

3.9 LAND USE AND MASTER PLAN COMPATIBILITY

This chapter discusses potential effects caused by conflicts between the proposed action and the Whittier Narrows Dam Master Plan and Environmental Assessment published by the USACE in 1997. This chapter takes into consideration prescribed land uses, surrounding land uses, and opportunities to use the site for implementation of the action.

3.9.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The sublease boundary consists of two parcels. The 0.63-acre parcel in the northwest corner of the sublease boundary closest to Durfee Avenue and containing the Whittier Narrows Nature Center (WNNC) is owned by County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LACDPR). The remaining 10.58 acres of the sublease boundary and the surrounding Whittier Narrows Natural Area (Natural Area) is owned by the USACE. The authorized purpose of the Whittier Narrow Dam is flood control, as set forth by the Flood Control Act of 1941. The dam protects a 554-square mile densely populated area comprised of residential, commercial, and industrial land. The San Gabriel River, the Rio Hondo Channel, and the flood-flow channel are within the reservoir. The secondary purpose of the Whittier Narrows Dam is recreation, as authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944. The act, as amended, authorizes the USACE to construct, maintain, and operate public parks and recreational facilities as water resource development projects. A third authorized purpose of the Whittier Narrows Dam is water conservation.

The U.S. Congress has charged the USACE, Los Angeles District with the responsibility for maintaining flood control and other missions at this location. The USACE utilizes the WNNC site and the entire Recreation Area as a major flood control reservoir behind the dam. The Whittier Narrows Dam Master Plan serves as a guide for the use and development of all resources within the Recreation Area. The goal of the plan is to provide guidelines for public use of public lands, while preserving the wildlife habitat, vegetation, and cultural resource values, in addition to supporting the authorized project purposes of flood control and water conservation. A specific area has been identified as a nature area for the purposes of public education, and to preserve the diverse plant communities and wildlife habitats that are rapidly vanishing from the Los Angeles basin (USACE 1996).

3.9.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Future development within the Recreation Area is governed by the Whittier Narrows Dam Master Plan. The primary goal of the Whittier Narrows Dam Master Plan is flood control. A secondary purpose of the Whittier Narrows Dam Master Plan is to construct, maintain, and operate public parks and recreational facilities at water resource development projects (USACE 1996).

3.9 Land Use and Master Plan Compatibility

3.9.3 CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

Regarding land use, effects of the alternatives would be considered significant if the action would:

- Result in a land use that would be incompatible with the surrounding areas; or
- If the proposed land uses are inconsistent with applicable planning and policy documents.

3.9.4 PROJECT EFFECTS ON LAND USE

3.9.4.1 No ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on land use. Because the sublease boundary would remain in its current condition, no development would occur and no land use changes would occur. Implementation of the No Action Alternative would not introduce new land uses that would be inconsistent with the Whittier Narrows Dam Master Plan.

3.9.4.2 18,230 SF ALTERNATIVE (PROPOSED ACTION)

Implementation of the 18,230 sf Alternative would not result in a land use that would be incompatible with the surrounding areas or a land use that would be inconsistent with applicable planning policy documents. This alternative would replace the existing WNNC with an expanded and more modern nature center. It would continue the existing use of the sublease boundary for educational and recreational opportunities.

The new nature center would be constructed above the floodplain and the USACE taking line so as not to reduce the amount of water storage located in the flood plain. Additionally, all structures located below the level of a 100-year flood and the taking line would be designed to flood so as not to impede flood flows. As such, the 18,230 sf Alternative would not interfere with the USACE flood control activities behind the Whittier Narrows Dam, the first authorized purpose of the Whittier Narrows Dam.

The 18,230 sf Alternative would be consistent with the USACE's second authorized purpose of the Whittier Narrows Dam to provide open space and recreational facilities. The existing natural area would be enhanced by restoring it with locally indigenous, native vegetation and the existing trails would be maintained. This alternative would not alter the use of the sublease boundary as an educational and recreational resource.

The 18,230 sf Alternative would be consistent with the third authorized purpose of Whittier Narrows Dam, which is water conservation. The proposed facility would employ recycled water and be constructed to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Platinum level standards to reduce water and energy consumption in building construction and operation. Further, it would serve as a model facility of conservation. The programs offered at the 18,230 sf

Alternative would include water conservation, education programs about the watershed, water quality, and the benefits of flood control. Thus, the 18,230 sf Alternative would be consistent with and enhance the USACE's mission with respect to the Whittier Narrows Dam. No substantial direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effect on land use compatibility and master plan compatibility would occur.

3.9.4.3 14,000 SF ALTERNATIVE

Implementation of the 14,000 sf Alternative would not result in a land use that would be incompatible with the surrounding areas or a land use that would be inconsistent with applicable planning policy documents. Construction and operation of the new nature center would continue the existing use of the sublease boundary for educational and recreational opportunities. It would not interfere with the USACE flood control activities behind the Whittier Narrows Dam. It would be consistent with USACE's second authorized purpose of the Whittier Narrows Dam to provide open space and recreational facilities. It would be consistent with the third authorized purpose of Whittier Narrows Dam, which is water conservation. The 14,000 sf Alternative would be consistent with and enhance USACE's mission with respect to the Whittier Narrows Dam. No substantial direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects on land use compatibility and master plan compatibility would occur.

3.9.4.4 10,000 SF ALTERNATIVE

Implementation of the 10,000 sf Alternative would not result in a land use that would be incompatible with the surrounding areas or a land use that would be inconsistent with applicable planning policy documents. Construction and operation of the new nature center would continue the existing use of the sublease boundary for educational and recreational opportunities. It would not interfere with the USACE flood control activities behind the Whittier Narrows Dam. It would be consistent with USACE's second authorized purpose of the Whittier Narrows Dam to provide open space and recreational facilities. It would be consistent with the third authorized purpose of Whittier Narrows Dam, which is water conservation. The 10,000 sf Alternative would be consistent with and enhance USACE's mission with respect to the Whittier Narrows Dam. No substantial direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects on land use compatibility and master plan compatibility would occur.

3.9.4.5 2,800 SF ALTERNATIVE

Implementation of the 2,800 sf Alternative would not result in a land use that would be incompatible with the surrounding areas or a land use that would be inconsistent with applicable planning policy documents. This alternative would replace the existing WNNC with an expanded and more modern interpretive center. As such, the only changes within the sublease boundary would be located outside of the boundaries of USACE's 100-year flood plain and taking line. Further, construction and operation of the 2,800 sf Alternative and associated facilities would continue the existing use of the project site for educational and recreational opportunities. No substantial direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse land use conflicts would occur.

3.9 Land Use and Master Plan Compatibility

3.9.5 MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are required.

3.9.6 SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

3.9.6.1 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Because no action would be taken, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects of the 2,800 sf Alternative.

3.9.6.2 18,230 SF ALTERNATIVE (PROPOSED ACTION)

The 18,230 sf Alternative would not have a direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on land use. No land uses changes would occur under this alternative.

3.9.6.3 14,000 SF ALTERNATIVE

The 14,000 sf Alternative would not have a direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on land use. No land uses changes would occur under this alternative.

3.9.6.4 10,000 SF ALTERNATIVE

The 10,000 sf Alternative 4 would not have a direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on land use. No land uses changes would occur under this alternative.

3.9.6.5 2,800 SF ALTERNATIVE

The 2,800 sf Alternative would not take place within USACE-owned property. As such, this alternative would not have a direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on land use. No land uses changes would occur under this alternative.