

REVISED NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Date: August 2, 2021

To: Governor's Office of Planning and Research/State Clearinghouse Unit, Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and Interested Parties

From: Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority

Subject: Announcement of:

- 1) Revised notice of preparation of an environmental impact report for the 500-year Flood Protection Project
- 2) Scoping comments are due by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 1, 2021

On July 9, 2021, the Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority (TRLIA), as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), issued a notice of preparation (NOP) of an environmental impact report (EIR) for the 500-year Flood Protection Project, in accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines. As indicated in the NOP, TRLIA is proposing to implement improvements to the Reclamation District (RD) 784 levee system to provide 500-year flood protection to southwest Yuba County.

Since issuing the NOP, TRLIA has added a component to the proposed project. The new component would extend the existing Western Pacific Interceptor Canal (WPIC) west levee to the north and east by constructing a new levee embankment connecting to State Route 65. This revised NOP incorporates this new project component. The July 9, 2021 NOP indicated that the 30-day public scoping period would end August 9, 2021. This revised NOP extends the scoping period to September 1, 2021. The July 20, 2021 public scoping meeting addressed all potential project components, including extension of the WPIC west levee, and an additional scoping meeting will not be held. The purpose of this NOP is to provide sufficient information about the proposed project and its potential environmental impacts to allow the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, responsible and trustee agencies, and interested parties with sufficient opportunity to provide a meaningful response related to the scope and content of the EIR. There are no changes to probable environmental impacts presented in the July 9, 2021 NOP; the only changes herein are the extended public scoping period and the revised project description adding the new project component.

Written comments concerning the EIR must be directed to the Executive Director of TRLIA at the following address or via email no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 1, 2021. All comments must include full name and address of the commentor. Please address all comments to:

Paul G. Brunner, Executive Director
Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority
1114 Yuba Street, Suite 218
Marysville, CA 95901
Telephone: 530-749-5679
Fax: 530-749-6990
Email: pbrunner@co.yuba.ca.us

Agencies that need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed project should provide TRLIA with the name of the staff contact person. Comments provided by email should include the name and address of the sender. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public.

Interested parties submitting comments will be automatically added to the distribution list for future notices and information about the environmental review process for the proposed project. If an interested party does not wish to submit comments on the scope and content of the EIR but would like to be added to the mailing list, they can submit contact information, including email address, with a request to be added to the mailing list at the contact above.

Project Background and Location

TRLIA is a joint powers authority comprised of Yuba County and RD 784 that was formed in 2004 to address funding and implementation of levee improvements for the RD 784 urban service area and other areas within Yuba County. The RD 784 urban service area consists of approximately 30,000 acres in southwest Yuba County, including part or all of the communities of Linda, Olivehurst, Arboga, and Plumas Lake. This service area is bounded on the north by the Yuba River, on the west by the Feather River, on the south by the Bear River, and on the east by the WPIC. TRLIA has implemented a program of improvements to the RD 784 levee system to provide 200-year flood protection to properties within the RD 784 urban service area.

