



## NOTICE OF PREPARATION

### GENERAL PLAN/DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT Lake Oroville State Recreation Area

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is the Lead Agency under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act and is preparing a program level (first tier) draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan for Lake Oroville State Recreation Area. Your agency's comments are requested in connection with the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

Your response must be sent to the address below not later than thirty (30) days after the receipt of this notice. We would appreciate the name of a contact person in your agency.

#### DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION CONTACT PERSON:

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#### PROJECT LOCATION:

The Lake Oroville State Recreation Area (LOSRA) is located on the Feather River in Butte County near the City of Oroville, about 75 miles north of Sacramento. The park's headquarters area is accessed via Glen Drive between Highway 162 and Oroville Dam Boulevard East. Lake Oroville, the second largest reservoir in California, was created by the Oroville Dam. The Oroville Dam was

completed by the Department of Water Resources in 1967 and is the tallest earth-filled dam in the country.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

The general plan provides a long-term outline and guidelines for future proposed facilities, land use, resource policies, management, operation, interpretation, and concession operations at LOSRA. The general plan/draft environmental impact report is the first tier of environmental analysis. Future implementation of general plan proposals may occur in phases as funding becomes available, and these proposals will be subject to additional (tiered) environmental review.

The general plan is based upon the park's classification, Declaration of Purpose, and Vision, which provides a context and direction for future park management and site-specific planning and development. The plan considers project alternatives and recommends further assessments for future development projects.

The general plan develops goals and guidelines and recommends the preparation of management plans covering subjects such as natural resources and sensitive species, cultural resources, park recreation, interpretation, trails, regional influences, and visitor impacts.

## **Background**

The Lake Oroville State Recreation Area was created in 1961 by the Davis-Dolwig Act, enacted to provide financing for State Water Project recreational facilities and fish and wildlife enhancement projects. Under the Davis-Dolwig Act, California State Parks, the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and the Department of Boating and Waterways work together to plan, design, fund, and construct recreation facility improvements. State Parks has jurisdiction over the water surface of Lake Oroville as well as most of the shoreline areas, managed as the Lake Oroville State Recreation Area.

The DWR holds fee title to most of the lands that form LOSRA and is responsible for operating the Oroville Water Project Facilities. The Oroville Facilities include Lake Oroville, the Oroville Dam, Hyatt Powerplant, Thermalito Diversion Dam and Powerplant, the Feather River Hatchery, Thermalito Power Canal, Thermalito Forebay, Thermalito Pumping Generating Plan, and Thermalito Afterbay. The Federal Power Commission, a predecessor to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), issued a 50-year license (effective February 1, 1957) to DWR to construct and operate the Oroville Facilities (FERC Project No. 2100).

Because the relicensing of the Oroville Facilities falls under the approval authority of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, DWR must comply with

the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). DWR has prepared a Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) which was filed with FERC in January 2005. DWR must also comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is expected to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Report during the Fall of 2005.

The first general plan for LOSRA, the *Lake Oroville State Recreation Area General Development Plan*, was completed by State Parks in 1973. In 1988, this general plan was amended by the addition of the *Lake Oroville State Recreation Area General Plan Amendment: Lime Saddle Area* which updated the plan to meet additional recreation needs. The current general planning process was initiated in 2003 to update the general plan and provide planning input and coordination to DWR's Oroville Facilities relicensing process and DWR's *Recreation Management Plan*, which is a major product of the relicensing process.

The updated LOSRA General Plan will be a supporting document of DWR's Relicensing Application to FERC, as well as an independent general plan, as required by Public Resources Code 5002.2. State Parks is not required to prepare an environmental document under NEPA because activities proposed in the General Plan do not occur on federal land or require federal permits or approvals at this time. When subsequent plans land activities are proposed, appropriate environmental compliance and permits will be obtained.

The Draft General Plan was released to the public for review in November 2004. This plan is currently available for review at libraries in Oroville, Chico, Paradise, and Gridley, at the State Parks Headquarters at 400 Glen Drive in Oroville, and on the State Parks website: [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=23415](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=23415). The extensive public involvement of DWR's Oroville Facilities relicensing process has been considered in the preparation of the general plan and appropriate proposals for recreational development and cultural and natural resource preservation have been included. The Draft EIR will also be prepared in coordination with DWR's relicensing process. Public input throughout this planning process will be considered during the preparation of the environmental analysis.

This planning effort is focused on the need to meet increasing demands for public recreation at Lake Oroville State Recreation Area while also improving the protection, preservation, and management of the park's unique natural and cultural resources, and protect its special sense of place. The following are some of the primary planning issues in this planning process.

## **Primary Planning Issues**

**Regional influences and the park's relationship with surrounding areas.** Opportunities exist to improve the park's ecological, biological, recreational, and educational relationships with neighboring lands, land-uses, agencies, landowners, jurisdictions, services, and facilities.

**Recreational opportunities and visitor experiences.** Opportunities exist to expand and improve aquatic and terrestrial recreational opportunities and experiences.

**Visitor use impacts on resources.** The General Plan evaluates the impacts of existing and potential development and visitor use on sensitive resources, particularly in heavy use areas.

**Preservation and restoration of sensitive plant and animal species and habitats in the park.** The recreation area is currently a refuge for a number of sensitive plant and animal species. Opportunities exist to enhance habitats, restore natural vegetation succession, restore populations, enhance biocorridors, and protect these and other less sensitive species.

**Exotic plant and animal species management.** Exotic plant and animal species are negatively affecting the park's native plants, animals, and habitats. Guidelines are proposed in the General Plan for long-term management.

**Fire ecology management.** Opportunities exist to improve the park's fire ecology management program and cooperation with fire control agencies. Goals and guidelines are proposed for future management plans.

**Transportation, circulation, and parking.** Opportunities exist to lessen traffic impacts on intrinsic park values and improve park entrances, circulation, and parking. Road and trail systems are evaluated to meet future park management and recreation needs.

**Park interpretive and educational resources, programs, and facilities.** Opportunities exist to improve the park's interpretive and educational programs and facilities.

**Cultural Resources.** Opportunities exist to improve the protection and perpetuation of the recreational area's archaeological, historical, and cultural resources and values. The plan addresses the need to coordinate and cooperate with local Native American groups to meet common cultural needs and resolve relevant cultural issues.

**Aesthetics.** Opportunities exist to improve aesthetic and viewshed values in the recreation area.

**Operations.** Opportunities exist to improve the efficiency of recreation area operations.

**POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:**

If the guidelines proposed by the General Plan were implemented, there could be potential adverse impacts to soils, water quality and flows, wildlife and habitat, aesthetics, cultural resources, and sensitive vegetation without appropriate mitigation measures incorporated. All potential impacts are expected to be reduced to a less than significant level.