

# NOTICE OF PREPARATION / NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE A JOINT EIR / EIS FOR THE VISTA GRANDE DRAINAGE BASIN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The City of Daly City, as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the National Park Service (NPS), as the Lead Agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), will prepare a joint Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed project referenced above, and would like your views regarding the scope and content of the environmental analysis. If applicable, this EIR/EIS may be used by your agency when considering any discretionary approvals for this project.

The project location, description, and a summary of the probable environmental effects of the project are attached. These effects and all issue areas required by CEQA and NEPA will be evaluated in the Draft EIR/EIS. The Draft EIR/EIS is anticipated to be published in late 2013.

This Notice of Preparation/Notice of Intent is being circulated for a public comment period, beginning on February 28 and ending on April 26, 2013. Please identify a contact person, and send your comments on the proposed scope and content of the EIR/EIS in writing to:

City of Daly City, Department of Water and Wastewater Resources  
Attn: Patrick Sweetland, Director  
153 Lake Merced Blvd., Daly City, CA 94015  
Phone: (650) 991-8061, e-mail: [psweetland@dalycity.org](mailto:psweetland@dalycity.org)

The City of Daly City will hold a Public Scoping Meeting to provide an opportunity for the public and regulatory agencies to learn about the Project and be informed about how to submit comments on the scope of the Draft EIR/EIS analysis. The NPS will also host an open house, which will include a presentation about the Project and opportunities to comment. You are welcome to attend and provide your input on the scope of the Draft EIR/EIS so that it addresses all relevant environmental issues. The date and location of each meeting is as follows:

**Daly City Scoping Meeting**  
**March 28, 2013**  
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Doelger Senior Center  
Cafe/Kitchen  
101 Lake Merced Boulevard  
Daly City, CA

**National Park Service Open House**  
**March 19, 2013**  
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.  
Fort Mason  
San Francisco, CA

For more information visit:  
<http://www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/publicinvolvement.htm>

**Patrick Sweetland, Director**  
City of Daly City, Department of Water and Wastewater Resources

Date: February 28, 2013

## Project Location

The City of Daly City is proposing the Vista Grande Drainage Basin Improvement project in Daly City, unincorporated Broadmoor Village in northwestern San Mateo County, and the City and County of San Francisco. The Vista Grande Watershed Drainage Basin (Basin) is located in Daly City and unincorporated Broadmoor Village. The Basin is approximately 2.5 square miles in area and is bordered by the City and County of San Francisco to the north, the Colma Creek watershed to the south and east, and the Pacific Ocean on the west. Stormwater that falls within the Basin is drained through the Vista Grande Canal and Tunnel, which are located in the City and County of San Francisco, adjacent to John Muir Drive and the southwestern shoreline of Lake Merced. The tunnel outfall is located at the Pacific Ocean at Fort Funston, which is managed by the National Park Service (NPS) as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). **Figures 1 and 2** (presented at the end of this Notice of Preparation/Intent) show the project's location and the locations of planned improvements.

## Project Description

Daly City is proposing the project to address storm-related flooding that currently occurs in the Basin and to provide other environmental benefits, including restoration and management of water levels within Lake Merced. Lake Merced is made up of four individual but connected lakes (East, North, South, and Impound Lakes) and is owned by the City and County of San Francisco. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) maintains the lake as a non-potable emergency water supply for the San Francisco and is a responsible agency for this project. Historically, the Basin was part of the Lake Merced Watershed. The Vista Grande Canal and Tunnel were built in the 1890s to divert stormwater away from the lake to an outfall at the Pacific Ocean, below what is now Fort Funston. The existing canal and tunnel do not have adequate hydraulic capacity to convey peak storm flows, and flooding into adjacent low-lying residential areas and along John Muir Drive periodically occurs during storm events. The existing outfall structure and a portion of the Vista Grande Tunnel, once enclosed within the cliffs at Fort Funston, have become exposed due to the ongoing erosion of the cliff face. The project would alleviate flooding and improve the ocean outfall while reconnecting a significant portion of the lake's historic watershed.

The project would consist of the following structural components (further described below):

- Partial replacement of the existing Vista Grande Canal to incorporate a debris screening device, a treatment wetland, and diversion and outfall structures to route some stormwater (and authorized non-storm water) flows from the Vista Grande Canal to Lake Merced;
- Replacement of the existing Vista Grande Tunnel to increase its peak capacity and extend its operating life; and
- Replacement of the existing ocean outfall structure at Fort Funston.

