

1.1 PURPOSE

This Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) responds to comments received on the Newhall Ranch Resource Management and Development Plan and Spineflower Conservation Plan Draft EIS/EIR (Draft EIS/EIR; April 2009). The Draft EIS/EIR identified the environmental consequences associated with implementation of the Newhall Ranch Resource Management and Development Plan and Spineflower Conservation Plan (Project) and its alternatives, as well as mitigation measures to avoid or minimize significant impacts. As a result of these comments, and based on additional independent review by the lead agencies, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), portions of the Draft EIS/EIR have been revised. The Final EIS/EIR consists of: (i) the Draft EIS/EIR, including revised EIS/EIR pages/sections; (ii) a list of agencies, organizations, and individuals that commented on the Draft EIS/EIR; (iii) the comments and responses prepared by the lead agencies to those comments; and (iv) appendices that contain reports or studies referenced or used by the lead agencies in responding to comments.

The Final EIS/EIR is an informational document prepared by the lead agencies that must be considered by the decision makers before approving or denying the proposed Project. Section 1502.9, subdivision (b), of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) states:

"Final environmental impact statements shall respond to comments as required in Part 1503 of this chapter. The agency shall discuss at appropriate points in the final statement any responsible opposing view which was not adequately discussed in the draft statement and shall indicate the agency's response to the issues raised." (40 C.F.R. § 1502.9, subd. (b).)

The State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, section 15132, specify that a Final EIR shall consist of:

- (a) The Draft EIR or a revision of the draft.
- (b) Comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR either verbatim or in summary.
- (c) A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR.
- (d) The responses of the Lead Agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process.
- (e) Any other information added by the lead agency." (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15132, subds. (a)-(e).)

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

On April 27, 2009, the lead agencies (Corps and CDFG) released for public review the Draft EIS/EIR for the proposed Project (State Clearinghouse No. 2000011025). The public comment period on the Draft EIS/EIR began on April 27, 2009 and closed on August 25, 2009 (after an extension).

The lead agencies issued a "Notice of Availability and Public Hearing" advising the public of the availability of the Draft EIS/EIR for the proposed Project. The notice and the Draft EIS/EIR also were posted on CDFG's website (www.dfg.ca.gov/regions/5/newhall). In addition, copies of the Draft EIS/EIR were made available for public review in the offices of the lead agencies (Corps, Ventura Field Office, 2151 Alessandro Drive, Suite 110, Ventura, California; CDFG, 4949 Viewridge Avenue, San Diego, California; and, CDFG, Los Alamitos Office, 4665 Lampson Avenue, Los Alamitos, California). The Draft EIS/EIR also was made available for public review at the following additional locations: Valencia Library, Santa Clarita, California; Sylmar Library, Sylmar, California; Ventura H.P. Wright Library, Ventura, California; and, Castaic Library, Castaic, California.

During the comment period, a public hearing was held to provide the public with an opportunity to: (i) become more familiar with the proposed Project and the alternatives under consideration; and (ii) provide oral and written comments on the Draft EIS/EIR. The comments presented at the hearing were recorded and entered into the public record. The meeting was held on June 11, 2009, at 6:30 p.m., at Rancho Pico Middle School, located at 26250 West Valencia Boulevard, Stevenson Ranch, California. The date, time, and place of the hearing were identified in the circulated Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS/EIR.

1.3 FINAL EIS/EIR ORGANIZATION

Section 2.0 of this Final EIS/EIR contains copies of the revised Draft EIS/EIR pages or sections that have been modified or clarified in response to comments received on the Draft EIS/EIR, and based on an additional independent review conducted by the lead agencies. The revised or additional text is shown in double-underline; deleted text is shown in ~~strikeout~~. Revised or new figures or tables are indicated by the addition of the following text to the figure or table title: **(Revised)** or **(New)**, respectively. The electronic version of the Final EIS/EIR, which is publicly available on a DVD, includes the Draft EIS/EIR and incorporates the revised pages or sections shown in **Section 2.0**, and new technical reports and documents as appendices. Thus, the electronic version of the Final EIS/EIR will be a complete composite of both the unchanged Draft EIS/EIR sections and the revised Draft EIS/EIR sections.

Section 3.0 of the Final EIS/EIR contains the comments and responses associated with the Draft EIS/EIR (April 2009). Thirteen topical responses were prepared in response to issues that elicited multiple comments. These topical responses encompass the following issues:

- Topical Response 1: EIS/EIR Public Review Opportunities
- Topical Response 2: Bankruptcy-Related Comments
- Topical Response 3: Natural River Management Plan Projects and Mitigation
- Topical Response 4: Nickel Water
- Topical Response 5: Water Litigation and Regulatory Action Update

- Topical Response 6: CLWA's 41,000 AFY Water Transfer
- Topical Response 7: Perchlorate Treatment Update
- Topical Response 8: Groundwater Supplies and Overdraft Claims
- Topical Response 9: State Water Project Supply Reliability
- Topical Response 10: Vehicle Trip Distribution Methodology
- Topical Response 11: River Corridor SMA/SEA 23 Consistency
- Topical Response 12: Wildlife Habitat Connectivity, Corridors, and Crossings
- Topical Response 13: Global Climate Change Update

Section 3.0 also contains copies of the comments received on the Draft EIS/EIR, followed by the lead agencies' responses to those comments. The comments received were in the form of comment letters, public hearing comment cards, and oral comments recorded in the public hearing transcript. The comments are organized by federal, state, and local agencies; organizations; and individuals.

The Final EIS/EIR includes the additional technical reports and other documents as appendices. The reports/documents were used or referenced in responses to comments on the Draft EIS/EIR. The "F" appendix designation refers to the appendices found in the Final EIS/EIR, followed by the section number and name of the section used in the Draft EIS/EIR.