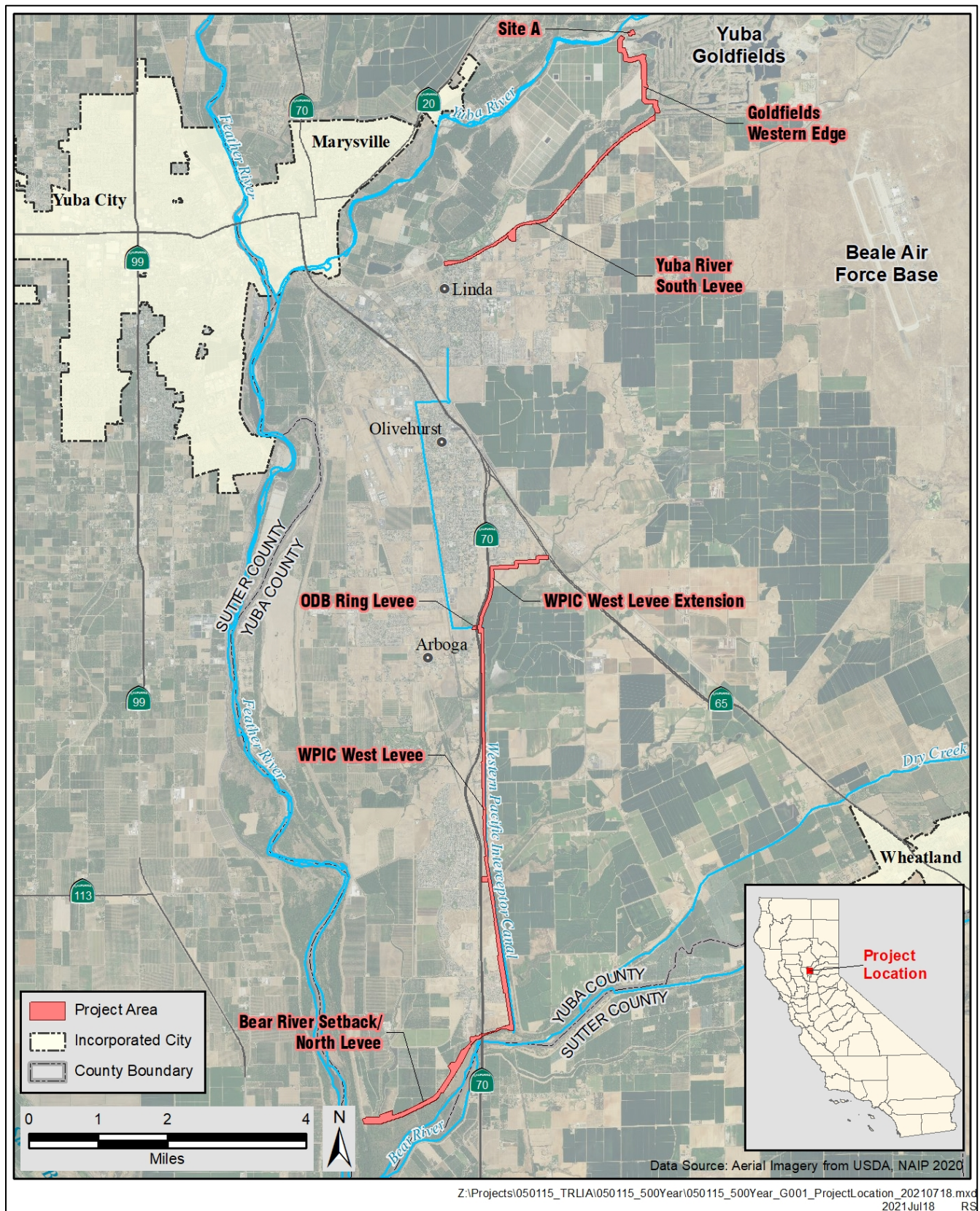
TRLIA is considering opportunities to further reduce flood risk beyond the State minimum standards and ensure the basin is adaptable to climate change. Specifically, TRLIA is reevaluating the RD 784 levee system against the 500-year design water surface elevations to determine which levee segments would not meet this level of protection and identify appropriate improvements to increase protection of those areas to the 500-year level. Based on the preliminary review, improvements may be necessary along a total of up to approximately 11 miles of existing levee segments located on the north side of the Bear River, west side of the WPIC, and south side of the Yuba River. Improvements also may include extending the WPIC west levee to the north and east and modifying and extending existing embankments in the western portion of the Yuba Goldfields (Goldfields). The project area (**Figure 1**) is located on the U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute Yuba City, Olivehurst, and Nicolaus quadrangles.

