



PLANNING DEPARTMENT
1350 BROADWAY
ATWATER, CA 95301
(209) 357-6367

NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETING FOR BERT CRANE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT DISCHARGE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

Date: January 9, 2026

To: Responsible or Trustee Agencies and interested members of the public.

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting for the Bert Crane Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge Improvements Project

Comment Period: January 9, 2026, to February 8, 2026

Scoping Meeting: Thursday, January 22, 2026, from 5:30 to 6:30 pm (Virtual)

Project Title: Bert Crane Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge Improvements Project

Project Proponent: City of Atwater

Purpose of Notice

The City of Atwater ("City") is proposing to undertake the Bert Crane Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge Improvements Project ("Project"). In its capacity as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Section 15000 et seq.), the City has determined that preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the Project. This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15082(a) and 15375.

Public Review Period

The City requests that responsible or trustee agencies and interested members of the public respond to this NOP within the 30-day review period, from **January 9, 2026, to February 8, 2026, at 5 pm**. Comments should be provided in writing to:

Justin Vinson, Public Works Director
City of Atwater
1350 Broadway, Atwater, CA 95301
jvinson@atwater.org

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, responses must provide specific details about the scope and content of the environmental information related to the responsible or trustee agency's area of statutory responsibility. At a minimum, identify the significant environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that the responsible or trustee agency will need to have explored in the Draft EIR, and whether the agency will be a responsible or trustee agency for the project.

Scoping Meeting

The City will hold a Scoping Meeting in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082 to present information regarding the Project and the CEQA process, and to receive public comments regarding the scope and content of the Draft EIR. The date, time, and location of the Scoping Meeting are:

Thursday, January 22, 2026

5:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Virtual by Zoom:

- URL: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86525871107>
- Meeting ID: 865 2587 1107
- Call In: +1 (669) 444-9171

Verbal and written comments regarding the scope of the Draft EIR will be accepted at the Scoping Meeting.

Should you require special accommodations at the Scoping Meeting, please contact Justin Vinson at jvinson@atwater.org or (209) 777-0273 no later than January 14, 2026.

Project Location

The Project site is generally located north of Bear Creek, south of Applegate Road, and east of South Bert Crane Road, in Atwater, CA 95301. The Project site includes portions of six (6) parcels, totaling approximately 7.67 acres, and identified by the Merced County Assessor as Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 056-200-026, 056-200-011, 056-200-021, 056-200-024, 065-020-012, and 056-200-002. The site also includes approximately 3,390 feet of South Bert Crane Road right-of-way (ROW).

Project Description

In order to meet Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) groundwater recharge requirements, the City of Atwater intends to construct improvements to discharge its treated effluent to the Merced Irrigation District (MID) via Black Rascal Creek or Bear Creek. These improvements would connect into the existing force main with a tee fitting and automatic actuated butterfly valves integrated into the City's SCADA system. The improvements would allow the City to redirect effluent flows to the Gallo Ranch, the creeks, or both.

A Discharge Study was prepared to evaluate three (3) alternatives for future improvements for discharge into either Black Rascal Creek or Bear Creek: Alternative 1 – Bert Crane Road Alignment, Alternative 2 – South WWTP Alignment, and Alternative 3 – Deckert Lateral Alignment. The Environmental Impact Report will evaluate the potential environmental impacts of all three (3) proposed alternatives.

- Alternative 1 would include construction of 4,400 linear feet of 18-inch pipeline, traffic control, and flow diversion and dewatering. A new outfall structure into Bear Creek would be constructed.
- Alternative 2 would include construction of 4,300 linear feet of 18-inch pipeline and flow diversion and dewatering. A new outfall structure into Black Rascal Creek would be constructed
- Alternative 3 would include connection to the existing Deckert Lateral culvert, construction of 5,400 linear feet of 18-inch pipeline, increases to MID's Deckert Lateral capacity, replacing the existing MID outfall structure to Black Rascal Creek, and traffic control.

