. Copies of the Draft Plan and EIS/EIR will be available for review at the Four Rivers Sector office (31426 Gonzaga Road, Gustine, CA, 95322, 209-826-1197) at the Los Banos Library (1312 South 7th Street, Los Banos, CA 93635, 209-826-5254), at the address noted below and at the Department website at <http://www.parks.ca.gov/>. Once there, click on "General Plans in Progress" in the right margin. Please submit comments in writing to the address provided below. Comment letters must be postmarked by June 10, 2005.

California Department of Parks and Recreation

Northern Service Center

One Capitol Mall, Suite 500

Sacramento, CA 95814

Contact: Wayne Woodroof, Senior Park and Recreation Specialist

Phone: (916) 445-8850 Fax: (916) 445-9100

wwood@parks.ca.gov

and

United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Reclamation

South-Central California Area Office

1243 N Street

Fresno, CA 93721-1813

Contact: Robert Epperson, Resource Management Specialist

Phone: (559)487-5409 Fax: (559)487-5397

bepperson@mp.usbr.gov



SAN LUIS RESERVOIR SRA

Executive Summary

The project area is owned by Reclamation and was built as part of the water storage and delivery system of reservoirs, aqueducts, power plants, and pumping stations operated under the California State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP). Construction began on San Luis Reservoir in 1963 and was completed in 1967 with planned joint use by the SWP and the CVP. Reclamation was the constructing agency and DWR is the operating agency. The Department was given the responsibility to plan, design, construct, maintain, and operate the recreation areas surrounding the reservoirs.

Lands managed by the Department for recreation are part of the State Park system and comprise the SRA, one type of classification under the system. The Department also owns and manages Pacheco State Park, which is located west of the San Luis Reservoir, adjacent but outside the project area. A separate General Plan exists for Pacheco State Park and was done in coordination with this Plan. Additional lands were set aside by Reclamation for wildlife preservation and mitigation to be managed by DFG. These lands within the project area are known as the O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Area and San Luis Wildlife Area, and are managed pursuant to DFG's mission, separate from the SRA lands. To the north of San Luis Reservoir and west of O'Neill Forebay are the Upper and Lower Cottonwood wildlife areas, owned by DFG and therefore not part of the project area. The California Department of Forestry (CDF) operates a fire station on Reclamation lands, south of Gonzaga Road.

The SRA and wildlife areas within the project area receive thousands of visitors each year who participate in a variety of land- and water-based recreational activities, including hiking, biking, nature study, picnicking, windsurfing, fishing, boating, personal watercraft use, and camping. Long-range recreation and resource management plans are essential to fulfill the missions of both Reclamation and the Department. Reclamation is required to prepare a Resource Management Plan and the Department is required to prepare a General Plan. These plans are intended to set forth goals and guidelines for management of these resources for the next 25 years. The purpose of preparing a joint Plan is to provide coordinated direction for recreation and resource management of the project area lands while continuing to serve the primary purpose of water storage and distribution for the SWP and the CVP.

The SRA lands are currently accessible to the public at five primary locations: Dinosaur Point Use Area at the west side of San Luis Reservoir; San Luis Creek Use Area on the west side of O'Neill Forebay; Basalt Use Area at the southeast corner of San Luis Reservoir; Medeiros Use Area, south of O'Neill Forebay; and Los Banos Creek Use Area along the north and south shores of Los Banos Reservoir. Each of these locations offers different types of land- and water-based recreation for a variety of individuals and small and large groups. O'Neill Forebay and San Luis wildlife areas each have separate parking areas to access the numerous trails and hunting areas open to the public.

The project area contains a rich array of natural and cultural resources that require coordinated management in combination with visitor use and education, and water storage and distribution. Map 4 summarizes the key biological features and wildlife survey points in the project area. Wildlife species such as the San Joaquin kit fox and other federally endangered species are known to exist in the vicinity and require coordinated planning to ensure optimum habitat protection.

Other challenges include safety-related issues of ingress and egress from SR 152. This busy vehicular corridor already exceeds its capacity related to volume of vehicles and is particularly challenging to enter and exit the SRA for Department, DWR, and CDF staff and the general public visiting Basalt and San Luis Creek use areas. The remote location and indirect access to Los Banos Reservoir and Los Banos Creek Use Area, 10 miles to the southeast of San Luis Reservoir, also pose challenges to management staff.

