

Department of Public Works

Bureau of Engineering
Bureau of Street Services
Joint Report No. 1

January 12, 2018
CD No. 7

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD
PUBLIC WORKS OF THE CITY
of Los Angeles California
AND REFERRED TO THE CITY COUNCIL
JAN 12 2018


Executive Officer
Board of Public Works

BIG TUJUNGA WASH AT ORO VISTA AVENUE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM (PROJECT) CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) COMPLIANCE AND PROJECT APPROVAL (WORK ORDER No. E1907637 AND STATE CLEARINGHOUSE [SCH] No. 2015071012)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the requirements of the CEQA, adopt and forward this report and transmittal to the Los Angeles City Council with the following recommendations:

1. Review and consider the Negative Declaration and Initial Study.
2. Find that, on the basis of the whole record, there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment and that the Negative Declaration reflects the City of Los Angeles's (City) independent judgment and analysis.
3. Adopt the Negative Declaration.
4. Specify that the documents constituting the record of proceedings in this matter are in the custody of the City Clerk located at 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 and in the files of the Department of Public Works (DPW) Bureau of Engineering (BOE) located at 1149 South Broadway, Suite 600, Los Angeles, CA 90015.
5. Approve the project as described in the Final Initial Study.

TRANSMITTAL

Final Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND), dated November 2017.

DISCUSSION

Background

Big Tujunga Creek originates in the San Gabriel Mountains, and flows roughly east to west, and with several tributaries from the north and south join flows into Big Tujunga Reservoir, formed by the Big Tujunga Dam. Above the dam, this water source is called Tujunga Creek or Big Tujunga Creek. Below the Big Tujunga Dam, it is called Tujunga Wash or Big Tujunga Wash (Wash). Within the vicinity of the project site, the Wash drains a

watershed of approximately 106 square miles. The Wash has a perennial channel and several bypass channels.

Oro Vista Avenue crosses the Wash at a low water, constructed crossing also known as an "Arizona Crossing". At the southern end of the crossing, the Wash is at the same elevation as the crossing. The Arizona Crossing allows high storm water flows to pass over Oro Vista Avenue, even if the culverts become blocked. The Wash descends toward the north. A box culvert, located on the north side of the crossing, spans the perennial flow channel. Two pipe culverts, located in the middle section of the Arizona Crossing, accommodate storm water flows from the bypass channel.

Large boulders are placed in the area adjacent to and along the margin of the road. These are placed for the safety of the motorists, and to prevent trespassing into the Wash by motorized vehicles.

Oro Vista Avenue is the only functional, year-round access route into the Riverwood residential Community. During periods of moderate storm water flows, the culverts can become blocked with sediment, boulders, and debris. This can result in water, sediments, rocks, and debris to flow onto and over Oro Vista Avenue. During times of high storm water flows, Oro Vista Avenue becomes flooded and impassable at the Arizona Crossing. Under these conditions, Oro Vista Avenue cannot provide emergency or normal access to the Riverwood Community.

Following the 2009 Station Fire, which burned over 87 percent of the Big Tujunga Creek watershed, multiple storm events conveyed a tremendous volume of sediment into the Wash. Adjacent to Doane Canyon, the Wash was shifted out from its historic, perennial channel diverted by sediments flowing out from that Canyon. The amount of debris and water flowing through the Wash blocked the two culverts beneath Oro Vista Avenue. This blockage resulted in massive amounts of water and debris flowing over Oro Vista Avenue, causing flooding and blocking access to the Riverwood Community.

As part of the clean-up activities related to impacts to Oro Vista Avenue and locations adjoining the Wash from the 2009 Station Fire, emergency approvals and permits were obtained from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). During a site visit by the RWQCB, equipment working in areas adjoining the Wash upstream of Oro Vista Avenue was observed operating outside of the approved permitted area. The City was subsequently cited and fined and was required to obtain additional approvals and permits from the USACE, RWQCB, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to accomplish work activities along Oro Vista Avenue.

