

San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority

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NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Individuals

Subject: Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows Project

Lead Agency: San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority
100 North Old San Gabriel Canyon Road
Azusa, CA 91702
Contact: Ms. Valorie Shatynski
vshatynski@rmc.ca.gov

Project Title: San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared by the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority (Authority) for the San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows (Discovery Center) Project. The Authority is the lead agency, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), responsible for preparation of this document.

Project Location:

The Discovery Center project site is located at 1000 North Durfee Avenue in South El Monte within the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area (Recreation Area) in eastern Los Angeles County. The Recreation Area is located between the San Gabriel River and the Rio Hondo (a tributary of the Los Angeles River), approximately 10 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. The project site is located less than one mile from the intersection of Interstate 605 (I-605, San Gabriel River Freeway) and State Route 60 (SR 60, Pomona Freeway). The project site is bound by Durfee Avenue to the north, open space within the Whittier Narrows Natural Area to the east and south, and a commercial/industrial parcel to the west. The San Gabriel River parallels the site along the southern boundary of the Whittier Narrows Natural Area approximately 0.25 mile south of the site. The Whittier Narrows Nature Center is located on the project site, which includes a museum, gift shop, library, outbuildings, and 33-car parking lot. Figure 1 shows the project location.

Project Description:

The Discovery Center project would develop a new interpretive center and associated facilities on approximately 7 acres (construction impact area) within approximately 11.3 acre lease boundary in the Whittier Narrows Natural Area. The proposed project would replace the existing Whittier Narrows Nature Center with a new, larger interpretive center and would develop other amenities on-site. The primary project features include a new 18,230 square foot interpretive center, a 150-car parking lot, a maintenance building, an open air classroom, a constructed wetland/riparian area, a covered outdoor classroom, and walkways from the interpretive center connecting to existing trails. The balance of the site would be set aside for habitat preservation and restoration. The interpretive center would include a lobby, exhibit areas, classrooms, support facilities, and administrative offices. The interpretive center would be constructed to meet the

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U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) of the highest (Platinum) level. This design approach increases the efficiency of energy, water and building material use on-site.

The interpretive center would host a range of educational and recreational activities and would be utilized by several public agencies to deliver the message of cultural and natural resources and watershed conservation. The Discovery Center and the parking lot would be open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. seven days per week and up to 10:00 p.m. if an evening event is scheduled. Groups focused on cultural and natural resources and watershed conservation would be allowed use of the interpretive center for meetings that provide programs open to the public. The 18-month construction process is anticipated to commence in October 2011. All existing structures would be removed as part of construction.

Summary of Impacts:

The following effects were not found to be significant during the Initial Study process: agricultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, parks and recreation, utilities and service systems, and energy. Impacts to aesthetics and transportation/traffic would be less than significant. Impacts to air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, hydrology and water quality, and noise would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures. No significant and unavoidable environmental impacts would occur.

Public Comment Period:

The 60-day public comment period for this Draft EIR will commence on June 5, 2009 and conclude on August 3, 2009. Copies of the Draft EIR will be available for review at the following locations:

- South El Monte Library, 1430 North Central Avenue, South El Monte, CA 91733
- El Monte Public Library, 3224 Tyler Avenue, El Monte, CA 91731
- Pico Rivera Public Library, 9001 Mines Avenue, Pico Rivera, CA 90660

A copy of the document will also be posted online at <http://discoverycenterauthority.org/>. Please submit comments in writing to the address provided below. Comment letters must be postmarked by August 3, 2009.

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Email: vshatynski@rmc.ca.gov

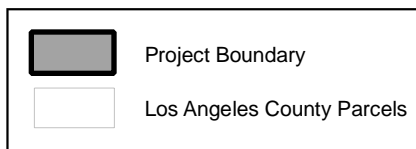
Public Meetings:

Two public meetings will be held in June and July 2009 to solicit input from interested parties on the content of the Draft EIR. The first meeting will be held on **Wednesday, June 24, 2009** at **South El Monte High School** (1001 North Durfee Avenue in South El Monte, California) at **7:00 to 9:00 p.m.** The second meeting will be held on **Saturday, July 18, 2009** at the **South El Monte High School** (1001 North Durfee Avenue in South El Monte, California) at **2:00 to 4:00 p.m.** Public comments related to the contents of the Draft EIR will be accepted at the public meeting.



Source: Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor, 2006; USGS El Monte Quad, 1994

Figure 1
Project Location Map



Not to Scale