

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE EIR

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the potential environmental consequences that may result from implementation of the East Bay Regional Park District's (EBRPD's) Draft Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan (Plan). EBRPD is the lead agency for environmental review of the proposed project; this EIR is designed to fully inform EBRPD's decision-makers, other responsible agencies, and the general public of the Plan and the potential consequences of its approval and implementation. The EIR also recommends a set of mitigation measures to reduce or avoid potentially-significant impacts and examines various alternatives to the proposed project.

B. PROPOSED PROJECT

EBRPD, with LSA as a consultant, has developed a Draft Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan to guide ongoing vegetation management activities on EBRPD park lands along the wildland-urban interface to reduce the likelihood of a catastrophic, wind-driven wildfire, such as the 1991 Oakland Hills fire.

1. Study Area

The Plan's Study Area comprises approximately 19,000 acres of parks and open space within the Measure CC zone in western Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. This zone includes 13 hillside parks (from north to south):

- Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve
- Kennedy Grove Regional Recreation Area
- Wildcat Canyon Regional Park
- Tilden Regional Park
- Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve
- Temescal Regional Recreation Area
- Robert Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve
- Huckleberry Botanic Regional Preserve
- Roberts Regional Recreational Area
- Redwood Regional Park
- Leona Canyon Regional Open Space and Preserve

- Anthony Chabot Regional Park, and
- Lake Chabot Regional Park.

Also included in the Study Area are seven shoreline parks (from north to south):

- Point Pinole Regional Shoreline
- Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline
- Brooks Island Regional Shoreline
- Eastshore State Park
- Middle Harbor Shoreline Park
- Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach, and
- Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline.

The Study Area's hillside parks straddle the East Bay Hills in an elongated band of approximately 26 miles in length and up to 2.5 miles in width. The shoreline parks are located along the San Francisco Bay within the City of Richmond in the north to the City of Oakland in the south. While the Study Area for the Plan includes the 13 hillside parks and seven shoreline parks listed previously, the main focus of the Plan is on the wildland-urban interface along the western edge of the East Bay hill parks and the shoreline parks of Point Pinole and Miller/Knox, where wildfire hazards and fuel loads are present.

2. Plan Purpose and Goals

EBRPD has determined that there are areas of high hazard fuels within the Study Area that have significant potential to produce or conduct a devastating wildfire, and action is needed to reduce the risk of a fast-moving wildland fire emerging from or moving through the parklands and igniting residential neighborhoods and other structures and facilities adjacent to the parks. Similarly, the potential also exists for fires starting on and moving from adjacent non-park lands through high hazard fuels and causing unacceptable damage to EBRPD facilities and resources.

The purpose of the Plan is to reduce the risks from wildfires in identified high hazard areas on EBRPD parklands through fuel reduction actions that are conducted in a manner that mitigates adverse environmental effects and implements resource and habitat management goals. The Plan is not a technical manual for habitat restoration, but rather provides basic guidelines for protecting environmental values, enhancing habitat, restoring native vegetation and setting priorities for treatments while reducing wildfire hazards. The Plan provides specific goals, objectives, guidelines, and best management practices (BMPs) to inform and guide wildfire hazard reduction and resource management activities that will be carried out by EBRPD and its contractors.

Specific goals that have been established by EBRPD for the Plan include the following:

- Reduce fire hazards on District-owned lands in the East Bay's wildland-urban interface to an acceptable level.
- Maintain and enhance ecological values for plant and wildlife habitat consistent with fire reduction goals.

- Preserve aesthetic landscape values for park users and neighboring communities.
- Provide a vegetation management plan which is cost-effective and both financially and environmentally sustainable to EBRPD on an on-going basis.

C. EIR SCOPE

EBRPD posted at each Study Area Park and circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and an Initial Study that included a list of potential environmental effects that could result from the proposed project. The NOP was published on April 16, 2008, was distributed to local, regional, State and federal agencies, and persons who had expressed interest in the Plan and EIR. The NOP was also posted and the Initial Study made available at each Park within the Study Area.

A public scoping session was held on May 7, 2008. Comments received by EBRPD on the NOP were taken into account during the preparation of the EIR. The NOP, Initial Study and written comments received on the NOP are included in Appendix A.

1. Topics Addressed in This EIR

This Draft EIR focuses on the areas of concern identified in the NOP and comments received on the NOP. The following environmental topics are addressed in this EIR:

- A. Land Use and Planning Policy
- B. Biological Resources
- C. Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- D. Hydrology and Water Quality
- E. Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- F. Air Quality and Global Climate Change
- G. Noise
- H. Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- I. Visual Resources

Chapter VI, CEQA-Required Assessment Conclusions, provides an analysis of potential cumulative effects of the project for each environmental topic.

