

## PREFACE

On January 20, 2010, the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority (Authority) Governing Board (Board) certified that the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Project was completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In addition, the Board for the Authority approved the 14,000 square foot (sf) Alternative that was described in the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in Section 2.5. The proposed action in the draft EA was the 18,230 sf Alternative; therefore, the proposed action has been changed to the 14,000 sf Alternative in this final EA that is being prepared for the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The 14,000 sf Alternative was evaluated throughout Sections 3.1 to 3.16 in the draft EA and included in this final EA. No aspects of the proposed action will exceed the parameters of the 14,000 sf Alternative described in Section 2.5.

The rationale for Board approval of the 14,000 sf Alternative was based on the fact that the alternative is feasible and it meets all of the objectives of the project. Furthermore, the 14,000 sf Alternative is more economically feasible than the 18,230 sf Alternative, which was the proposed action in the draft EA.

The 14,000 sf Alternative (proposed action) would meet the following objectives:

1. Create an accessible interpretive center set in a unique regional setting, designed to educate the public about the San Gabriel River watershed through a combination of indoor exhibits, outdoor interpretive features, and educational programming.
2. Provide an interpretive center that accommodates children and teacher from the K-12 school districts located within a 25-mile radius of the project site by providing standards-based grade-level appropriate educational programming through a wide range of accessible and free exhibits, classroom space, and hands-on outdoor experiences.
3. Expand the public user base to the currently underserved, diverse urban population located within a 25-mile radius of the project site with economically and geographically accessible interpretive facilities that would enhance awareness and regional interest in watershed improvement activities.
4. Create an interpretive center capable of meeting the outreach and educational programming needs of a diverse range of Stakeholders and Partner agencies.
5. Create a unique facility for the greater Los Angeles area focusing on watershed management for habitat, flood control, conservation, and water quality.
6. Create an access point and hub destination for the Emerald Necklace Park Network, as the only interpretive center in this 17-mile loop of parks, trails, and greenways.

## Preface

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7. Provide a gateway to exploration of other natural areas and recreational opportunities in the San Gabriel River watershed.
8. Provide leadership in sustainable building and landscape design and operations by integrating these features of the project into the indoor and outdoor exhibits.

The 14,000 sf Alternative would reduce several of the significant environmental effects compared to the 18,230 sf Alternative. Specifically, impacts to biological resources, air quality, noise, and traffic would be reduced compared to the 18,230 sf Alternative because of the reduction in building size, area disturbed during construction, and number of visitors that would be expected to travel to the lease boundary. The text below provides a summary of the environmental effects of the 14,000 sf Alternative compared to the 18,230 sf Alternative for each environmental issue area that is discussed in Sections 3.1 to 3.16 of the final EA.

### **Section 3.1 Biological Resources**

When compared to the 18,230 sf Alternative, implementation of the 14,000 sf Alternative would reduce direct impacts to vegetation communities and land cover types by approximately 1.96 acres (refer to Table 3.1-3). Mitigation measures BIO-A through BIO-Q would still be required under the 14,000 sf Alternative.

### **Section 3.2 Cultural Resources**

Because the same structures would be affected under the 14,000 sf Alternative, the impacts would be the similar to the 18,230 sf Alternative (refer to Section 3.2.5.2).

### **Section 3.3 Flood Control and Hydrology**

Flood control and hydrology impacts would be similar to the 18,230 sf Alternative because portions of the interpretive center associated with the 14,000 sf Alternative would be constructed within the flood zone and all grading activities would be balanced on-site per USACE requirements (refer to Section 3.3.4.3).

### **Section 3.4 Recreation**

Similar to the 18,230 sf Alternative, educational and recreational experiences would be enhanced by the interpretive center that would be built under the 14,000 sf Alternative because it would be able to accommodate substantially more visitors than the current facility by providing a larger interpretive center than the existing Whittier Narrows Nature Center (WNNC), more parking, and new programming (refer to Section 3.4.3.2).

### **Section 3.5 Air Quality**

Because the amount of grading and type of construction activities would be reduced for the 14,000 sf Alternative, construction emissions, including greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions, would be reduced compared to the 18,230 sf Alternative. Construction and operational GHG emissions generated by the 14,000 sf Alternative would be reduced compared to the 18,230 sf Alternative because of the reduced number of trips and smaller building (refer to Section 3.5.5.3).

