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Office of Planning and  
Environmental Review  
Leighann Moffitt, Director



County Executive  
Navdeep S. Gill

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**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO**  
**OFFICE OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**  
**NOTICE OF PREPARATION**

**FEBRUARY 15, 2019**

**TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES**

**SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR OE3 TRAINING CENTER (PLNP2017-00199)**

Sacramento County will be the CEQA Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a project known as OE3 Training Center. This Notice of Preparation has been sent to responsible and trustee agencies and involved federal agencies pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. Agencies should comment on the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agencies' statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

The project description, location, and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials and may also be viewed online at:

<https://planningdocuments.saccounty.net/ViewProjectDetails.aspx?ControlNum=PLNP2017-00199>

Please send your Agency's response to this Notice to:

Tim Hawkins, Environmental Coordinator  
Office of Planning and Environmental Review  
827 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 225, Sacramento, CA 95814

or via e-mail at: [CEQA@saccounty.net](mailto:CEQA@saccounty.net).

Your response should include the name of a contact person in your agency.

Agencies with specific questions about the project should contact Leanne Mueller, Project Manager, at (916) 874-6141 for further information.

**PROJECT TITLE: OE3 TRAINING CENTER**

**CONTROL NUMBER: PLNP2017-00199**

**PROJECT PROPONENT(S):**

Owner: Operating Engineers Local #3 (OE3) CA AAT

Applicant: OE3 CA AAT Attn. Tammy Castillo

Land Use Consultant: Benchmark Resources Attn. Andrew White

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION:**

Operating Engineers Local #3 proposes to develop the OE3 Training Center on a 1,500-acre site in unincorporated Sacramento. The project site is located at 13800 Meiss Road in the town of Sloughhouse; assessor's parcel numbers: 128-0090-032, 128-0110-011, and 128-0060-001; Carbondale USGS quadrangle, township 7N, range 8E, sections 17-20. All exhibits can be found at the end of this document.

The applicant is requesting a new use permit to build and operate a new campus and equipment training activities. This new use permit would replace the existing mining use permit on the subject property. The new campus and training center includes the following: 1) construction and operation of a new campus facility (without dormitory); and 2) allowance for field instruction with construction equipment on the property. The project will include the relocation of existing classrooms and equipment training from the Rancho Murieta Training Center; the dormitory and food preparation will continue to reside at the current campus location in Rancho Murieta.

The field instruction area will cover 435 acres; however, only 80 acres will be actively disturbed at one time. The applicant proposes a five year rotation cycle, so that the land can rest and revegetate.

**Sacramento County Planning Entitlement Requests:**

1. A Use Permit for a private school to allow 450-acre of 1,500-acre site to be utilized as an Operating Engineers training center in the AG-80 zone.
2. A Design Review to comply with Countywide Design Guidelines.
3. A Williamson Act Contract to re-enter into contract and prevent non-renewal scheduled to occur December 2024 on portions of the subject property.
4. Williamson Act Cancellation to cancel the existing contract on the 15-acre campus site.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVE:**

The project comprises three primary elements: 1) development of a 15-acre state-of-the-art training campus and 80-acre field instruction area for journeyman and apprentice operating engineers; 2) permanent preservation of more than 1,050 acres of open space grazing lands containing federally and State-listed species and habitat; and 3) grazing of 355 acres of fallowed field instruction lands. This new campus and field instruction area would consolidate the school campus in Rancho Murieta and the existing field instruction area (on-site) to create a consolidated training center, so that OE3 can continue to provide state of the art operating engineers training.

**PROJECT BACKGROUND:**

The project site was subject to extensive gold dredging operations over 100 years ago, disturbing and dramatically changing the land by leaving dredge tailings in long rows averaging 15-25 feet in height.

These tailings have been mined for decades and in 1999, the County approved a modification to the existing Mining Use Permit and reclamation plan to continue mining on approximately 175 acres. The Use Permit will expire in June 2019.