While currently able to accommodate visitors, trends in population within the region reveal the possibility of increased recreation demand at the project area facilities. Tracking and planning visitor trends in this location, the region, and other similar facilities will be essential for long-term plan implementation.

This Plan includes an overview of existing conditions, including a summary of opportunities and constraints, a plan for the future use and management of the project area, and the associated environmental analysis pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Reclamation and the Department have embarked on related planning work on other similar units throughout the state and utilize the *Resource Management Plan Guidebook*, *Planning for the Future*, and *California State Parks Planning Handbook*, respectively, to guide the planning process and the contents of such plans. Long-term management at the project area needs to balance the protection of natural and cultural resources, visitor use and education, and operations and maintenance while complying with the engineering and operational requirements for water storage and distribution. The context of the project area within the local and regional planning framework will ensure partnering with public agencies, landowners, and other stakeholders to ensure coordinated and efficient plan implementation.

APPROACH TO THE PLAN

An analysis of existing conditions was undertaken as part of the planning process utilizing the collective knowledge of Reclamation, Department, DWR, and DFG staff, research of the physical and operational conditions and visitor activity. These agencies and other interested agencies, along with landowners, recreational users, and other individuals, all provided information about the history and conditions at the project area, which was summarized in a written and graphic report (see Appendix E). A geographic information system was set up to compile much of the information currently known and collected about the recreational, natural, and cultural systems of the project area. The compiled data was then used to structure key issues to be addressed and aid decision making.

Agency staff participated in several meetings and workshops to identify and develop strategies that address the specific issues for management at the project area. Existing site data and preliminary opportunities and constraints were presented at a public workshop and scoping meetings held in January and February 2002. These sessions, as well as a visitor survey, sought to inform the public about the planning process and solicit ideas for project area enhancements and visions for its future. Public agencies in the region also provided feedback through the NEPA/CEQA scoping process and attendance at workshops.

Management policies, in the form of goals and guidelines were developed based on five broad planning areas to provide the framework for future plan implementation. The five planning areas are: 1) resource management, 2) visitor experience, interpretation and education, 3) local and regional planning, 4) infrastructure and operations, and 5) water operations. Management zones were created for land and water-based use areas to identify land and resource use and management currently and for the future.

Based on the collected information and stakeholder input, four project alternatives were developed, including a No Action/No Project alternative. These alternatives provide various levels of resource management and visitor use and education programs for the project area, and were presented to the public in May 2003. Alternative 1 is a No Action/No Project plan. Alternative 2 provides the least amount of new improvements and resource management actions. Alternative 3 is the preferred

alternative and provides a balance of new facilities within existing developed areas and more aggressive resource management actions. Alternative 4 provides the most overall intensive facility development alternative. The Preferred Alternative (3) reflects Reclamation's and the Department's mandate, stated purpose and vision, public interests, agencies' relevant rules and regulations, and opportunities and constraints in all planning areas. It provides implementation of the project area-wide goals and guidelines while balancing current and future needs to ensure plan longevity.

SUMMARY OF THE PLAN

The Plan sets forth project area-wide management goals and guidelines will be used to implement all phases of project area use, future actions, and to measure Plan success. These goals and guidelines fall under five broad planning areas with relevant issue areas for each category, as follows:

Resource Management

- Scenic/Aesthetic
- Cultural/Historic
- Geology/Soils
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Vegetation
- Wildlife

Visitor Experience, Interpretation and Education

- Visitor Facilities
- Trails
- Interpretive Themes
- Concession Opportunities

Local and Regional Planning

- Interagency Cooperation
- Regional Plans
- Population and Demographics
- Linkages

Infrastructure and Operations

- Project Area Access and Circulation
- Management Agreements
- Staffing Needs and Facilities
- Utilities

Water Operations

- Water Elevation Fluctuations

- Operation of Dam and Power Facilities

This Plan also sets forth management zones that, based on existing conditions and resources, recreation uses, and landscape character, provide an overall direction for managing different lands and waters within the project area while recognizing the uniqueness and diversity of the landscape and surface waters. The six management zones are:

- Administration and Operation Zone (AO)
- Frontcountry Zone (FC)
- Backcountry (BC)
- Suburban Zone (SU)
- Rural Developed Zone (RD)
- Rural Natural Zone (RN)