The locations of these components are shown in Figure 2. Additionally, operational components of the project would include management of water elevations in Lake Merced and a Lake Management Plan that would implement water quality best management practices.

## **Vista Grande Canal Improvements and Diversion to Lake Merced**

The existing Vista Grande Canal is a 3,600-foot-long brick-lined channel with a flow capacity of 500 cubic feet per second (cfs). The canal carries storm flows as well as low flows (also referred to as base flows), which consist of authorized non-stormwater flows such as irrigation runoff that are present in the canal all year. Under the project, a portion of the canal would be replaced with several new facilities to improve storm water quality and conveyance capacity. A collection box, debris screening device, box culvert, and diversion structure would replace the upstream portion of the canal. A treatment wetland would be developed over the box culvert (Figure 2). From the diversion structure, Daly City would construct a box culvert under John Muir Drive and install a screened outfall structure at the edge of South Lake or Impound Lake. Key components are described in more detail below.

### ***Collection Box and Debris Screening Device***

A collection box would replace the upstream portion of the existing Vista Grande Canal to collect flows from the contributing storm drains. A debris screening device would be installed downstream of the collection box to trap debris greater than 5 millimeters in diameter, which would be removed using vacuum trucks on a scheduled basis.

### ***Box Culvert***

A reinforced concrete box culvert would replace approximately 1,500 feet of the existing canal directly downstream of the debris screening structure. The box culvert would run underneath the proposed treatment wetland described below.

### ***Constructed Treatment Wetland***

A constructed treatment wetland would be developed to improve water quality. The treatment wetland would be located along John Muir Drive, partially over the box culvert described above. The treatment wetland would be planted with emergent reeds such as cattails or bulrush, which would improve water quality by intercepting and settling out suspended particulates. After passing through the wetland, the treated water would flow through the diversion structure to the outfall at Lake Merced. During periods of very low or no flow, a recirculating pump would draw water from South Lake to maintain flow in the wetland.

### ***Diversion and Lake Outfall Structures***

A semi-automated hydraulic diversion structure would be constructed directly downstream of the box culvert and treatment wetlands to direct flows to either the Pacific Ocean or to a submerged outfall structure into Lake Merced. The specific location of the outfall structure will be determined based on further engineering and environmental review. The diversion of flows would be conducted as described in the Lake Management Plan section below.

### ***Lake Merced Overflow***

An existing Lake Merced overflow structure, consisting of a brick and masonry riser and tunnel, connects South Lake with the Vista Grande Canal. Under the proposed project, a portion of the existing Lake Merced overflow would be replaced with an adjustable-height weir that would be used to control the lake level and allow water to be diverted back into the Vista Grande Canal.

### **Vista Grande Tunnel Replacement**

The existing Vista Grande Tunnel has a hydraulic capacity of 170 cfs. The tunnel would be enlarged to increase its capacity to 500 cfs or greater to accommodate storm flows and reduce flooding in the Basin, and to extend its operating life by replacing the aging structure.

Alternatively, a new tunnel could be bored adjacent to and parallel with the existing tunnel. Under either option, the new tunnel would incorporate a 30-inch diameter pipeline to transport treated effluent from the Daly City Wastewater Treatment Plant to the ocean outfall. At Fort Funston, the existing tunnel and outfall are located within an existing utility easement.

### **Ocean Outfall**

Daly City's existing outfall structure, which is located on the beach below Fort Funston, discharges flows from the Vista Grande Tunnel, and also connects an existing 30-inch effluent force main from the Daly City Wastewater Treatment Plant with a subsurface and sub-marine outfall pipeline. Erosion of the cliff face by the surf and waves of the Pacific Ocean has resulted in the outfall structure, a segment of the Vista Grande Tunnel, and the force main segment being exposed and lying across a portion of the beach. The project would remove the existing Daly City outfall structure and replace it with a low-profile outfall structure set into the existing cliff face to reduce future erosion. The existing 30-inch force main would also be removed and replaced with a similar configuration set back into the cliff face. The existing submarine outfall pipeline and diffuser would be renovated to protect it from erosion.

### **Other Project Components**

#### ***Lake Level Management***

The project would divert some stormwater and authorized non-stormwater flows to Lake Merced to aid the SFPUC in operating Lake Merced within desired water levels. The water surface elevation (WSE) of Lake Merced has fluctuated historically from Elevation (El.) 13 feet (San Francisco City Datum) in the 1940s to a low of El. -3.2 feet in 1993. From 2006 to 2010, the lake had an average WSE of approximately El. 5.8 feet. SFPUC has identified a goal of raising the WSE in the lake compared to current conditions to serve beneficial uses and provide a reliable emergency water supply for firefighting and sanitation purposes. The EIR will evaluate range of average WSEs from El. 6.5 to El. 8.5 feet.