In 2011, OE3 bought the proposed project site and received a substantial compliance letter from the County stating that the proposed school equipment activities are similar to those expected in the existing Mining Use Permit, provided that OE3 follow all conditions stipulated by that Use Permit. Since 2014, OE3 transports students daily to the project site from the Rancho Murieta campus for field equipment training. The existing field equipment training area is limited to 95 acres with no permanent structures. The remainder of the land is leased out to local cattle farmers.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL/LAND USE SETTING:**

The project is located in eastern Sacramento County, south of the community of Rancho Murieta. The entire project site encompasses 1,500 acres of mine tailings, open grassland, riparian vegetation and wetland resources. In the center of the project site, approximately 95 acres have been "worked" by the project applicant for field instruction using a variety of equipment types. In that disturbed area, there are two ponds – one is a detention pond to capture stormwater runoff from the disturbed area and the other is a fresh water pond that supplies the water trucks used for dust suppression. The other notable feature throughout the project site is the remnant dredge tailings left from mining activities from the 1850s through 1910. These tailings are large mounds generally in long rows. In the valleys of these rows stormwater can accumulate and provide suitable environments for the growth of cottonwood dominated riparian vegetation. This is quite evident on the site, with vegetation consisting of cottonwoods, elderberry shrubs and willows. Scattered throughout the project site within the grassland open spaces are native oaks, black walnut, eucalyptus, and pine trees.

The surrounding land uses are all agricultural. There are a few scattered homesteads to the west of the site. Northwest of the project site is a mitigation bank for a variety of wetland resources. The Cosumnes River is located approximately two miles to the north and Rancho Murieta is approximately 3.5 miles to the northeast.

#### **PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS/EIR FOCUS:**

Preliminary review of the Project, the site, and the location indicates that the areas of EIR focus should include: Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Climate Change, and Cultural Resources. A brief discussion is provided below.

#### **Agricultural Resources**

The proposed project is located in eastern Sacramento County on lands identified as grazing land (reference Department of Conservation 2016 Important Farmland Map). The proposed project will permanently convert 15 acres for the proposed education campus and expand the area used for field equipment training.

The project site is also currently subject to a Williamson Act Contract that is in the non-renewal process. The current contract will non-renew in 2025. The project proposes the cancellation of the 15-acre education campus and re-enter into a new contract for the remaining property. The analysis will evaluate impacts associated with the proposed school and existing agricultural practices and Williamson Act.

## **Air Quality**

This chapter will describe the potential of the Project to result in the emission of recognized air pollutants such as particulate matter and ozone precursors. The analysis will examine both emissions related to construction and emissions related to operation.

## **Biological Resources**

The project is located in the area of the County where the Sierra foothills begin. The topography is rolling and there are natural ephemeral drainages, small creeks, scattered seasonal wetlands, and vernal pools throughout. Mature vegetation, generally in the valleys created by the mine tailings, consists of cottonwoods, elderberries, and box elders. Vegetation removal is anticipated along with filling some wetlands and vernal pool features to accommodate the expanded field training area. The project site also contains suitable habitat for special status species. Impacts to these sensitive habitats and species will be analyzed.

## **Climate Change**

The proposed project is requesting a Use Permit for the operation of a private school in perpetuity. This school has a field training component where the students get hands-on training of on-road and off-road construction equipment. There are many pieces of equipment at the site and in operation throughout the instruction day. The analysis will analyze the potential impacts to climate change and greenhouse gas emissions recognizing the continual operation of the school and the type and number to equipment used on a daily basis.