Map 6 illustrates the project area management zones. For each zone a summary of existing features, purpose and intent, resource goals, and land use is presented. The AO Zone contains areas of existing operations and associated buildings and will be used for project area operations and maintenance activities but will allow limited public access. The FC Zone delineation can be considered the face of the project area. Visitors will experience this zone upon entry and it will contain the most active user facilities. The BC Zone delineates the area(s) that accommodate public access in the form of hiking, biking, and day use, and will have limited motorized access, respective of the primitive landscape character. The SU, RD, and RN zones are based on an inventory system for water surface areas known as Water Recreation Opportunities Spectrum (WROS) (Aukerman, Haas 2003). This inventory system takes into account physical, social, and management attributes. Each of the project area water bodies has a designated management zone according to their attributes.

Recognizing that the project area's carrying capacity is based on many factors (i.e., data collection, project area purpose, and the desired future conditions) a summary of the existing visitor use and facilities is provided including the proposed visitors and facilities that can be quantified to demonstrate the prescribed visitor capacity. Additionally, a series of quality indicators were developed to formulate a framework for monitoring carrying capacity for the planning areas outlined in the Plan. From these, managers can use adaptive management strategies to determine when alternative management actions are needed to ensure that the desired conditions are being met.

Based on the Plan policies and the management zones, three action alternatives were developed to implement the Plan, all respecting the need to protect and preserve natural and cultural resources throughout the project area. Maps 7 through 9 illustrate the primary components of the three action alternatives. Resource management activities are more aggressive in Alternative 3 and 4, however, all alternatives include provisions for different ways to accomplish resource goals. In all three action alternatives, the project area-wide goals and guidelines provide for the Plan to be self-mitigating. The Preferred Alternative (3) provides a balance of additional visitor and operational facilities while maintaining the essential character and resource base of the project area. This alternative will also allow more visitors to use the project area over time, as demand increases, and provide more recreational opportunities to serve a more diverse group of recreational users. This is achieved in concert with the protection of natural and cultural resources, by concentrating new visitor service areas and facilities in and around

existing developed areas and in close proximity to infrastructure to limit development in undisturbed areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The Plan reflects the mandate of Reclamation and the Department for the stewardship of sensitive resources, and recreation opportunities, while also reflecting Reclamation's and DWR's mandate to provide water to the SWP and the CVP. The protection and restoration of natural and cultural resources are key components of the Plan; therefore, the Plan is self-mitigating. An evaluation of potential impacts was conducted during Plan preparation. It was possible to design the Plan such that significant impacts to resources are avoided, and it provides the least environmentally damaging alternatives.

The Plan retains large undeveloped expanses of the project area, thus maintaining its ability to function as a regional wildlife corridor, to protect native vegetation, watershed and surface water stewardship, and to preserve cultural and scenic resources. The Plan identifies conceptual sites for proposed new and expanded facilities, which would be located in the least environmentally constrained areas. The environmental analysis prepared for the Plan is programmatic in scope and self-mitigating and does not contain project-specific analysis for the recommended facilities identified in the Plan.

A description of each project alternative is provided in Chapter 3, Section 3.4. Chapter 4 evaluates the potential for significant environmental effects for the following environmental resource areas:

- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Public Services
- Scenic/Aesthetic Resources

For each of the potential impacts identified, the Plan guidelines serve as mitigation and, when implemented, would maintain potential environmental impacts at a less-than-significant level for each environmental resource area. Specific projects would undergo subsequent NEPA/CEQA review in the future as appropriate.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AADT	Average Annual Daily Trips
ABAG	Association of Bay Area Governments
ACH	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
Af	acre-feet
AO	Administration and Operations Zone
AQMD	Air Quality Management District
ASC	Agricultural Services Center
AUM	animal unit month
Authority	California High-Speed Rail Authority
BAAQMD	Bay Area Air Quality Management District
Basin Plan	Central Valley Region Water Quality Control Plan
BC	Backcountry Zone
BMP	Best Management Practices
BP	Before Present
BRM	bedrock mortar
CALFED	CALFED Bay-Delta Program
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation

