

Del Paso Regional Park Master Plan

Implementation Program

Review of CEQA Documents ➤ DEIR NOV 1984 ➤ FEIR JAN 1985

Summary of Adverse Impacts and Mitigation Measures with a Focus on the Disposition of East Side Parcels

Prepared by T. Vendlinski (7 November 2008)

Note: All *italicized* text is reprinted here verbatim from the CEQA documents prepared by the City and their consultant (Jones & Stokes Associates). Text in normal Times New Roman font was written by Tim Vendlinski to paraphrase and capture the findings of the CEQA documents.

Setting:

Del Paso Regional Park (DPRP) covers ~679 acres. At the time of the CEQA studies, 433 acres were developed and 246 acres remained undeveloped. The Master Plan was aimed at the disposition of the undeveloped 246 acres separated by Watt Avenue. These expanses are referred to as the East and West side parcels. (DEIR pp.3-6)

Unavoidable, Adverse, and Irreversible Impacts of Master Plan (DEIR p.16):

- ❖ Inconsistent with plans and policies
- ❖ Destruction of a 30 foot swath of riparian forest for the softball complex access road
- ❖ Fragmentation of the riparian corridor
- ❖ Permanent loss of open space
- ❖ Permanent loss of wildlife habitat
- ❖ Reduction in the long-term value of the site for biological resources

Significance of Natural and Cultural Resources at DPRP:

Oak Regeneration: *“Habitat for valley oaks, once very abundant throughout the Sacramento Valley, has been significantly reduced by agricultural practices and urban development... (and) regeneration of new valley oaks is not readily taking place. In contrast with this general pattern, valley oaks are regenerating in Del Paso Regional Park near Arcade Creek. Live oak and blue oaks are also regenerating within the park (DEIR pp.51, 54). “The oak regeneration in the uplands in the park is unusual.” (FEIR, p.9)*

Ongoing Declines in Unique Natural Communities: *“Riparian woodlands and oak savannas...are being diminished in areal extent throughout the City, County, and State by development. The DEIR suggests the avoidance of development and protection of these two habitat types” in Del Paso Regional Park. (FEIR, p.105)*

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Last Remnant of Rancho del Paso: *The project area lies on lands of the Rancho del Paso... (and) (t)he undeveloped lands of Del Paso Park represent probably the last remaining open portions of the 44,000-acre ranch.*" (DEIR pp.132-133)

A Refuge for Birds in a Suburban Matrix: The importance of Arcade Creek and Del Paso Regional Park to birds is illustrated by Exhibit F-4 (pp. 64-65) or of the DEIR. Seventy-three species were catalogued during the 1984 field survey, including 7 raptor species. (see also FEIR, p.119)

Consistency Issues Regarding the Park Master Plan with Land Use Policies: (DEIR pp.35-38)

County Policy: East and West Side developments were considered **potentially inconsistent** with provisions of the **1982 Sacramento County General Plan**¹ policies calling for the maintenance of *the natural or native environment for low-intensity uses designed to ensure long-term protection*. The DEIR found the Master Plan *could eliminate oak regeneration area(s) and vernal pools...which would result in degradation of the natural environment*.

City Policy: East and West Side developments were considered **inconsistent** with provisions of the **1984 City Master Plan for Park Facilities and Recreation Services** calling for the identification and acquisition of *sites containing significant native plant communities, or examples of ecological relationships to make the area available for public visitation, education, and recreational use*. The DEIR found the Master Plan calling for the development of *native woodlands, savanna, a riparian corridor, and bird and wildlife habitat would be inconsistent with the policy of acquiring such sites*.

¹ The DEIR for the **1987 Sacramento General Plan Update** prepared in March 1987) following the completion of the Del Paso Regional Park Master Plan suggested that the City of Sacramento establish an RCZ recognizing the values and special management needs of significant natural habitats, and performance standards for managing these areas. *"The primary purpose of the RCZ would be to ensure proper management and preservation of significant natural habitats including blue oak woodlands, riparian areas, rivers and canals, ponds and freshwater marshes, and northern hardpan vernal pools. A secondary function would be to provide open space for passive recreation and education...The intent of these performance standards would be to ensure that impacts which could significantly compromise, reduce, or eliminate the values of a habitat would not be permitted. The type of activities that should be regulated to preserve significant natural habitats include: (1) vegetation removal that substantially alters canopy cover or other important vegetational components; (2) soil removal, disturbance, or dumping; and (9) erecting new structures or building new roads."* (DEIR, p.U-32) Furthermore, the document said the City and County could design public parks *to direct use away from sensitive areas through careful placement of park facilities and trails. Del Paso and Hansen Parks are examples of park facility design that is sensitive to natural habitats.*" (DEIR, p.U-34)

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Adverse Impacts to Oak Regeneration and Raptor Foraging Areas:

Loss of Foraging Areas for Raptors and Need to Protect Riparian Zone: Development of 13-acres east of Renfree Field “*would impact the oak regeneration midway between Renfree Field and the existing neighborhood park* (DEIR, p.42). “*Valuable habitat for foraging raptors would be eliminated*” by development of the Day-Use Area (FEIR, p.17) “*Development of Del Paso Regional Park may lead to a reduction in raptor use of the area due to elimination of some foraging habitat; however, maintaining the riparian zone would ensure continued nesting of raptors.*” (FEIR, p.112)