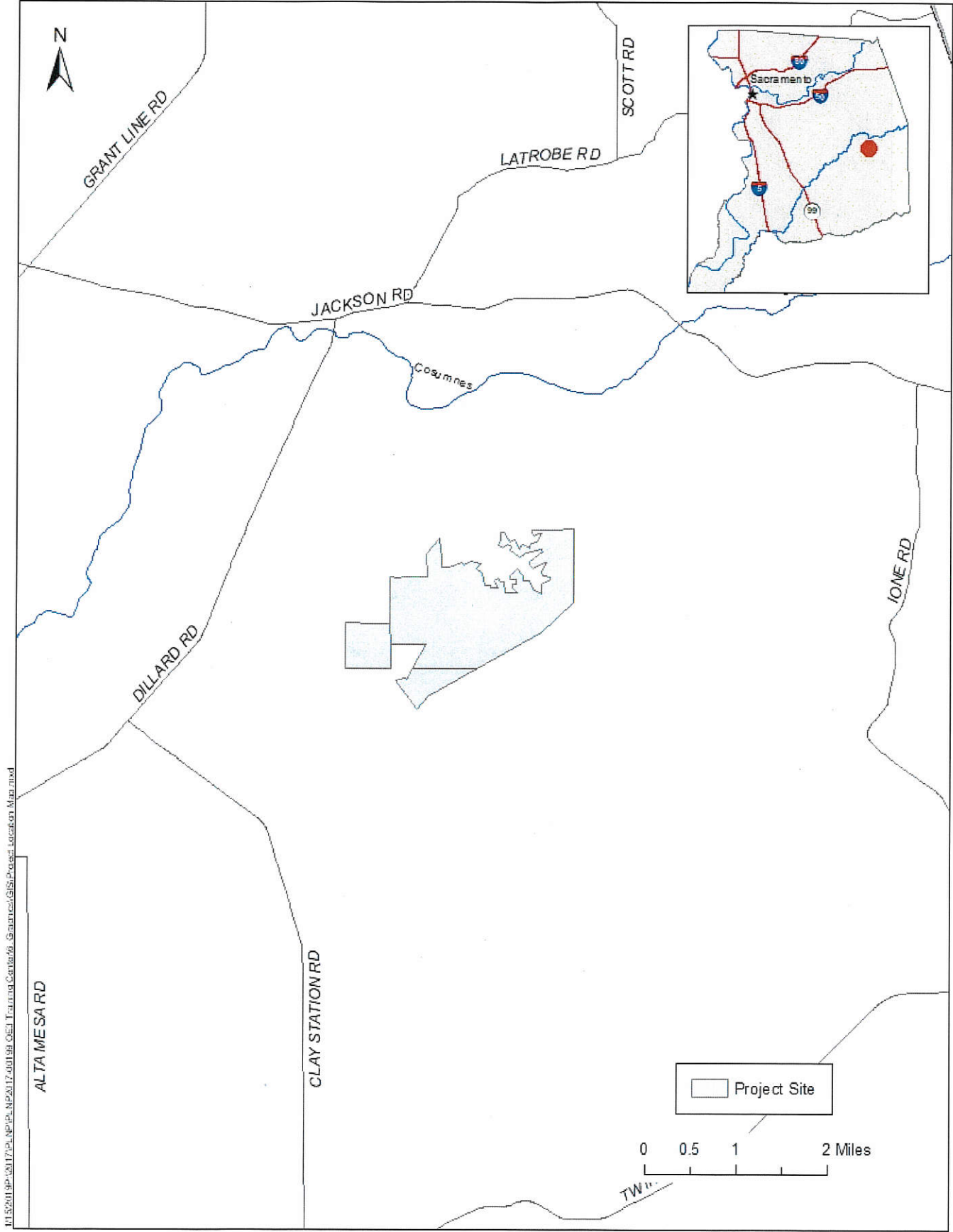
## **Cultural Resources**

The project is located in an area of the County which is sensitive for cultural/archeological and Tribal Cultural Resources. Prior projects on a portion of this site have conducted cultural resources studies and some historical resources were discovered; however, there was no concern with impacting these resources. Tribal Cultural Resources were not previously evaluated and therefore, this will be a new analysis for this property.

### **INTENDED USES OF THE EIR:**

The Sacramento County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors will use the information contained in the EIR in evaluating the proposed project and rendering a decision to approve or deny the requested entitlements. The EIR will serve as an information document for the general public as well. Responsible agencies may also use the EIR as needed for subsequent discretionary actions. Responsible agencies may include but not be limited to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento Municipal Utility District and/or Pacific Gas and Electric.