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CDEC	California Data Exchange
CDF	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CESA	California Endangered Species Act
CHRIS	California Historical Resources Information System
CNDDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
COLD	Cold Freshwater Habitat
CORP	California Outdoor Recreation Plan
CRHR	California Register of Historical Resources
SWP	California State Water Project
CVP	Central Valley Project
DbA	A-weighted decibel
DAF	Dissolved Air Flotation
Department	California Department of Parks and Recreation
DFG	California Department of Fish and Game
DMC	Delta Mendota Canal
DO	Dissolved Oxygen
DRI	Desert Research Institute
DPR	California Department of Parks and Recreation
DWR	California Department of Water Resources
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
ESA	federal Endangered Species Act
FC	Frontcountry Zone
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency

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FMP	Fire Management Plan
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FWCA	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
Gilroy General Plan	<i>Gilroy 2002-2020 General Plan</i>
gdp	Gallons per minute
GIS	Geographic information systems
GP	General Plan
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
Hollister General Plan	<i>Hollister General Plan 1995-2010</i>
I-	Interstate
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IRRS	Interregional Road System
ITR	International Turbine Research, Inc.
KFPACT	Kit Fox Planning and Conservation Team
km	Kilometer
kWh	kilowatt hours
LAC	Limits of Acceptable Change
LAFCO	Local Agency Formation Commission
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
LOS	Level of Service
Los Banos General Plan	<i>The City of Los Banos General Plan</i>
LZ	Leased Zone
MARTS	Merced Area Regional Transit System
MCAG	Merced County Association of Governments
MCL	Maximum Contaminant Level

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Merced County General Plan	<i>Merced County Year 2000 General Plan</i>
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
mph	miles per hour
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
MTBE	Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NCCP	Natural Communities Conservation Program
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOI	Notice of Intent
NOP	Notice of Preparation
NO _x	oxides of nitrogen
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWI	National Wetlands inventory
OHP	Office of Historic Preservation
OHV	Off Highway Vehicle
PAID	Planned Agricultural Industrial Development
Park	Pacheco State Park
PCS	Potential contaminant sources
PG&E	Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Plan	Resource Management Plan, General Plan and EIR/EIS
PM ₁₀	particulate matter with a diameter of 10 micrometers or less
PRBO	Point Reyes Bird Observatory

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PRC	Public Resources Code
Reclamation	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
RD	Rural Developed Zone
RFI	Request for interest
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RN	Rural Natural Zone
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
RTPA	Regional Transportation Planning Agency
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
Santa Clara County General Plan	<i>Santa Clara County General Plan, Charting a Course for the County's Future, 1995-2010</i>
SCS	U.S. Soil Conservation Service
SCVWD	Santa Clara Valley Water District
Secretary	Secretary of the Interior
SFBAAB	San Francisco Bay Air Basin
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SIPs	State Implementation Plans
SJVAB	San Joaquin Valley Air Basin
SJVUAPCD	San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District
SOP	standard operating procedures
SO _x	oxides of sulfur
SP	State Park
SR	State Route
SRA	San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area
SU	Suburban Zone
SWP	State Water Project
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TCR	Transportation Concept Report
TDS	Total dissolved solids

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TOC	Total organic compound
UC Merced	University of California, Merced
US 101	U.S. Highway 101
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
UTC	Ultimate Transportation Corridor
VERP	Visitor Experience and Resource Protection
WARM	Warm freshwater habitat
WROS	Water Recreation Opportunity Spectrum



S A N L U I S R E S E R V O I R S R A

1. Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

Resource Management Plan/General Plan

Pursuant to individual policy requirements, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) have recognized the benefits of preparing a management plan (Plan) for common lands that they own and manage. Reclamation is required to prepare resource management plans and the Department is required to prepare general plans. Although the federal requirements for the Resource Management Plan (RMP) differ somewhat from the state requirements for a General Plan (GP), this joint Plan is being developed through a cooperative effort between the federal and state agencies to ensure comprehensive and cohesive management of the project area and satisfies the requirements of both the RMP and GP processes. The project area is an assemblage of lands and waters consisting of approximately 27,000 acres, owned by Reclamation and managed for different purposes by the Department, California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and California Department of Water Resources (DWR).