Diminishment of the Park’s Last Wildlands: “*Development of a day-use recreational area and neighborhood park would eliminate valuable wildlife habitat. This area constitutes the second largest expanse of natural habitat remaining in the park. Only the proposed Sports Complex site includes a larger area of undeveloped open space which is important as wildlife habitat...Wildlife use of the site would decrease. This could be significant to foraging raptors as other foraging habitat in the vicinity of the park becomes developed.*” (DEIR, p.68)

Adverse Effects of Human Intrusion: “*Maximum utilization may potentially bring hundreds of persons to the park on a given day. These additional people, many of whom would likely be unfamiliar or insensitive to the natural habitat values in the park, may damage the park’s natural resources* (FEIR, p.8):

- ❖ “*Trampling vegetation....*”
- ❖ “*Destroying riparian vegetation.*”
- ❖ “*Increased littering....*”
- ❖ “*Scaring animals.*”
- ❖ “*Trampling or intentionally breaking oak seedlings and young trees.*”
- ❖ “*Damaging mature trees by breaking limbs, carving on bark, etc.*”

Proposed Mitigation Actions for Adverse Impacts:

Designating Habitat for Preservation to Address Potential Inconsistency with County Policy: “*The City agrees that the entire undeveloped portion of Del Paso Regional Park is currently functioning as natural habitat. The Assessment of Consistency on page 36 of the DEIR was trying to point out that the Master Plan had set aside an additional 63 acres as designated natural habitat area. The Master Plan designation of additional acreage to be preserved is consistent with county policy to maintain the natural or native environment for low intensity uses designed to ensure long-term protection.*” (FEIR, p.62).

Designating Habitat for Permanent Protection to Address Inconsistency with City Policy: “*The City acknowledges in the DEIR that the proposed improvements to implement the Master Plan may have significant adverse impacts on the environment. Admittedly, the Master Plan does not propose adding any new natural areas to the park. However,*

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implementation of the Master Plan calls for “designating” (i.e., permanently protecting) 63 additional acres of natural area that are not currently afforded any guaranteed protection. In addition, the City is recommending designation of the areas delineated on Exhibit 2-4 as natural habitat area. This is certainly more beneficial for those areas than leaving them unprotected and subject to future development.” (FEIR, p.37)

Minimizing Impacts to East Side Oak Regeneration Areas to Address Consistency Problems with County and City Policies: *“The combination of the day-use area and the neighborhood park was suggested on page 43 of the DEIR as a mitigation measure to minimize the impacts on the eastside oak regeneration area. This would be consistent with County policy of maintaining the natural and native environment for low-intensity uses designed to ensure long-term protection. It would also be consistent with City policy of acquiring sites containing significant native plant communities or examples of ecological relationships to make the area available for public visitation, education, and recreational use.” (DEIR, p.43; FEIR, p.72)*

Special Treatment Recommended for Oak Regeneration Areas: *“Areas in which successful regeneration of native oaks is occurring should be protected. Limited regeneration of valley and blue oaks occurs in the Sacramento area and known locations need to be monitored and protected.” (DEIR, p.111)*

Permanent Protection of the East Side as Mitigation for Park Development:
As mitigation for the development of the Day Use Area, the City should *“(d)esignate other land within the park for permanent preservation and enhance the value of designated land for wildlife habitat.” (FEIR, pp.17-18).*

“The entire Norris Swale (both terraces) is a preferred mitigation area for both vegetation and wildlife impacts for other park features.” (FEIR, p.116)

“Mitigation measures were suggested in the DEIR to minimize the losses of habitats (especially riparian, woodland, and savanna oak habitats, heritage and regenerating oaks) and the potential impact of overuse of the park (siting and directing activities not related to nature study and appreciation away from sensitive areas)...The improvement of wildlife habitat in areas not scheduled for development would help to compensate for losses of habitat due to development. The dedication to permanent open space and management for wildlife of areas such as the east end of the park will help to compensate for any wildlife habitat losses.” (FEIR, p.101)

Protecting Natural Areas by Directing Intensive Human Use Away from These Areas:
“Park facilities such as playgrounds and picnic areas should not concentrate users in or adjacent to the natural areas. Other locations within the park are more appropriate for intensive human use and the park plan should direct visitors away from the natural areas for activities not associated with the natural resource values.” (DEIR, p.62)

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Coupling Mitigation Package with a Call for an Overall Resource Management Plan:

“The enhancement of the vegetation and wildlife habitat of the golf course roughs offers an interesting concept and is an opportunity that warrants more detailed study. Such a study should be undertaken as part of an overall resource management plan for the park...Open grasslands must be managed for in one area and woodland in another if plant and animal species that are supported by the different vegetation types are to be retained and increased on-site.” (FEIR, p.135)

“The areas designated as natural areas and proposed natural areas in the master plan should receive the first priority in any management plan. The enhancement of these areas through good management planning can provide significant mitigation for the impacts of the proposed projects. While these areas are ‘natural areas’, they are not receiving the protection and active management that could improve their ability to support native plants and animals. Most of these areas are (or could be) contiguous with Arcade Creek, which vastly improves their overall usefulness as wildlife habitat.” (FEIR, p.135)