Potential Environmental Impacts

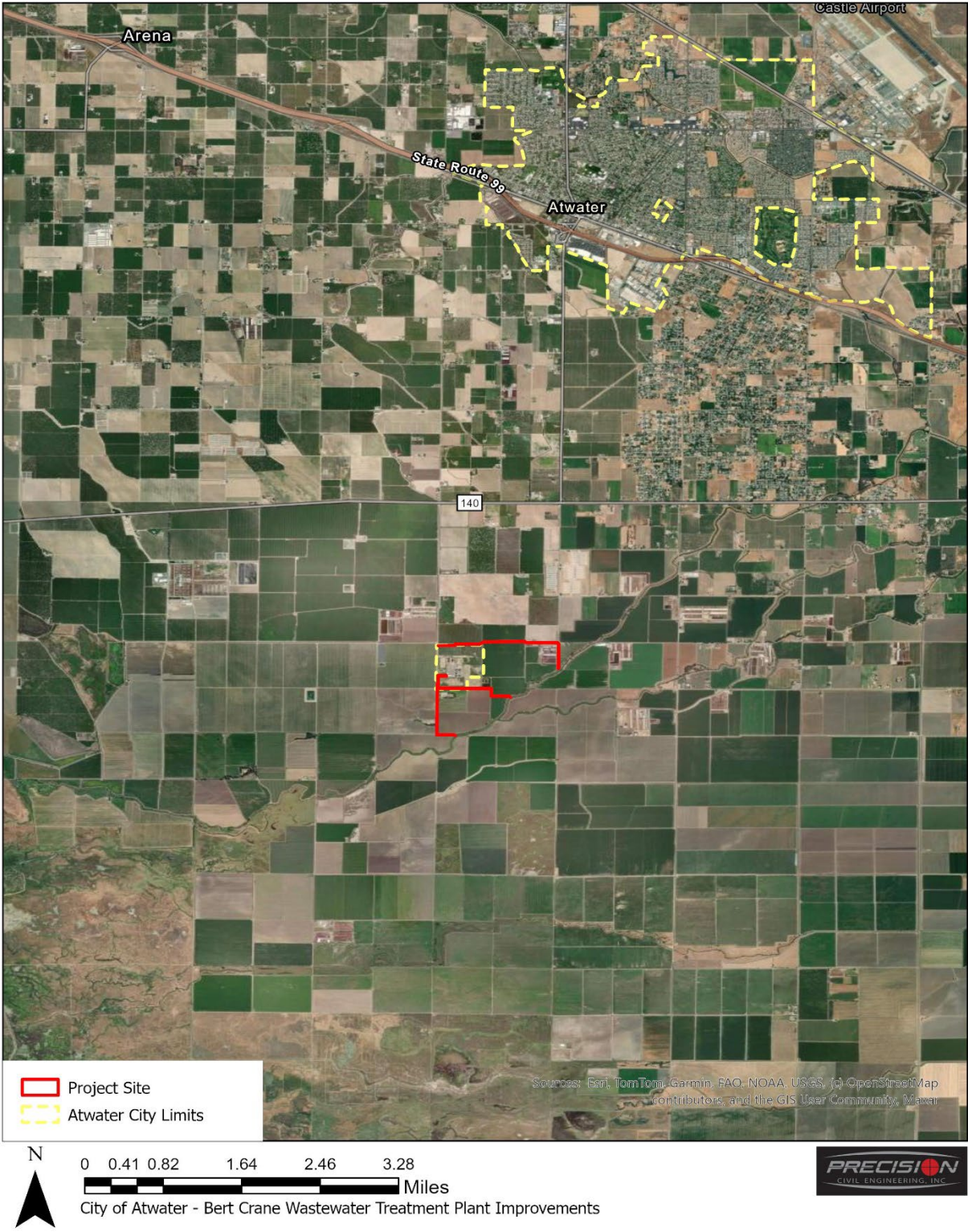
Pursuant to Section 15063 of CEQA Guidelines, an Initial Study was prepared for preliminary review of the project to determine significant effects on the environment. Through the Initial Study, it was determined that the following impact areas would not have the potential to result in a significant impact:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Wildfire

As Lead Agency, the City has concluded there is substantial evidence that the Project may result in significant impacts to Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, and Hydrology and Water Quality, necessitating preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The Initial Study, which provides the supporting analysis for these determinations, is available upon request. Responsible agencies and the public are invited to comment on the proposed EIR scope, including any additional issues that should be addressed.

Attachment A. Project Location



Attachment B. Project Vicinity