This Plan is being developed with a joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) and in consultation with all stakeholder agencies, organizations, and interested public. It will be adopted by Reclamation leadership and the State Park and Recreation Commission. The purpose of the plan is to permit the coordinated development and management of recreation lands, waters, and facilities under Reclamation ownership. Although the Plan does not address water operations or power generation, it will provide management guidance for the next 25 years and be used as the basis for directing recreation and resource management activities on Reclamation lands and waters in a manner that maintains and enhances public and resource benefits, and maintains consistency with their purpose for water storage and distribution.

Plan Program and Policy

RMP Program and Policy

The mid-Pacific Region, South-Central Area office of Reclamation is conducting a multi-year effort to prepare an RMP for each of its major facilities. This program is guided by federal legislation and policies to ensure that federal lands are managed to serve a wide range of public use. Pursuant to the Reclamation Recreation Act of 1992, Title 28 (P.L. 102-575) and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) (40CFR 1500-08), Reclamation is required to develop an RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The requirement is also an outcome of *Assessment '87*, a Reclamation study that examined the future direction of its programs. This study established a broad framework for moving forward into the 21st century with increased emphasis on the improved management of projects and the protection of the environment. Each RMP is intended to provide the management framework needed to balance the development, use, and protection of Reclamation lands and their associated natural, cultural, and recreational resources. It is Reclamation's blueprint for future resource management decisions to guide Reclamation, managing partners, and agency cooperators and to inform the public about the resource management policies and actions to be implemented over the life of the RMP.

Reclamation's resource management policy is to provide a broad level of stewardship to ensure and encourage resource protection, conservation, and multiple uses, as appropriate. Management practices and principles established in this RMP, in accordance with existing federal laws, regulations, and policies, provide for the protection of fish, wildlife, and other natural resources, cultural resources, public health and safety; and applicable uses of Reclamation lands and water areas, public access, and outdoor recreation.

General Plan Program and Policy

In accordance with Public Resources Code §5002.2 regarding General Plan guidelines and §21000 et seq. concerning the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Department is required to prepare a General Plan and Environmental Impact Report for the land that it manages, in this case, the San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area (SRA). The purpose of the General Plan is to guide future development activities and management objectives at the SRA. In accordance with this requirement, this joint plan establishes general management policies for lands classified as State Recreation Areas within the project area. Public Resources Code, Section 5019.56 classifies state recreation units according to the following definition:

State recreation units consist of areas selected, developed, and operated to provide outdoor recreational opportunities. The units shall be designated by the commission by naming, in accordance with Article I (commencing with Section 5001) and this article relating to classification.

In the planning of improvements to be undertaken within state recreation units, consideration shall be given to compatibility of design with the surrounding scenic and environmental characteristics.

State recreation units may be established in the terrestrial or non-marine aquatic (lake or stream) environments of the state and shall be further classified as one of the following types:

- (a) State recreation areas, consisting of areas selected and developed to provide multiple recreational opportunities to meet other than purely local needs. The areas shall be selected for their having terrain capable of withstanding extensive human impact and for their proximity to large population centers, major routes of travel, or proven recreational resources such as manmade or natural bodies of water. Areas containing ecological, geological, scenic, or cultural resources of significant value shall be preserved within state wildernesses, state reserves, state parks, or natural or cultural preserves, or, for those areas situated seaward of the mean high tide line, shall be designated state marine (estuarine) reserves, state marine (estuarine) parks, state marine (estuarine) conservation areas, or state marine (estuarine) cultural preservation areas.*

Improvements may be undertaken to provide for recreational activities, including, but not limited to, camping, picnicking, swimming, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, boating, waterskiing, diving, winter sports, fishing, and hunting.

Improvements to provide for urban or indoor formalized recreational activities shall not be undertaken within state recreation areas."

Other classifications for state recreation units include underwater recreation areas and State Beaches; however, only the SRA classification is relevant for this Plan.

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT AREA

Location and History of the Project Area

The project area, located north and south of State Route (SR) 152, encompasses over 27,000 acres and includes San Luis Reservoir, O'Neill Forebay, Los Banos Reservoir and adjacent lands. State Road 33 and the community of Santa Nella are located two miles east. The City of Los Banos is 12 miles east of the San Luis Reservoir. The City of Gilroy is located 38 miles to the west. The SRA also includes the Los Banos Reservoir, located 10 miles to the southeast of San Luis Reservoir. The project area is situated in the foothills of the Diablo Range and bordered on the west by the hilly terrain that separates the San Joaquin Valley from the Diablo Range. U.S. 101 passes approximately 30 miles to the west, and Interstate 5 to the east. Map 1 illustrates the location and the project area boundary.

