

MERA NEXT GENERATION RADIO  
COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

**DRAFT SUBSEQUENT  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

SCH #99092073

VOLUME 1 OF 2

SEPTEMBER 2019

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY (MERA)



# MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Town of Corte Madera  
300 Tamalpais Drive, Corte Madera, CA 94925

**NOTICE OF COMPLETION AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**  
**MERA NEXT GENERATION RADIO COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM PROJECT**  
**DRAFT SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (SCH #99092073)**  
**PROJECT TITLE: MERA NEXT GENERATION RADIO COMMUNICATION SYSTEM**  
**LEAD AGENCY: MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY**

Facilities and meetings comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act. If accommodations are needed, please contact the Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA) Operations Officer at (415) 473-4368.

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that a Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (Draft SEIR) has been completed for the project identified below and is on file with the Marin County Department of Public Works, 3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 304, San Rafael, California, and available for public review between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Copies of the Draft SEIR may be obtained from the Department of Public Works. In addition, a copy is available for review at the Marin County Civic Center Library, the Central Santa Rosa Library, and all branches of the Marin County library. All appendices incorporated into the Draft SEIR are also available for public review at the Marin County Department of Public Works office. A copy of the Draft SEIR and all appendices can also be accessed from a link on the Marin County website, <https://www.marincounty.org/depts/pw/divisions/projects/mera>

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The MERA radio system is vital for emergency countywide communications between police, firefighters and public works crews. The emergency communications system is a network of radio antennas and equipment linked with microwave connections. However, the combination of older equipment and recent changes to frequency requirements by the *Congressional Jobs Bill HR 3630* now requires an upgrade of all Ultra High Frequency (T-band) radio communications systems, including the MERA system. The Next Gen System would update the current backbone network to utilize new radio frequencies in the 700MHz band to vacate the UHF (T-band) frequencies currently utilized. The Next Gen System would also utilize Project 25 (P25) technology to provide improved public service and emergency radio coverage within the County of Marin. Funding for the project is generated by a parcel tax that was authorized by Marin County voters in 2014.

The current MERA system includes 15 active communications sites. The Next Gen System would retain and upgrade 10 of the functioning sites, decommission five existing sites and add equipment to eight new sites, which include previously developed infrastructure not part of the MERA system. Existing infrastructure at the eight new sites include communication facilities or water storage tanks, and a water wellhead site in northern Marin County.

Existing sites used in Next Gen System:

- Civic Center
- Big Rock Ridge
- Mt. Tamalpais
- Mt. Barnabe
- Point Reyes Hill
- Dollar Hill
- San Pedro Ridge
- Mt. Tiburon
- Sonoma Mountain
- Stewart Point

New sites proposed for Next Gen System:

- Prime Site (Sheriff's dispatch center)
- Tomales (existing cell phone site)
- Coyote Peak (a water wellhead site)
- Skyview Terrace (an MMWD water tank site)
- Muir Beach (a local water tank site)
- Wolfback Ridge (an existing broadcast tower)
- OTA Mt. Burdell (an existing broadcast tower)
- Mill Valley Water Tank (MMWD water tank)

The five sites to be decommissioned as part of the Next Gen System are: Forbes Hill in San Rafael, Mt. Burdell near Novato, Mill Valley City Hall and Mill Valley Police Station, and the Bay Hill Road site in Sonoma County.

**PROJECT LOCATIONS:** Figure 1 shows the Next Gen System configuration and Table 1 provides a summary description of the communication sites including assessor parcel numbers and coordinates. A more detailed project description with a list of existing and proposed facilities at each site can be found on the MERA website: <https://www.marincounty.org/depts/pw/divisions/projects/mera>

**SUMMARY OF IMPACT CONCLUSIONS:** The Draft SEIR evaluates the project with respect to the following topical issues:

1) Land Use & Planning	7) Biological Resources	13) Aesthetics/Visual Resources
2) Population & Housing	8) Energy & Natural Resources	14) Cultural Resources
3) Geology and Soils	9) Hazards and Hazardous Materials Radio Frequency Analysis	15) Tribal Cultural Resources
4) Hydrology and Water Quality	10) Noise	16) Agriculture and Forestry Resources
5) Air Quality	11) Public Services and Recreation	17) Greenhouse Gas Emissions
6) Transportation/Traffic	12) Utilities & Service Systems	18) Mineral Resources

The Draft SEIR finds that the projects would result in significant or potentially significant environmental impacts related to topical issues # 7, 9, 13, 14, 15 and recommends the implementation of feasible mitigation measures to either avoid or reduce to a level of insignificance the identified environmental impacts. The Draft SEIR finds that the proposed project would result in significant unavoidable aesthetic/visual resource impacts.

