



RECORDING REQUESTED
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County of Sacramento
Planning and Environmental Review
827 7th Street, Room 225
Sacramento, CA 95814
CONTACT PERSON: Julie Newton
TELEPHONE: (916)874-6141

ENDORSED

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

MAY 28 2025

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BY WES DEPUTY

SPACE ABOVE RESERVED FOR RECORDER'S USE

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

Project Title:

Johnson Cosumnes Mitigation Bank Floodplain Restoration Project

Control Number:

PLER2024-00114

Project Location:

The project is located at 8700 Twin Cities Road, Galt CA 95632. Approximately 3.5 miles west of Highway 99 in south Sacramento County at the confluence of Laguna Creek and the Cosumnes River.

APN:

146-0220-033

Description of Project:

Westervelt Ecological Services (WES) will establish a conservation easement over the property to protect approximately 204 acres of wetland, riparian, and riverine habitat. Additionally, notches will be created in the existing agricultural berms to restore hydrologic connectivity to the Cosumnes River and Laguna Creek. The property will be graded and contoured to connect approximately 4,400 linear feet of pilot channels and swales to restore and promote topographic complexity associated with floodplain wetland and riparian habitats. Existing deep pockets will be graded to reduce the potential for fish stranding. Native wetland and riparian plants will be installed to encourage native plant recruitment and reduce weed and non-native plant establishment. A Habitat Development and Interim Management Plan and a Long-Term Management Plan will be implemented for monitoring and maintenance purposes and will include activities such as non-native invasive plant species management, repair/replacement of access gates and signage to prevent trespass and vandalism, and the removal of trash.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project:

Sacramento County – ceqa@sacounty.gov

Person or Agency Carrying out Project:

Westervelt Ecological Services
Attn: Allegra Bukojemsky
3636 American River Drive, Suite 120 95864
(415) 828-6584
abukojemsky@westervelt.com

Exempt Status:

Statutory Exemption: Public Resources Code Section 21080.56 (Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects).

Reasons Why Project is Exempt:

The project is exempt from the provisions of CEQA as it meets the requirements specified by Public Resources Code section 21080.56 as detailed below.

Section 21080.56(a). The project is exclusively one or both of the following: (1) a project to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend, or (2) a project to restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined the project is exclusively a project to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend. Similarly, the purpose of the project is to restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife.

Implementation of the project will restore and expand the habitat for California native fish and wildlife species. While the project site is being evaluated as a mitigation bank, the project is not affiliated with any existing projects or permits requiring mitigation. Benefits to fish and wildlife resources beyond those being credited as part of the proposed Johnson Cosumnes Mitigation Bank include the enhancement and protection of known valley elderberry longhorn beetle and western pond turtle habitat, and mature riparian woodland for a variety of sensitive raptors, birds, and bats; and enhancement of major waterways that feed the Delta and provide off-channel refugia for several native fish.

Section 21080.56(b). An eligible project may have incidental public health benefits, such as public access and recreation.

- As the lead agency, Sacramento County has determined the project may have incidental public benefits. General public access will not be allowed to protect sensitive resources and for public safety. However, healthy biodiverse wetland and riparian habitats will enhance beneficial biodiversity to the region. Additionally, the project site may be used for environmental education and scientific study by local tribes, as well as environmental and scientific organizations, with prior authorization.

Section 21080.56(c). The project does both of the following: (1) results in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery; and (2) Includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined the project will (1) result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery; and (2) includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment.

While it is anticipated that this project will eventually provide mitigation opportunities for various projects purchasing credits from the bank, the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency there are several features of the bank that, considered collectively, ensure the project will result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery above and beyond the mitigation value of the bank. Specifically, the project is strategically located within the area of the Cosumnes River Preserve, where more than 50,000 acres of land is conserved and managed through cooperative partnership. The 204 acres that the project will protect in perpetuity will provide consolidated mitigation that provides for large-scale, cohesively managed, and high-functioning habitat. Of that 204 acres, four acres of higher floodplain habitat will not be associated with any bank credits.

Long-term Net Benefits to Climate Resiliency: The project will improve the resilience of perennial and seasonal wetlands to the hydrologic and thermal pressures resulting from a changing climate. The project includes the restoration and enhancement of historic floodplains. Floodplains act as sponges, absorbing, filtering, and storing water, all of which are environmental factors that promote biodiversity and work to shelter populations from climate pressures such as increased

drought and flood frequency and severity. The large size of the Project site, combined with increased connectivity to other preserved lands along the Cosumnes River, will expand the network of ecological buffers to climate pressures, increasing habitat resiliency and available resources in perpetuity.

The LTMP is crafted to provide for the management and protection of the restored habitat in perpetuity, funded by a long-term endowment to ensure conservation values are continually supported and protected, even under extremes in climatic variability. This long-term funding and management strategy integrates adaptive management that enables evaluation and adjustment of approaches in response to climate pressures for the continued benefit of the restored habitat and conservation values.