San Luis Reservoir was built as part of the water storage and delivery system of reservoirs, aqueducts, powerplants, and pumping stations operated under the California State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP). The Reservoir has a capacity of 2 million acre-feet and is the largest off-stream reservoir in the United States. San Luis Reservoir stores water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (fed by the California Aqueduct and the Delta Mendota Canal [DMC]), which is pumped from O'Neill Forebay to San Luis Reservoir. The function of the San Luis reservoir is to store and regulate water pumped from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta for use in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California. Construction began on San Luis Reservoir in 1963 and was completed in 1967, with planned joint use by the SWP and the CVP. Reclamation was the constructing agency and owns the land, and DWR is the operating agency. The nearby Los Banos Reservoir was built to prevent storm runoff from flooding the California Aqueduct and Delta Mendota Canal.

As part of the land acquisition undertaken by Reclamation for the CVP and upon completion of the water storage facilities, a series of legal agreements and associated correspondence between various agencies were executed to manage different land areas. Additionally, right-of-way agreements were executed between Reclamation and various utility interests including Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and Chevron Oil. A detailed list of these agreements is summarized in Appendix A. Principally, the management of recreation and associated facilities was transferred to the Department. Key dates for the development of recreational facilities and management by the Department are as follows:

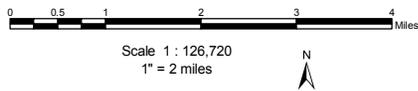
- **May 1965** - San Luis Reservoir and Forebay Recreation Development Plan (Bulletin No. 117-7).
- **June 1966** - San Luis Reservoir and Forebay Recreation Development Plan, Appendix C: Fish and Wildlife Development Plan (Bulletin No. 117-7).
- **April 8, 1969 (Amended July 2, 1982)** - Agreement between the United States of America and the State of California for the Construction and Operation of the Initial Recreation Facilities of the San Luis Unit (Contract No. 14-06-200-4353A).
- **November 1971** - General Development Plan, San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area.
- **February 1986** - General Plan Amendment, San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area.

Project Area Ownership and Management

Reclamation owns most of the land surrounding the reservoirs; however, other agencies are involved in operating and managing these lands. Map 2 illustrates ownership and management of the lands in and around the project area. The agencies include the Department (recreation management), DWR (reservoir and water distribution operations), and DFG (San Luis and O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Areas and Upper and Lower Cottonwood Wildlife Areas). Upper and Lower Cottonwood Wildlife Areas are on lands owned and managed by DFG so are not within the project area. The San Luis and O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Areas, although managed by DFG, are on Reclamation-owned lands and are therefore included in the project area. All of these Wildlife Areas were set aside during the construction of the reservoirs as mitigation for habitat lost resulting from development of the CVP. Appendix A also includes a summary of legal agreements detailing the transfer of management of wildlife mitigation lands to DFG. A smaller mitigation parcel known as Jasper-Sears, located near the current SRA Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) area, is also owned and managed by DFG and is not part of the project area. Additionally, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) utilizes an existing fire station building on Reclamation lands for the purpose of fire protection.