**REVIEW PERIOD:** This Notice of Completion of the Draft SEIR commences a 45-day public review period. Interested persons are invited to review and comment on the Draft SEIR. Written comments may be sent **no later than 4:00pm on the closing date of October 21, 2019** to:

Ernest Klock, MERA Operations Officer  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 304, San Rafael, CA 94903  
email: [NERA-EIR@marincounty.org](mailto:NERA-EIR@marincounty.org)

**PUBLIC MEETING DATE AND LOCATION:** A public hearing on the Draft SEIR will be conducted by the MERA. Oral and written comments on the Draft SEIR may be presented to the MERA at the hearing, scheduled for:

**October 10, 2019 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm**  
Board of Supervisors Chambers  
3501 Civic Center Drive - Room #330, San Rafael, CA

Please call the Marin County Department of Public Works at (415) 473-6530 on or after October 7, 2019 in order to obtain a copy of the agenda, or visit our website at <https://www.marincounty.org/depts/pw/divisions/projects/mera>.

The project is not located on any of the lists of sites enumerated under Section 65962.5 (Hazardous Sites) of the Government Code.

If this project is challenged in court, the challenge may be limited to raising only those issues raised in written correspondence submitted during the 45-day Draft SEIR public review period or at the public hearing described in this notice. (Government Code Section 65009[b][2]).

Ernest Klock, Operations Officer, MERA  
**Phone: 415-473-4368**

**Table 1. MERA Sites and Locations for CEQA Evaluation**

Site Name and Number	APN	Jurisdiction	Coordinates	Previous EIR	Comments
1. Prime Site EOF <sup>^</sup>	165-220-11	City of San Rafael	38.019167, -122.541528	N	New site at Sheriff's Dispatch
2. Civic Center	179-270-11	City of San Rafael	37.999056, -122.531306	Y	Upgrades
3. Big Rock	164-300-04	Marin County	38.059194, -122.604250	Y	Upgrades
4. Mt. Tamalpais	197-120-31	Marin County	37.929006, -122.587084	Y	Upgrades
5. Mt. Barnabe	168-240-01	Marin County	38.026751, -122.716321	Y	Upgrades
6. Bolinas Fire Station	193-030-20	Marin County	N/A	Y	Dropped from original system
7. Bolinas Ridge	197-120-30	Marin County	N/A	Y	Dropped from original system
8. Point Reyes Hill	109-160-23	Marin County	38.079836, -122.866944	Y	Upgrades
9. Forbes Hill	010-261-02	City of San Rafael	N/A	Y	Decommission
10. Dollar Hill	011-051-02	City of San Rafael	37.980262, -122.529354	Y	Upgrades
11. San Pedro Ridge	015-250-21	City of San Rafael	37.990205, -122.500139	Y	Upgrades
12. Mt. Burdell	125-180-17	City of Novato	N/A	Y	Decommission
13. Novato PD	153-061-28	City of Novato	N/A	Y	Dropped from original system
14. Mt. Tiburon	058-261-39	Town of Tiburon	37.890440, -122.464796	Y	Upgrades
15. Mill Valley City Hall	028-014-16	City of Mill Valley	N/A	Y	Decommission
16. Mill Valley Police Station*	030-250-01	City of Mill Valley	N/A	Y	Decommission
17. Bay Hill Road	100-190-07	Sonoma County	N/A	Y	Decommission
18. Sonoma Mountain	136-190-09	Sonoma County	38.261015, -122.903629	Y	Upgrades
19. Stewart Point**	188-090-15	Marin County	38.185833, -122.825167	Y	Upgrades
20. Tomales***	100-050-42	Marin County	38.017000, -122.546000	N	New site with cell tower and equipment
21. Coyote Peak	106-110-03	Marin County	37.863289, -122.585512	N	New site with existing water wellheads
22. Skyview Terrace Water Tank	165-220-02	City of San Rafael	37.851085, -122.498376	N	New site with MMWD water tank
23. Muir Beach	199-262-11	Marin County	38.149888, -122.593239	N	New site with local water tank
24. Wolfback Ridge	200-120-02	Marin County	37.902735, -122.558010	N	New site with existing 100' tower
25. Mt. Burdell OTA <sup>^</sup>	125-160-01	Marin County	38.261015, -122.903629	N	New site with existing structure and tower
26. Mill Valley Water Tank	046-070-03	Marin County	38.185833, -122.825167	N	New site with existing MMWD water tank

