

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Auburn State Recreation Area and Auburn Project Lands (ASRA/APL) General Plan and Resource Management Plan (GP/RMP) Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIR/EIS) has been prepared by California State Parks (CSP), as California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency, in accordance with the requirements of CEQA (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15000 et seq.), and by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), as National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) lead agency, in accordance with the requirements of NEPA (42 U.S. Code Sections 4321-4347) and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (Code of Federal Regulations [CFR], Title 40, Sections 1500 et seq.). For CEQA compliance, the EIR serves as a program EIR, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. For NEPA compliance, the EIS serves as a programmatic EIS, consistent with Reclamation's NEPA Handbook (Reclamation 2012). This Final EIR/EIS contains responses to comments received on the ASRA/APL GP/RMP Draft EIR/EIS (Draft EIR/EIS). The Final EIR/EIS consists of the Draft EIR/EIS and this document, which includes comments received from agencies, organizations, and the public on the Draft EIR/EIS, responses to those comments, and revisions to the GP/RMP and Draft EIR/EIS.

CSP and the Reclamation prepared the GP/RMP through a multi-year public planning process to guide the long-term management of ASRA/APL. In the 1960s and 70s, Reclamation acquired APL to support construction, operation, and maintenance of the Auburn Dam and Reservoir consistent with Public Law 89-161. ASRA was designated a State Recreation Area in 1979, covering nearly all of APL, except for 105 acres that are managed by other agencies. ASRA is managed by CSP consistent with a Managing Partner Agreement with Reclamation. CSP prepared a GP for the management of Auburn Reservoir after construction of the dam (CSP 1979). A series of complications put construction of the dam on hold for an indefinite period. Reclamation prepared an Interim RMP in 1992, in coordination with CSP, that provided guidance for the management of the area until the dam was constructed (Reclamation 1992). This GP/RMP would replace the 1979 GP and the 1992 Interim RMP. It would provide a long-term and comprehensive framework for the management of ASRA/APL in its current condition, consistent with the missions of CSP and Reclamation. The GP/RMP identifies goals and guidelines to achieve the purpose and vision for ASRA/APL. It includes management strategies and improvements to serve visitors while protecting natural and cultural resources. The Draft and Final EIR/EIS evaluate the potential environmental effects that could result from implementation of the GP/RMP alternatives over the next 20 or more years.

1.2 Purpose and Intended Uses of the Final EIR/EIS

The lead agencies preparing an EIR/EIS must consult with and seek comments from responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA and cooperating agencies under NEPA that have jurisdiction by law over resources affected by the project. CEQA and NEPA both require that the EIR/EIS is circulated to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR/EIS. This Final EIR/EIS has been prepared to respond to comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS, which are reproduced in this document; and to present corrections, revisions, and other clarifications in response to these

comments and as a result of the ongoing planning efforts. The Final EIR/EIS will be used to support CSP and Reclamation decisions regarding whether to approve the GP/RMP. This document may also be used by CEQA responsible agencies to meet their requirements under CEQA before deciding whether to approve projects that implement the GP/RMP over which they have jurisdiction.

1.3 CEQA and NEPA Public Review Process

On July 19, 2019, CSP and Reclamation released the Draft EIR/EIS for public review and comment for a 47-day period ending September 3, 2019. On August 27, 2019, a notice of public comment period extension was released extending the comment period to September 17, 2019 for a total 61-day public comment period. The Draft EIR/EIS was submitted to the California State Clearinghouse for distribution to reviewing agencies; posted on the ASRA/APL General Plan/Resource Management Plan website (www.parks.ca.gov/PlanASRA); and was made available at the CSP Auburn Sector Office, Auburn Public Library, Auburn Recreation District Canyon View Community Center, El Dorado County Library in Placerville, U.S Bureau of Reclamation Mid-Pacific Regional Library, CSP Recreation Planning Office, Foresthill Library, Colfax Library, and CSP Folsom Sector Office. A notice of availability of the Draft EIR was published in the Auburn Journal and the Mountain Democrat and distributed by CSP to a project-specific mailing list of over 3,500 individuals, organizations, and agencies that expressed interest in the GP/RMP over the multi-year planning process. The notice of availability was also published in the Federal Register.

A public information open house was held on August 15, 2019 at the Northside Elementary School Cafeteria in Cool to receive input from agencies and the public on the Draft EIR/EIS. Written comments were accepted and CSP and Reclamation staff were available to answer questions and discuss the project proposals. The public review process for this EIR/EIS followed an extensive multi-year public engagement process during the development of the Preliminary GP/Draft RMP, which is described in greater detail in Section 3.2.2 of this Final EIR/EIS.

As a result of these notification efforts, written comments were received from agencies, organizations, and individuals on the content of the Preliminary GP and Draft RMP and the Draft EIR/EIS. Chapter 3, Comments and Responses, identifies these commenting parties, their respective comments, and responses to their comments. None of the comments received nor the responses provided constitute “significant new information” pursuant to CEQA that could require recirculation of the Draft EIR (State CEQA Guidelines CCR Section 15088.5). Reclamation determined that NEPA requirements have been satisfied (CFR, Title 40, Section 1506.3(a), (c)).

1.4 Final EIR/EIS and GP/RMP Approval

This document and the Draft EIR/EIS together constitute the Final EIR/EIS, which will be considered by CSP and Reclamation for certification before making a decision regarding adoption of the GP/RMP.