Long-term Net Benefits to Biodiversity: Restoration of riparian and floodplain habitat across the project site will produce significant net benefits to biodiversity. Riparian habitat is one of the most important and currently limiting ecosystems for species richness within California. Implementation of this project will have a significant net benefit on biodiversity through expansion, connection, and restoration of riparian and floodplain habitats. Long-term benefits are expected for nesting and foraging birds and native aquatic and terrestrial species.

The project enhancements will result in palustrine emergent, scrub-shrub, and forested wetlands habitats associated with riverine systems. These communities are highly valuable for waterfowl and other migrating terrestrial species during winter, offer foraging habitat for raptors during the summer, and attract ground-nesting birds when conditions are dry. The project includes riparian species plantings, which will facilitate the establishment of scrub-shrub and forest thicket-like habitats, which will serve as important cover and nesting habitat for migratory and resident birds and additionally support wetland habitats that will seasonally contribute to high quality off-channel habitat for native fish.

Long-term Net Benefits to Sensitive Species Recovery: The habitat improvements will have direct, long-term, and perpetual benefits through enhancement of essential fish habitat for steelhead - Central Valley DPS, and expanded habitat for giant gartersnake, Swainson's hawk, tricolor blackbird, western pond turtle, and western red bat.

Steelhead and chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) are both confirmed present within the water systems on the project site. The Cosumnes River provides rearing habitat for steelhead. Restoring the direct connection between the river and its floodplain and re-establishing freshwater wetlands will provide a substantially expanded floodplain for juveniles to rear and forage. Expanded off-channel habitats, including floodplains, are beneficial for juvenile rearing. The project activities will greatly increase accessible habitat and food web support for these sensitive species and contribute to long-term salmonid recovery efforts.

Four sensitive plant species have potential to benefit from the project through expanded habitat opportunities including bristly sedge (*Carex comosa*), Sanford's arrowhead (*Sagittaria sanfordii*), woolly rose mallow (*Hibiscus lasiocarpus* var. *occidentalis*), and delta tule pea (*Lathyrus jepsonii*). The LTMP will establish management activities that will manage invasive species throughout the site and ensure long lasting protection for the establishment and recovery of native and protected plant species.

Restoration and enhancement of riparian habitat will expand, improve, and permanently protect habitat for elderberry shrubs (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *caerulea*), which are host plants for the valley elderberry longhorn beetle. The protection of these shrubs and expansion of additional potential habitat for elderberry shrubs to establish will support long-term recovery efforts for the valley elderberry longhorn beetle.

Sensitive amphibians and aquatic reptiles will particularly benefit from increased habitat complexity and heterogeneity in the enhanced project landscape. Although no giant garter snakes have been detected within the project site, there are nearby populations that will likely benefit

from the project, which may lead to future habitat occupation and use by the species, aiding in recovery.

Procedures for the Protection of the Environment: Restoration and enhancement activities will be conducted between May 1 and October 1 of each year the project is actively implemented to avoid the rainy season. All staff will be trained on appropriate environmental requirements from relevant state, local, and federal permits and approvals, and work will be restricted to daylight hours to avoid light pollution and unnecessary anthropogenic pressures on sensitive species. Tree removal will be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the floodplain restoration goals, and the notch installation locations in the riverside berms will be selected to avoid healthy and mature trees. The protection of shade-producing and bank-stabilizing trees will be prioritized along existing riparian habitats, and all disturbed areas will be restored to the greatest extent possible; restoration actions will include soil decompaction, planting with native riparian species, and removal of and exclusion of invasive species.

Special-status species protection measures will be implemented to avoid and minimize impacts. Pre-construction surveys will be conducted for nesting birds, special-status plant surveys, western pond turtle, and giant gartersnake. Impacts to special-status species will be avoided through spatial and/or temporal avoidance measures, such as exclusion buffers or limited operating periods.

Ongoing Management for the Protection of the Environment: The ongoing management of the Project site will include implementation of the LTMP for the protection of the environment. The LTMP will incorporate minimal mowing, pruning, and grazing to promote overall habitat quality. The LTMP will prescribe site inspections, invasive species monitoring and management, aerial drone and satellite monitoring, inspections for trash removal and property maintenance needs, and vegetation management. The LTMP will outline required coordination with regulatory agencies, the property owner, and Wilton Rancheria, and will be funded by an endowment.

The endowment will provide funds to ensure LTMP management activities are conducted for ongoing protection of the conservation values of the property. A third-party conservation easement holder will be responsible for ensuring WES, and any potential future landowners, are compliant with the easement's restricted uses and implementing the LTMP's required maintenance and monitoring.

Section 21080.56(d). The project does not include any construction activities, except for the construction activities solely related to habitat restoration.

- As lead agency, Sacramento County has determined that the project does not include any construction activities, except for construction activities solely related to habitat restoration.

Julie
Newton

Julie Newton
ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR OF
SACRAMENTO COUNTY, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Digitally signed by Julie Newton
DN: cn=Julie Newton, o=Sacramento
County, ou,
email=newtonju@sacounty.net, c=US
Date: 2025.05.27 16:09:22 -07'00'

Copy To:

**County Clerk of Sacramento
County Clerk**

3636 American River Drive, Suite 110
Sacramento, CA 95864

**Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
State Clearinghouse**

1400 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814