2. Topics Not Addressed in This EIR

The following seven topics were considered in the Initial Study but not addressed in this EIR because it was determined that the project would not cause significant impacts related to these topics: agricultural resources, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, and utilities.

a. Agricultural Resources. Although portions of some parks within the Study Area are currently categorized as Grazing Land by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, there are no areas of designated “Farmland” located in or adjacent to the Study Area. Implementation of the Plan would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to a non-agricultural use. In addition, none of the parks within the Study Area or any of the land adjacent to the parks is zoned for agricultural use; as such, implementation of the Plan would not conflict with

existing zoning for agricultural uses or Williamson Act contracts. As a result, impacts on agricultural resources would be less than significant and are not further analyzed in this EIR.

b. Mineral Resources. The purpose of the Plan is to reduce the risk of wildfire in identified high hazard areas through fuel reduction activities to be undertaken by EBRPD. The vegetation management actions proposed as part of the Plan would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State, or in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan. As a result, impacts on mineral resources would be less than significant and, as such, are not further analyzed in this EIR.

c. Population and Housing. While there are a very limited number of residences used primarily by District staff located within the parks within the Study Area (approximately 14 residences), implementation of the fuel reduction activities identified in the Plan would not displace the residents living within these structures. Rather, the purpose of activities undertaken as part of the Plan is to limit the future displacement of residents within and adjacent to the parks as the result of a catastrophic wildland fire. Therefore, implementation of the Plan would not result in the displacement of substantial numbers of existing residents, necessitating the replacement of housing elsewhere. As a result, impacts on population and housing would be less than significant and, as such, are not further analyzed in this EIR.

d. Public Services. The Plan does not propose the construction of new or altered government facilities, and no additional governmental facilities or public services would be required in order to conduct the fuel reduction and vegetation management activities proposed by the Plan. Fire protection and emergency services are provided to the parks in the Study Area by EBRPD and surrounding fire protection districts. The purpose of the Plan is to manage vegetation to reduce the potential for a catastrophic wildfire; while EBRPD staff would manage and conduct the fuel management activities over time, the District has sufficient facilities and offices for the required personnel.

EBRPD and municipal police departments provide police protection services to the Study Area and the surrounding vicinity. Implementation of the fuel reduction activities and resource management projects identified in the Plan would not require additional police protection services such that acceptable service ratios and response times could not be maintained. In addition, because the Plan would not result in any local or regional population increase which would lead to a subsequent increase in student enrollment in public schools, implementation of the Plan would not require the construction of new schools or result in school capacity being exceeded. Therefore, impacts on public services would be less than significant and, as such, are not further analyzed in this EIR.

e. Recreation. The Plan does not propose to develop recreational infrastructure, trails, facilities or structures that might increase the use of the regional parks such that substantial physical deterioration of the recreational facilities would occur or be accelerated. The vegetation management activities proposed by the Plan would not in themselves cause an increase in the number of visitors to the parks that would lead to significant adverse effects to the environment. As such, impacts on recreation would be less than significant and are not further analyzed in this EIR.

f. Transportation. The Plan does not include any proposals to construct infrastructure, facilities, or permanent structures that would cause an increase in the number of visitors at the park and a related increase in vehicular trips. Therefore, implementation of the Plan would not cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system. The fuel reduction activities proposed in the Plan may result in temporary circulation impacts while equipment and personnel are transported to locations where fuel reduction activities would occur; however, these disruptions would be short-term in nature. Additionally, these temporary traffic impacts would be less than significant because fuel management activities would not occur throughout all the Study Area parks simultaneously, but would be temporary and occur in site-specific areas. Therefore, the Plan would not result in impacts to transportation, and as such, will not further be analyzed in this EIR.

g. Utilities. The Plan would not result in the construction of any new permanent structures that would generate wastewater, require wastewater treatment, or generate additional storm water runoff, and the fuel reduction strategies proposed under the Plan would not require large amounts of water or produce large amounts of wastewater. As such, the Plan would not require or result in the construction of new water, wastewater treatment, or stormwater drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects. In addition, activities implemented as a result of the Plan would include similar waste generation rates to those already realized by management efforts undertaken by EBRPD and its contractors. Therefore, impacts to utilities would be less than significant and are not further analyzed in this EIR.

D. REPORT ORGANIZATION

This EIR is organized into the following chapters:

- *Chapter I – Introduction:* Discusses the overall EIR purpose, provides a summary of the proposed action and environmental review process, identifies potentially significant issues and concerns, and summarizes the organization of the EIR.
- *Chapter II – Summary:* Provides a summary of the impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed project, and describes mitigation measures recommended to reduce or avoid any potentially-significant impacts.
- *Chapter III – Project Description:* Provides a description of the project objectives, project location and Study Area, planning process and background, details of the project itself and the required approval process.
- *Chapter IV – Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures:* Describes the following for each environmental technical topic: existing conditions (setting), potential environmental impacts and their level of significance, and mitigation measures recommended to mitigate identified impacts. Potential adverse impacts are identified by levels of significance, as follows: less-than-significant impact (LTS), significant impact (S), and significant and unavoidable impact (SU). The significance of each impact is categorized before and after implementation of any recommended mitigation measure(s).
- *Chapter V – Alternatives:* Provides an evaluation of two alternatives to the proposed project in addition to the No Project alternative.

- *Chapter VI – CEQA-Required Assessment Conclusions:* Provides the required analysis of growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible changes, effects found not to be significant, unavoidable significant impacts, and cumulative impacts.
- *Chapter VII – Report Preparation:* Identifies preparers of the EIR, references used, and the persons and organizations contacted.
- *Appendices:* The appendices contain the NOP and comments on the NOP and the Initial Study, technical calculations, and other documentation prepared in conjunction with this EIR.