1.4.1 State Approval Process

CSP is required by the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15090) to certify that the EIR was completed in compliance with CEQA, was reviewed and considered by CSP decision makers, and reflects CSP’s independent judgment and analysis before approving the General Plan. Because the EIR found that no significant and unavoidable impacts would occur, a statement of overriding considerations is not needed. Because mitigation measures are not necessary to address significant environmental impacts of

the proposed action, a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(d), is not required.

All general plans are submitted by CSP for approval from the California State Park and Recreation Commission (Commission). The Commission is responsible for the review of the General Plan and certification of the EIR. The Commission is required to hold a public hearing when considering the approval of a General Plan and EIR. Following certification of the EIR and approval of the general plan by the Commission, CSP would file a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse.

1.4.2 Federal Decision Process

A preferred alternative (Alternative 2) under NEPA has been identified within the Final EIR/Final EIS. No Federal decision will be made on the preferred alternative, the Proposed Action under CEQA until at least 30 days after the release of this Final EIR/EIS. After this 30-day waiting period, Reclamation will complete a Record of Decision (ROD), which will document Reclamation's decision to choose one of the alternatives as its preferred alternative. The final EIR/EIS will be used to support this decision. The ROD will address: the decision and the alternatives considered; the alternative(s) considered to be environmentally preferable; the factors that were considered; whether or not all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm for the alternative selected have been adopted, and if not, why; any monitoring and enforcement program established to ensure identified mitigation measures are accomplished; and any significant comments received on the Final EIR/EIS. The California Great Basin Regional Director will approve the ROD. The decision to approve subsequent recreation development projects will be predicated on receiving the necessary input from State and Local fire and emergency management agencies.

1.5 Subsequent Environmental Review Process

This program EIR/programmatic EIS is used for evaluating the potential effects of the GP/RMP (Section 15168 of the State CEQA Guidelines and 40 CFR 1500.4(i), 1502.4(b) and (c), 1502.20). A program EIR/programmatic EIS considers broad environmental issues at the general plan/resource management plan stage. When specific projects implementing the GP/RMP are proposed at a later date, a project-specific environmental review is conducted. These environmental reviews of the later activities consider environmental effects of the project in light of the analysis and findings in the program EIR/programmatic EIS.

“Later activities” consistent with the GP/RMP may be “within the scope” of the program EIR for purposes of CEQA compliance, if the project-specific impacts have been covered in this EIR/EIS and no new or more severe significant effects have been identified for the later activity. If so, CSP needs to demonstrate, typically using a checklist, that it has considered all potential environmental effects in the program EIR/EIS, and if needed, incorporate relevant mitigation measures or Standard Project Requirements. In some cases, a new significant environmental impact may arise at the project-specific CEQA review. In that situation, the appropriate documentation is determined following the procedures and criteria in State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162 and 15164 and may include either an addendum, mitigated negative declaration, or supplement to an EIR focused on the new or more severe significant effect.

For NEPA compliance, a programmatic EIS (40 CFR 1500.4(i), 1502.4(b) and (c), 1502.20) is one that analyzes broad-scope actions defined at a planning stage in the RMP that provide a basis for evaluating environmental consequences. It provides an analysis of impacts and potential effects; reflecting the

reasonably foreseeable consequences of the planned management designations, facilities, or uses. The alternatives represent distinctly different actions and allow for a reasoned choice among alternatives. Information from a programmatic EIS would be referenced in subsequent NEPA documents prepared for specific projects consistent with the RMP to reduce redundancy and address broad cumulative effects (i.e., “tiered from” the programmatic EIS). Subsequent environmental analysis may require preparation of a Supplemental EIS, Environmental Assessment, or Categorical Exclusion Checklist. Where proposed projects are not all together consistent with the GP/RMP guidelines, a GP/RMP document revision or supplement may be required.

1.6 Organization of the Final EIR/EIS

This Final EIR/EIS is organized as follows:

Chapter 1, Introduction, describes the purpose of the Final EIR/EIS, provides an overview of the CEQA and NEPA public review process, and describes the content of the Final EIR/EIS.

Chapter 2, Revisions to the Preliminary GP and Draft RMP, presents revisions to the Preliminary GP and Draft RMP that were made in response to comments, or to amplify, clarify or make minor modifications or corrections. Changes in the text are signified by ~~strikeouts~~ where text is removed and by underline where text is added.

Chapter 3, Comments and Responses, contains a list of all parties who submitted comments on the Draft EIR/EIS during the public review period, the full text of the comments received, and responses to the comments. Master Responses to some common themes among the comments are included in this chapter.

Chapter 4, Revisions to the Draft EIR/EIS, presents revisions to the Draft EIR/EIS made in response to comments, or to amplify, clarify or make minor modifications or corrections. Changes in the text are signified by ~~strikeouts~~ where text is removed and by underline where text is added.

Chapter 5, References, identifies the documents used as sources for the analysis in the Final EIR/EIS.

Chapter 6, List of Preparers, identifies the lead agency contacts as well as the preparers of this Final EIR/EIS.

Note: Certain Adobe screen readers cannot decode the meaning of underlined or strike-through text within PDF documents. Due to this recognized problem with the accessibility software, accessible Microsoft Word versions of this Final EIR/EIS are also available. If you require an accessible Microsoft Word document, please download it from the GP/RMP website: <https://www.parks.ca.gov/PlanASRA>.