Project Description

The proposed improvements would include raising the height of existing specified levee segments by a maximum of approximately 2 feet, depending on the location. Raises may be accomplished by adding soil fill to the levee embankment. This would also require widening the levee footprint, except in limited areas where the existing levee crown is wider than 20 feet and/or landside and waterside slopes are flatter than two horizontal (H) to one vertical (V) and 3H:1V, respectively. If a wider levee footprint is required, fill would be placed along the landside and/or waterside slope to reach the desired levee height (variable), crown width (20 feet), and landside and waterside slopes (2H:1V and 3H:1V).

The additional levee height may be achieved by adding aggregate base to the levee crown on levee segments where the required levee raise is less than 0.5 foot, the existing levee crown is a minimum of 20 feet wide, and no other levee embankment work is required in or near the area of the raise. Where there is insufficient area to accommodate a widened footprint required by a levee crown raise (either soil fill or aggregate base), additional levee height may be provided by constructing a concrete parapet wall. Parapet walls are vertical space-conserving barriers constructed along the waterside levee crown hinge.

Figure 1 Project Area



Source: HDR, Inc. 2021, adapted by GEI Consultants, Inc. in 2021

The WPIC west levee would be extended by constructing a new levee embankment north along the east side of State Route 70, then east to State Route 65. The levee extension would be constructed with 3H:1V landside and waterside slopes and a 20-foot-wide crown. Along the western edge of the Goldfields, a new levee would be constructed along the alignment of an existing partial embankment. This levee would be constructed with 5H:1V landside slope, a 35-foot-wide crown, and 3H:1V waterside slope.

Along portions of the existing specified levee segments where seepage is a concern, remediation may include cutoff walls, landside blankets or seepage berms, or relief wells. Seepage cutoff walls are vertical walls approximately 3 feet wide and constructed of low hydraulic conductivity materials through the levee embankment and foundation to cut off potential through- and under-seepage. Relief wells are designed to relieve excessive pore pressures during high-flow events and provide a controlled discharge point for under-seepage. Relief wells and associated collection ditch and access road would be installed along the landside levee toe. Seepage berms and blankets are wide embankment structures that extend outward from the landside levee toe to extend the under-seepage path and provide additional resisting forces against high-seepage gradients.

Site A is located at an existing canal in the northwest corner of the Goldfields between a mining pond and the Yuba River channel. An embankment with landside and waterside slopes of 3H:1V and penetrated by three 60-inch culverts with gates to control flow would be installed at this location to control flows entering the Goldfields in a high-water event.

Equipment anticipated to be used during construction activities may include, but not necessarily be limited to: scrapers, graders, excavators, loaders, rollers, haul trucks, and water trucks.

Project Schedule

Project construction is proposed to be completed within the next 5 years. The project is anticipated to be constructed in a single season between April and December but could be spread over two construction seasons if construction cannot be completed in one season.

Project Alternatives

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a) requires that an EIR describe a range of reasonable and feasible alternatives to the proposed project, or to the location of the proposed project, that are capable of attaining most project objectives while also avoiding or substantially lessening the significant environmental effects of the project, and to evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.

The No-Project Alternative and at least one other alternative to the proposed project that could reduce at least one potentially significant impact of the proposed project will be evaluated in the EIR in accordance with CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The environmental analysis will focus on examining the potential environmental impacts of implementing the proposed project and identifying feasible measures and alternatives that can be implemented to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate such impacts. The EIR will also evaluate cumulative effects of the proposed improvements when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

Based on preliminary evaluations, the EIR is not anticipated to address the following resources, because there is no potential that these resources would be significantly impacted by the proposed project:

▪ **Energy**

- **Wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources.** Project implementation would not include wasteful or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, because it would be required to meet air quality and greenhouse gas emissions criteria that require the use of efficient equipment. In addition, project construction would be completed within the shortest period feasible, expected to be approximately 9 months.
- **Conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.** The project would be constructed using efficient equipment and would not change operations and maintenance from existing conditions. There would be no long-term impacts to energy resources, and the project would not conflict with or obstruct renewable energy or energy efficiency plans.