Plate NOP-1: Project Location Map



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Plate NOP-2: Existing Project Site (Aerial Photo 2016)

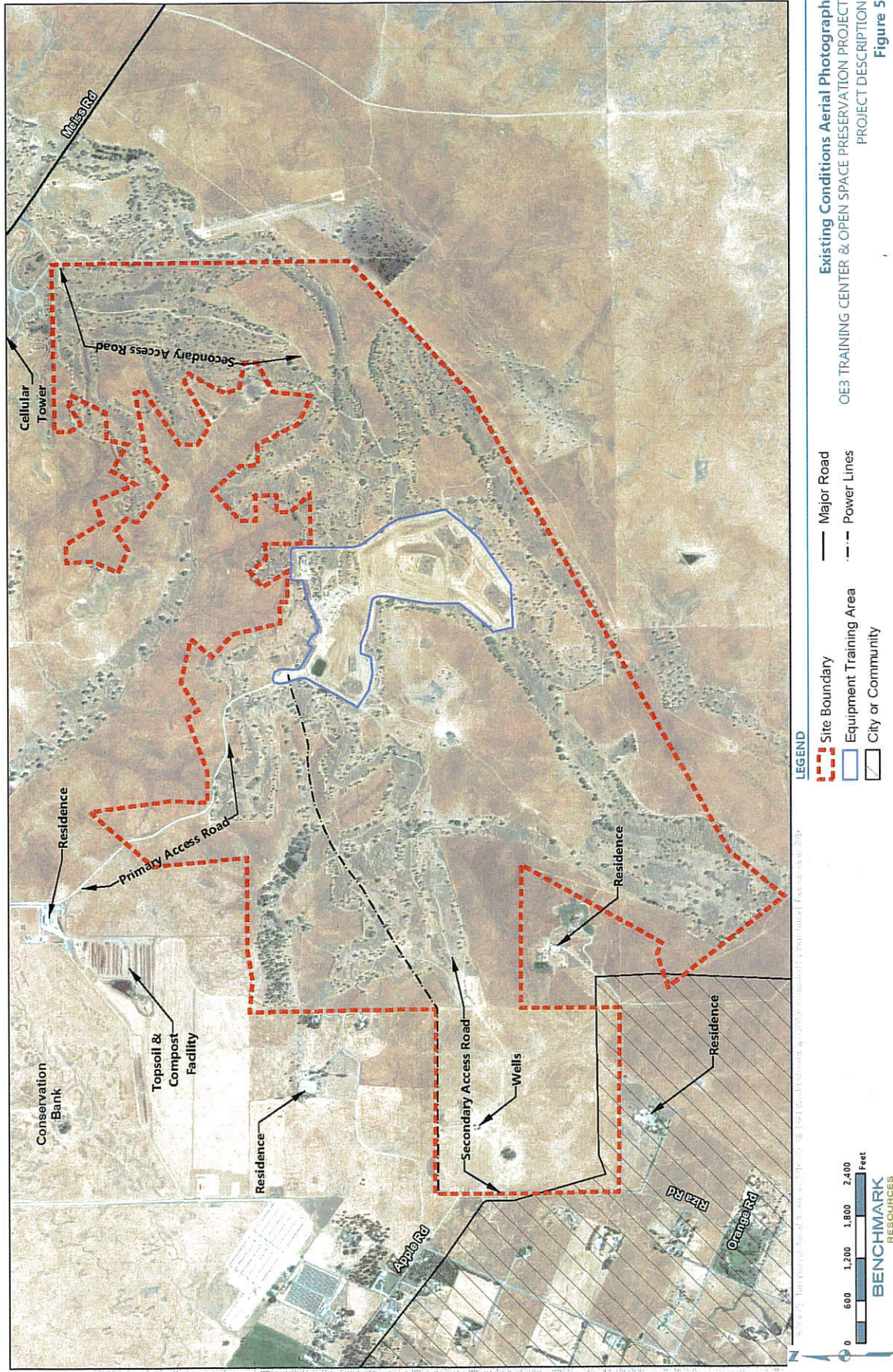




Plate NOP-3: Proposed Site Plan