### **Section 3.6 Soils and Geology**

The 14,000 sf Alternative would result in similar soils and geology effects, and compliance with the California Building Code seismic safety requirements would ensure that no direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effect would occur (refer to Section 3.6.3.2).

### **Section 3.7 Erosion and Sedimentation**

Similar to the 18,230 sf Alternative, soil disturbance during construction of the 14,000 sf Alternative would increase the potential for wind and water erosion within the sublease boundary. As with the 18,230 sf Alternative, potential effects to water quality from storm water runoff would not create a substantial direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effect (refer to Section 3.7.4.3).

### **Section 3.8 Mineral Resources**

As with the 18,230 sf Alternative, the sublease boundary would continue to be used for educational and recreational purposes under the 14,000 sf Alternative. Therefore, the 14,000 sf Alternative would not result in the loss of an area otherwise available for mineral resource extraction (refer to Section 3.8.3.2).

### **Section 3.9 Land Use and Master Plan Compatibility**

Similar to the 18,230 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. The 14,000 sf Alternative would be consistent with the Whittier Narrows Dam Master Plan by providing open space and recreational facilities. Also this alternative would be consistent with the third authorized purpose of Whittier Narrows Dam, which is water conservation (refer to Section 3.9.4.3).

### **Section 3.10 Economics**

As with the 18,230 sf Alternative, the 14,000 sf Alternative would provide enhanced educational and recreational resources to the surrounding community, which would be considered beneficial. The proposed features would be constructed and operated entirely within the boundaries of the 11.21-acre lease and sublease boundary and construction of the new facilities would not affect the continued operation of the surrounding residential, industrial, and institutional uses (refer to Section 3.10.4.3).

### **Section 3.11 Safety and Health**

No hazardous materials are known to be located within the sublease boundary. As with the 18,230 sf Alternative, Construction and operation of the 14,000 sf Alternative would not require extensive or on-going use of acutely hazardous materials or substances (refer to Section 3.11.3.2).

### **Section 3.12 Noise**

Operational characteristics of the 14,000 sf Alternative would be similar to the 18,230 sf Alternative. However, the number of vehicle trips generated would be reduced. As such, noise levels along affected roadways would be less under this alternative and would not exceed the threshold of 67 dBA  $L_{eq}$  (refer to Section 3.12.4.3).

### **Section 3.13 Transportation and Traffic**

The 14,000 sf Alternative involves construction of a smaller interpretive center and parking lot. The trip generation would be reduced under this alternative because trip generation is based on the square footage of the proposed uses and the project attendance levels that would be accommodated by a smaller facility compared to the 18,230 sf Alternative. Therefore, traffic impacts during regular operations and special event operations under the 14,000 sf Alternative would be reduced compared to the 18,230 sf Alternative (refer to Section 3.13.4.3).

### **Section 3.14 Aesthetics**

Aesthetic and visual impacts associated with this alternative would be similar to those associated with the 18,230 sf Alternative in that a new modern nature center and abundant native landscaping would be installed in the lease and sublease boundary. The interpretive center would be approximately 4,230 square feet smaller than the 18,230 sf Alternative and the parking lot would be reduced by 34 parking spaces. However, the existing site features that would be replaced would be similar (refer to Section 3.14.4.3).

### **Section 3.15 Scientific and Educational Value**

Similar to the 18,230 sf Alternative, the 14,000 sf Alternative would provide an expanded and more modern interpretive center. Like the 18,230 sf Alternative, the 14,000 sf Alternative involves restoration of the native habitat on-site and planting of only native species as part of project construction. As such, implementation of the 14,000 sf Alternative would have a beneficial effect on the scientific and educational value (refer to Section 3.15.4.3).

### **Section 3.16 Environmental Justice**

As with the 18,230 sf Alternative, the 14,000 sf Alternative would not disproportionately affect a population of low income, minority, or children and youth population. It would have the beneficial effect

of providing enhanced educational and recreational resources to disadvantaged, minority, and low-income groups (refer to Section 3.16.4.3).

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