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Project Description

The purpose of the project is the clearing, cleaning, maintaining, repairing, and restoration of Oro Vista Avenue and associated berms, swales, and shoulders that are located within the Wash. The work area is up to 200 feet upstream and up to 50 feet downstream of Oro Vista Avenue, within the Wash, to permit 24-hour access to the Riverwood Community. At the end of the Southern California rainy season (October to April), and/or after major storms (December to March), and/or after a major release of water from the Big Tujunga Dam, the City would remove accumulated sediments (i.e. sand, mud, boulders, etc.) and debris (i.e., trash, logs, uprooted trees and vegetation, etc.) that block the flow of water through the culverts or over the Arizona Crossing, upstream and downstream of Oro Vista Avenue. All work would be accomplished shortly after flows have ceased and most ground cover would have been scoured due to water flows. The project would recreate berms and swales in the Wash as needed to restore flow lines through the culverts or over the Arizona Crossing. Conditions would match pre-storm, pre-storm season, or pre-discharge flow from Big Tujunga Dam. There will be no new stream channelization or relocation.

Some minimal pre-storm and pre-discharge maintenance work may occur, but this would be primarily within the road right-of-way of Oro Vista Avenue, and/or a short distance upstream and downstream from the right-of-way. For example, there may be cleaning out of the culverts or perhaps removal of vegetation obstructing the upstream (inflow) and downstream (outflow) openings to the culverts.

Environmental Review

The Draft IS/ND was released for public review on July 2, 2015. Comments were received from the CDFW, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Bureau of Sanitation, and Mr. Art Miner on behalf of an adjacent property owner. Copies of the comments and responses can be found in the Final IS/ND, Section IX (Transmittal).

Since it was not possible to predict or determine where actual work could be needed adjoining the Wash north of Oro Vista Avenue, an area of approximately three thousand linear feet had been identified initially in the Draft Initial Study as an area in which work could occur. After the public review period, the City considered comments received and consulted with the regulatory agencies on numerous occasions regarding the scope of the project as issues and concerns were raised regarding the size of the project area and potential impacts, including potential impacts to four, California Endangered Species Act-listed species. As noted in Section IX.A. of the IS/ND (*Revisions and Clarifications*), a joint meeting was held on June 15, 2016 with representatives of the USACE, RWQCB, CDFW, and the City, related to the overall size of this project. At this

meeting, the City agreed to procure authorizations and permits that would cover only those areas up to 200 feet upstream and up to 50 feet downstream of Oro Vista Avenue. These distances are based on prior work in the area during the post 2005 and 2010 flooding and the distances allowed through the USACE Regional General Permit 63 (RGP-63) (*Repair and Protection Activities in Emergency Situations*). While the authorizations and permits would allow work within 200 feet upstream of Oro Vista Avenue, based on past work activities, most work is expected to occur within 50-feet of the Oro Vista Avenue right-of-way.

However, if a small amount of work is needed beyond the limits noted above, the City would then seek a verbal approval from the regulatory agencies for this small increase in the work area, and work would be conducted under the authorizations and permits applied for and approved as noted above.

If a large amount of work is needed beyond the areas noted above, or work was needed in another area within the Wash, the City would seek approval under a USACE RGP-63 Permit.

The Final IS/ND contains further details, including textual changes to reflect clarifications, changes, or modifications in the project's activities (i.e., elimination of work within the Wash perennial channel that resulted in reduction of the project area as described above).

Revisions made to the IS/ND have not resulted in new significant impacts or new mitigation measures, nor has the severity of an impact increased. None of the CEQA criteria for recirculation (State CEQA Guidelines §15073.5) has been met, and recirculation of the IS/ND is not warranted.

Project Schedule

The work proposed: clearing, cleaning, maintaining, repairing, and restoration of Oro Vista Avenue and associated berms, swales, and shoulders that are located within the Wash would begin once water flows are reduced to a level that would not negatively impact workers and equipment being utilized. Based upon past similar activities this is generally between ten and fifteen days after rainfall has ceased in the area.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The cost will vary and is dependent on the actual impacts of the flows from storm events or releases from the dam. The cost for the clean-up activities related to impacts to Oro Vista Avenue and locations adjoining Big Tujunga Wash from the 2009 Station Fire was an estimated at \$150,000. Funding will be identified based on the actual storm event or release from the dam that triggers the work and the actual extent of the damage.

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(MEM RMK ALM HL GS)

Report reviewed by:

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Report prepared by:

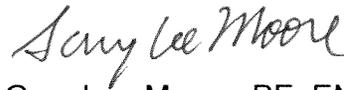
Environmental Management Group

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MEM/JRT/WJ/11-2017-0263.EMG

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Respectfully submitted,



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For Nazario Saucedo, Director
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