



April 8, 2019

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Government Office of Planning & Research
APR 08 2019
STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

CEQA Project: **SCH #2019039140**

Lead Agency: Colusa County Community Development Department

Project Title: River Partners Habitat Restoration (Willow Bent) UP #19-2-1

The Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (Division) oversees the drilling, operation, maintenance, and plugging and abandonment of oil, natural gas, and geothermal wells. Our regulatory program emphasizes the wise development of oil, natural gas, and geothermal resources in the state through sound engineering practices that protect the environment, prevent pollution, and ensure public safety. Northern California is known for its rich gas fields. Division staff have reviewed the documents depicting the proposed project.

The Project is located along the eastern bank of the Sacramento River approximately 11 miles north of the city of Colusa and 3 miles south of the community of Princeton in Colusa County, California. The project area encompasses a total of approximately 122.5 acres of the 175-acre Willow Bend Preserve and includes the North Field (97.9 acres) and the South Field (24.6 acres). The North Field of the project area regularly floods during normal water years. Once inundated, it performs like a historic floodplain would; retaining shallow, turbid waters for weeks at a time, providing beneficial habitat for fish and wildlife. However, rock revetment placed along the river in the 1980s eliminated channel migration, elevated the top of the bank, and disconnected the North Field from the main river channel. As a result, fish stranding occurs when the floodwaters recede. The purpose of the Project is to restore high-quality wildlife habitat to the property through minor alterations of land and vegetation within the project area. Project activities include site grading and preparation (including installation of a drainage structure, planting, seeding, irrigating, controlling weeds, and monitoring performance).

Grading in the North Field is designed to create positive drainage away from the Corps levee and toward the river. A water control structure will be installed within the newly graded channel. This structure will help control the rate that the site drains following flood events. Activities in the South Field are limited to tilling and planting of native riparian plants.

No gas wells are present within the North Field. Two abandoned gas wells are within the South Field. Both were abandoned in 1974 and were cut off five feet or more below

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ground level at that time. The locations are shown on the attached map. Based on the information provided, there should be no significant impact on the project from the wells and no significant impact to the wells by the project.

For future reference, you can review wells located on private and public land at the Division's website: <https://secure.conservation.ca.gov/WellSearch>. Based on our review of available data, no impact to known oil or gas wells is likely.

The local permitting agencies and property owner should be aware of, and fully understand, that significant and potentially dangerous issues may be associated with development near oil and gas wells. These issues are non-exhaustively identified in the following comments and are provided by the Division for consideration by the local permitting agency, in conjunction with the property owner and/or developer, on a parcel-by-parcel or well-by-well basis. As stated above, the Division provides the above well review information solely to facilitate decisions made by the local permitting agency regarding potential development near an oil or gas well.

1. It is recommended that access to a well located on the property be maintained in the event re-abandonment of the well becomes necessary in the future. Impeding access to a well could result in the need to remove any structure or obstacle that prevents or impedes access. This includes, but is not limited to, buildings, housing, fencing, landscaping, trees, pools, patios, sidewalks, and decking.
2. Nothing guarantees that a well abandoned to current standards will not start leaking oil, gas, and/or water in the future. It always remains a possibility that any well may start to leak oil, gas, and/or water after abandonment, no matter how thoroughly the well was plugged and abandoned. The Division acknowledges that wells abandoned to current standards have a lower probability of leaking oil, gas, and/or water in the future, but makes no guarantees as to the adequacy of this well's abandonment or the potential need for future re-abandonment.
3. Based on comments **1** and **2** above, the Division makes the following general recommendations:
 - a. Maintain physical access to any oil or gas well encountered.
 - b. Ensure that the abandonment of oil or gas wells is to current standards.

If the local permitting agency, property owner, and/or developer chooses not to follow recommendation "**b**" for a well located on the development site property, the Division believes that the importance of following recommendation "**a**" for the well located on the subject property increases. If recommendation "**a**" cannot be followed for the well located on the subject property, then the Division advises the local permitting agency, property owner, and/or developer to consider any and all alternatives to proposed construction or development on the site (see comment **4** below).

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4. Sections 3208 and 3255(a)(3) of the Public Resources Code give the Division the authority to order the re-abandonment of any well that is hazardous, or that poses a danger to life, health, or natural resources. Responsibility for re-abandonment costs for any well may be affected by the choices made by the local permitting agency, property owner, and/or developer in considering the general recommendations set forth in this letter. (Cal. Public Res. Code, § 3208.1.)
5. Maintaining sufficient access to a gas well may be generally described as maintaining "rig access" to the well. Rig access allows a well servicing rig and associated necessary equipment to reach the well from a public street or access way, solely over the parcel on which the well is located. A well servicing rig, and any necessary equipment, should be able to pass unimpeded along and over the route, and should be able to access the well without disturbing the integrity of surrounding infrastructure.
6. If, during the course of development of this proposed project, **any unknown well(s) is/are discovered**, the Division should be notified immediately so that the newly-discovered well(s) can be incorporated into the records and investigated. The Division recommends that any wells found in the course of this project, and any pertinent information obtained after the issuance of this letter, be communicated to the appropriate county recorder for inclusion in the title information of the subject real property. This is to ensure that present and future property owners are aware of (1) the wells located on the property, and (2) potentially significant issues associated with any improvements near oil or gas wells.

No well work may be performed on any oil or gas well without written approval from the Division in the form of an appropriate permit. This includes, but is not limited to, mitigating leaking fluids or gas from abandoned wells, modifications to well casings, and/or any other re-abandonment work. (NOTE: The Division regulates the depth of any well below final grade (depth below the surface of the ground). Title 14, Section 1723.5 of the California Code of Regulations states that all well casings shall be cut off at least 5 feet but no more than 10 feet below grade. If any well needs to be lowered or raised (i.e. casing cut down or casing riser added) to meet this grade regulation, a permit from the Division is required before work can start.)

DocuSigned by:

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Attachment: Map of affected wells

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● FORMER GAS WELLS



NORTH

600 ft

LOCATIONS OF AFFECTED WELLS
The Sacramento River Salmonid Stranding Reduction and
Floodplain Habitat Restoration Project
at the Willow Bend Preserve Project

Colusa County California

SCH 2019039140