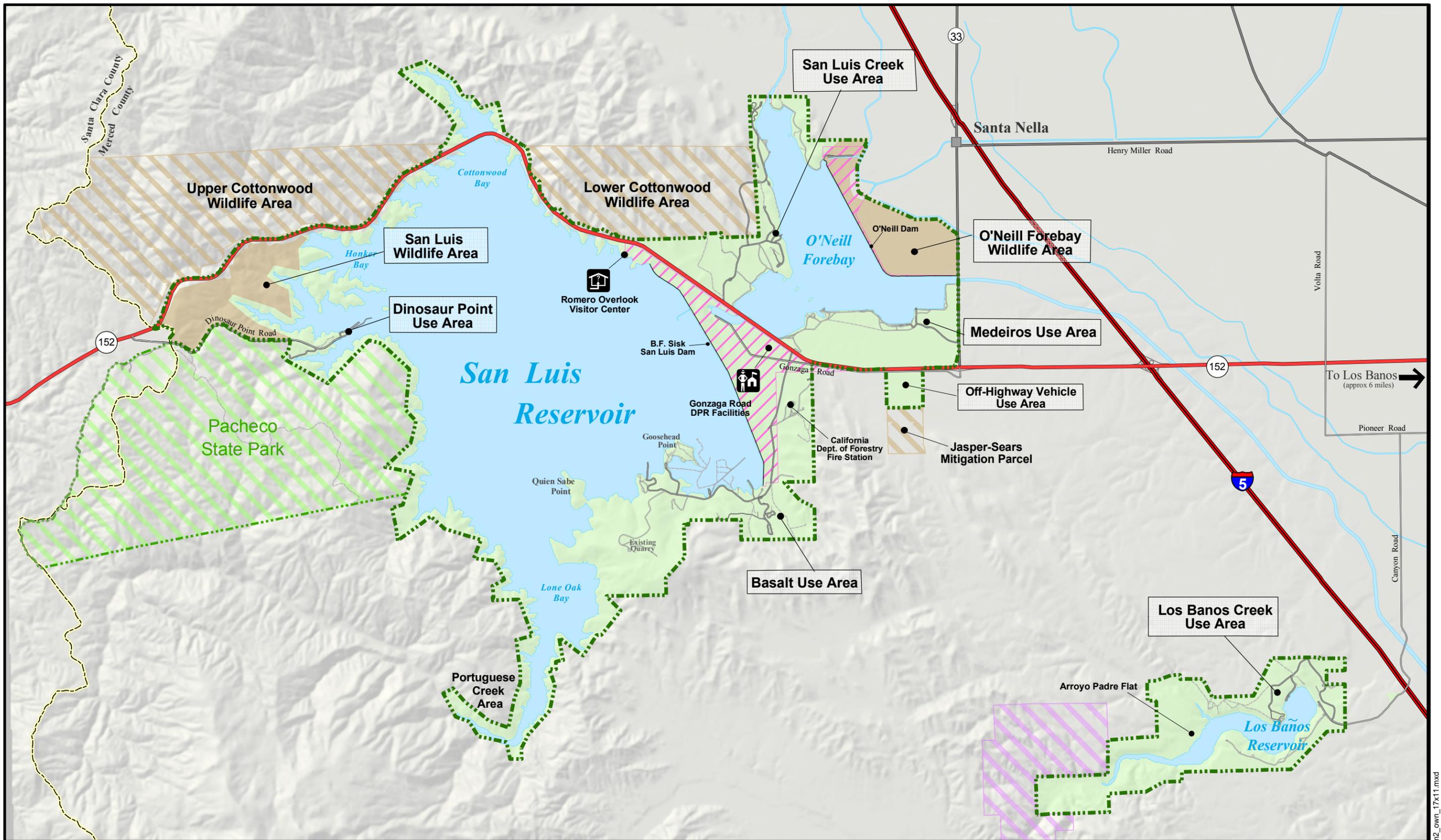
1.3 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN/GENERAL PLAN

The proposed federal action, as required for the EIS/EIR is the preparation and adoption of a program-level resource and recreation management Plan. The Plan identifies policies (in the form of goals and guidelines) and specifies the desired future condition of project area lands and waters for recreation and resource use and management. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and CEQA require Reclamation and the Department to explore a range of alternative management approaches and the environmental effects of these actions. Four management alternatives are evaluated and compared in Chapter 4 of this document. The purpose of the EIS/EIR is to assist Reclamation and the Department in finalizing a decision on a preferred alternative to implement the Plan.



 Project Area


**San Luis Reservoir
 State Recreation Area**
MAP 1
Location Map



Source: USGS DRG / EDAW, 2002



Scale 1 : 79,200
1" = 1.25 miles



4/20/05

EDAW

Land Management and Ownership Status		Boundaries	
	DPR and DWR managed (USBR owned)		Pacheco State Park
	DFG managed (USBR owned)		DFG owned and managed
	Joint Use Area		Project Area
	DWR owned		


**San Luis Reservoir
State Recreation Area**
MAP 2
Ownership & Management

P:\2002\2s035.0\gis\arcmap\sanluis_m2_own_17x11.mxd

Purpose of and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the Plan is to provide a program and set of policy guidelines necessary to encourage orderly use, development, and management of the project area's water surfaces and the surrounding lands owned by Reclamation for recreation and resource protection. The Plan will provide opportunities to enhance outdoor recreational experiences for the three reservoirs and their shorelines and assure their compatibility with the surrounding scenic, environmental, and cultural resources of the project area. In addition, this Plan proposes uses that are compatible with Reclamation's obligation to operate the reservoirs for water storage and delivery.