▪ **Land Use and Planning**

- **Physical Division of an Established Community.** Project activities would occur in rural areas and along community perimeters and would not divide any communities.
- **Conflict with Land Use Plan, Policy, or Regulation.** Implementing the proposed project would not change the overall character of lands in the project area or vicinity and would be consistent with Yuba County land use and zoning designations.

▪ **Population and Housing**

- **Inducement of substantial unplanned population growth in an area.** The project does not include housing or commercial development that would directly or indirectly induce population growth. The RD 784 service area already has 200-year flood protection. The proposed improvements would not induce growth beyond what has already been planned under the Yuba County 2030 General Plan and would not change where this growth is planned to occur.
- **Displacement of substantial numbers of existing people or housing.** No people or housing would be permanently displaced by project implementation, and construction would be completed by local construction workers that would not need temporary housing. Project construction would occur primarily in undeveloped areas. Construction is not anticipated to require temporary displacement of residents adjacent to work areas. If 24-hour construction is required adjacent to residences, it would be for a brief period (less than 1 week) and would not affect a substantial number of people or residences.

▪ **Public Services**

- **Substantial adverse physical impacts associated with new or physically altered governmental facilities.** The project would not require any new or increased government facilities to maintain public services, acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, or other public facilities. The project would not have any or only minimal effects on existing public services.

▪ **Recreation**

- **Increase in use of existing recreational facilities resulting in substantial deterioration.** The proposed project would not increase use of existing recreational facilities.
- **Construction or expansion of recreational facilities resulting in an adverse physical effect.** The proposed project does not include recreational facilities and would not require construction or expansion of recreational facilities.

▪ **Wildfire**

- **Substantial impairment of an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan.** There would be no effect on implementation of the Yuba County Emergency Operations Plan. Project construction would primarily occur in remote areas and temporary disruption of potential evacuation routes would be minimal, if any. Therefore, the proposed project would not substantially impair implementation of an emergency response or evacuation plan. Potential temporary and short-term disruption of emergency access and evacuation routes by haul truck traffic during construction will be addressed in the EIR's "Transportation" section.
- **Exacerbation of wildfire risks.** The project would not require installation or maintenance of infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk or result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment.
- **Exposure to significant wildfire risks.** No portion of the project area is within a State or Federal responsibility area for fire protection or within a high fire hazard severity zone designated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Standard wildfire risk reduction requirements for construction activities would be implemented during project construction, such as limiting activity on red flag days and prohibiting on-site burning. Therefore, project construction would not increase exposure of people or structures to significant wildfire risks or to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire.

Based on preliminary evaluations, the proposed project could have the following probable direct, indirect, and/or cumulative environmental effects:

- **Aesthetics.** Temporary changes in scenic views or visual character of the project area during construction, and potential long-term changes to aesthetics from levee modification and vegetation removal.
- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources.** Potential conversion of a small amount of farmland to accommodate levee footprint expansion.
- **Air Quality.** Temporary, short-term increases in pollutant emissions associated with construction activities.
- **Biological Resources.** Short- and long-term effects on habitat for special-status species and potential loss of a small amount of aquatic habitat and riparian vegetation.

- **Cultural Resources.** Potential disturbance or destruction of known or unknown historic or archaeological resources during construction.
- **Geology, Soils, and Paleontological Resources.** Temporary and short-term increases in erosion during construction.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** Temporary, short-term increases in greenhouse gas emissions associated with construction activities.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Potential introduction of contaminants into water courses and exposure of construction workers to hazardous materials during construction activities.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality.** Potential construction-related impacts to water quality, short- and long-term transport of sediments and other pollutants into water courses, and effects on flood conveyance and flood control.
- **Noise.** Temporary and short-term increases in noise levels near sensitive receptors during construction.
- **Transportation.** Temporary and short-term disruption of traffic or emergency access by haul truck traffic during construction.
- **Tribal Cultural Resources.** Potential disturbance or destruction of known or unknown Tribal cultural resources during construction.