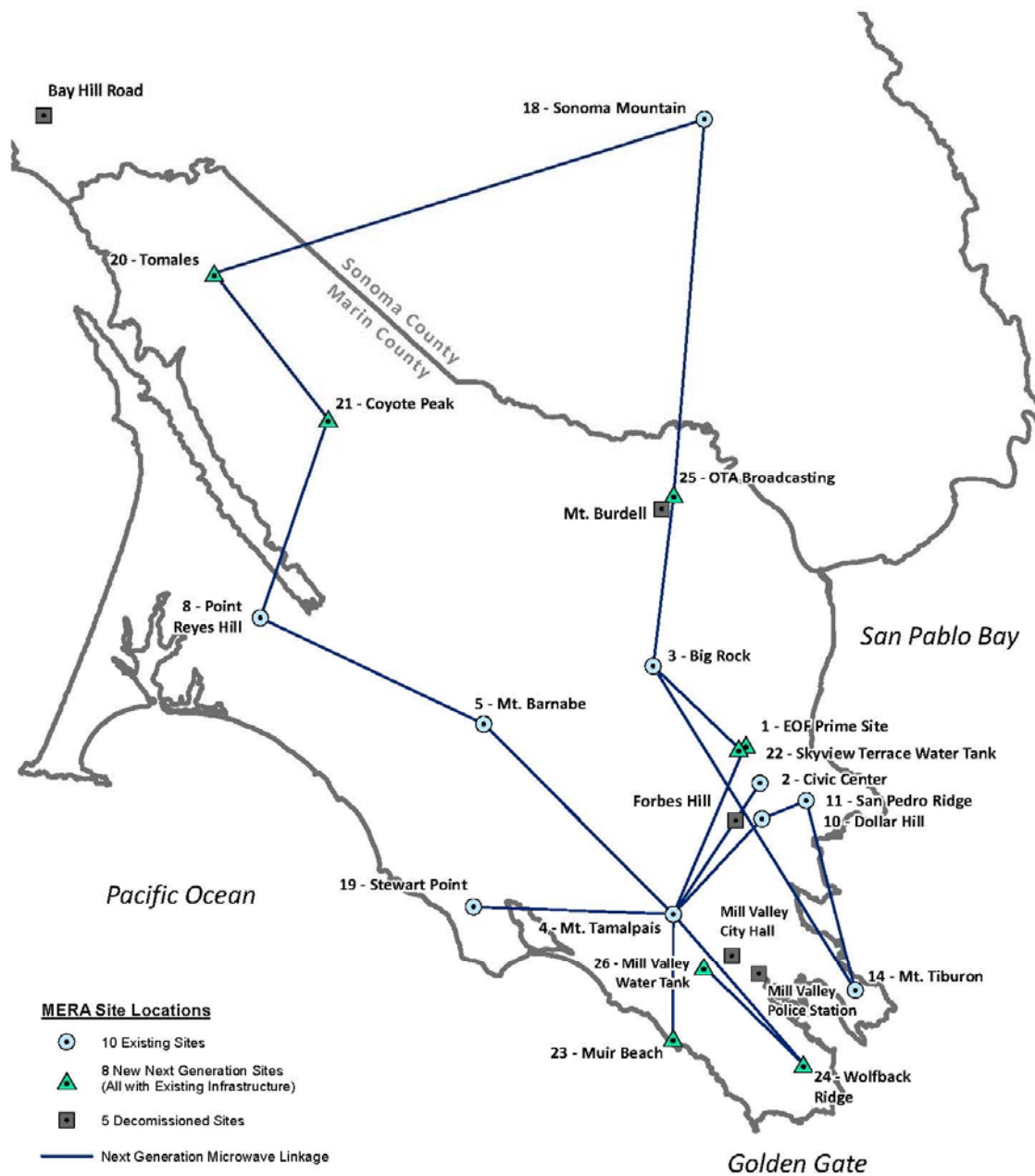
\* Added to original EIR as an adjustment before its publication so signal from Mill Valley City Hall would be detected.

\*\* Added to original EIR with a CEQA Amendment in 2006.

\*\*\* Added to original EIR with a Categorical Exemption in 2012. Incorporated into SEIR to discuss whole action.

<sup>^</sup> EOF = Emergency Operations Facility, OTA = Over-the-Air Broadcasting

**Figure 1. MERA Next Generation System Configuration**



Sources: National Geographic Basemap, WRA | Prepared By: czumwalt, 5/3/2018

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Prepared for:

**Marin Emergency Radio Authority**

**Ernest Klock, MERA Operations Officer**

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Corte Madera, CA 94925

SEPTEMBER 2019

Prepared by:



Pursuant to: California Environmental Quality Act, P.R.C. 21000 et seq.;  
State of California Guidelines, California Administrative Code, 15000 et seq.