The need for the Plan arises from the current General Plan for the SRA lands which was developed in 1971 and amended in 1986. A resource inventory was compiled in 1973. Since the adoption of that plan, there have been several changes in the physical and regulatory environment that have indicated the need for an updated plan. While facilities within the project area are adequate to satisfy the current user population, an updated plan is needed that will take into account population growth projected to occur within the state that might affect the level of recreational services and facilities needed. Additionally, a plan for managing resources based on the current status of natural and cultural resources and the associated regulatory framework is necessary for the long-term stewardship of these resources. Following the adoption of the Plan, Reclamation and the Department will update their management agreement for the "administration, operation, maintenance and development" of the project area, pursuant to the Federal Water Project Recreation Act of July 9, 1965 and applicable section of the Public Resource Code, last amended July 1982.

Subsequent Planning Actions

Programs and projects that will be implemented as a result of the Plan may require additional, and more detailed planning. Reclamation and the Department have handbooks that set forth subsequent planning actions. Such actions include the preparation of specific management actions to protect sensitive resources, and the development of specific project plans for new facilities to determine how they will relate to their surroundings.

Future planning efforts may also include the preparation of project-specific environmental compliance documents for implementation of management plans and subsequent development projects. These documents will tier off and be consistent with the Plan's program-level EIS/EIR. More information regarding this process is presented in Chapter 4. Securing any permits required for future implementation projects would also be part of subsequent planning actions. Finally, the Plan may need to be amended if any new acquisitions are added to the existing project area or if any other circumstances make parts of the current Plan no longer applicable.

1.4 CONTENTS OF THE PLAN AND EIS/EIR

This document serves as the Plan and program-level EIS/EIR for the project area. The program-level EIS/EIR is included herein to analyze and disclose any significant and potentially significant effects that may result from implementation of the Plan. The EIS/EIR informs decision makers and the public about the environmental consequences of the adoption of the Plan, consistent with the requirements of NEPA/CEQA. This Plan and EIS/EIR, is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction provides general background information including the location, history, and formation of the project area. It also summarizes Reclamation and Department planning processes and outlines the contents and organization of this document.

Chapter 2: Existing Conditions describes the project area's current physical and social conditions, including information on land use; significant physical, biotic, cultural, aesthetic, and recreational values; and existing facilities. The Existing Conditions chapter also lists system-wide and regional planning influences affecting the project area, describes its demographic resident and visitor profile, and lists issues to be addressed in the Plan. This chapter serves as the environmental setting for the Plan's programmatic EIS/EIR.

Chapter 3: Project Plan identifies the goals and guidelines that will direct future management and operation of the project area. This chapter includes the Purpose and Vision, describes geographic-based management zones, and provides project area-wide management goals and guidelines.

Chapter 4: Environmental Analysis contains the environmental impact analysis for the Plan's programmatic EIS/EIR, pursuant to NEPA/CEQA.

Chapter 5: References contains a list of the organizations and persons consulted during the preparation of this document, and a complete list of references.

Chapter 6: Glossary of Terms defines terms used in this document.

Chapter 7: Consultation, Coordination and Distribution outlines the public involvement program and agency consultation undertaken for this project as well as agency distribution.

Chapter 8: Report Contributors identifies the preparers of the Plan and EIS/EIR.

The Plan and EIS/EIR are combined under one document, so some chapters of this document serve both purposes. For example, Chapter 2, Existing Conditions, provides background information about existing conditions for the Plan and also serves as the environmental setting for the EIS/EIR, as required by NEPA/CEQA. Similarly, Chapter 3, Project Plan, serves as the project description for the EIS/EIR.

The EIS/EIR prepared for the Plan is programmatic in scope and therefore does not contain project-specific analysis for any of the projects recommended in the Plan. Specific projects will undergo subsequent NEPA/CEQA review in the future as described above under "Subsequent Planning Actions."