#### ***Lake Management Plan***

Daly City and SFPUC propose to develop a Lake Management Plan (LMP) as part of the proposed project to maintain and where feasible improve the water quality of Lake Merced. The LMP will include an operational plan for the proposed Vista Grande diversions, a water quality

monitoring plan, and best management practices that would be implemented by Daly City and SFPUC. The LMP will be developed in consultation with the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board.

## **Potential Environmental Impacts of the Project**

The EIR/EIS will describe the existing environmental conditions on the project site and will identify the significant environmental impacts anticipated to result from development of the project as proposed. Where potentially significant environmental impacts are identified, the EIR/EIS will also discuss mitigation measures that may make it possible to avoid or reduce significant impacts, as appropriate. The EIR/EIS will address all environmental issue areas required under CEQA and NEPA. The following paragraphs describe key environmental issues that will be addressed in the EIR/EIS.

### **Aesthetics/Visual Resources**

The EIR/EIS will discuss the visual and aesthetic resources of the site and its surroundings, particularly from publicly accessible locations on or near the project site, and evaluate potential impacts on scenic vistas and scenic resources that could occur as a result of the project.

### **Air Quality**

The EIR/EIS will describe the federal, state, and local air quality policies, regulations, and standards as they pertain to the project. The EIR/EIS will also describe local air quality based on air quality data from nearby monitoring stations and will identify locations of sensitive land uses in the project area. The EIR/EIS will then evaluate the project's potential air quality impacts. The analysis will include an assessment of local community risk related to emissions of toxic air contaminants and fine particulate matter from construction activities.

### **Biological Resources**

The EIR/EIS will evaluate impacts of the project on biological resources such as sensitive habitats and special-status species including, but not limited, to San Francisco spineflower, bank swallow, Western snowy plover, Peregrine falcon, California brown pelican, and San Francisco wallflower. The analysis will also address potential effects on aquatic habitat associated with diverting flows from the Vista Grande Canal to Lake Merced and raising the WSE of the lake.

### **Cultural and Archaeological Resources**

The EIR/EIS will describe the project's potential effects on cultural and archaeological resources. Because a portion of the project would be located within a historic landscape at Fort Funston, the analysis will include an evaluation of the project's conformance with standards set by the state and federal historic preservation regulations.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

The EIR/EIS will describe existing federal, state and local regulations related to greenhouse gases and climate change in the project area, quantify direct and indirect GHG emissions that would be

associated with the project, examine the potential for the project to result in global climate change impacts and discuss the measures included in the project to minimize impacts and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

## **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

The EIR/EIS will discuss hazards and hazardous material present in the project area, including hazardous material spills, leaks or cleanups, wildland fire risk, and other public safety issues. The EIR/EIS will evaluate the potential impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials including potential for soil contamination from existing and previous uses at the project site and the potential for accidental release of hazardous materials during project construction and operation.

## **Hydrology and Water Quality**

The EIR/EIS will analyze the project in light of applicable requirements under the Clean Water Act, state objectives to protect beneficial uses of water bodies, and policies concerning stormwater reuse and water quality. The EIR/EIS will evaluate the project's potential effects from erosion and sedimentation during construction and impacts on groundwater levels, flooding, and water quality in Lake Merced.

## **Land Use**

The EIR/EIS will identify the land uses and development on and around the project site, assess consistency with applicable local plans and policies governing land use in the project area, and evaluate potential land use impacts, including the project's compatibility with existing and proposed land uses in the project area.

## **Noise and Vibration**

The EIR/EIS will describe relevant noise policies, regulations and standards and discuss noise and vibration levels likely to be generated by project construction and operation. The EIR/EIS will evaluate the potential for project construction and operation to adversely affect adjacent land uses or violate applicable noise control ordinances. The analysis will also evaluate continuous vibrations produced by project construction (shaft construction, tunnel boring and muck handling) based on the potential to impact sensitive receptors.

## **Public Services and Utilities**

The EIR/EIS will describe existing fire protection, emergency medical services, and public utilities in the project area and will evaluate impacts on these services resulting from the proposed project.

## **Recreation**

The EIR/EIS will describe existing publicly accessible recreational facilities in the project area and evaluate the impacts of the project on recreational facilities in surrounding areas including Lake Merced, Fort Funston, and the Olympic Club Golf Course. The analysis will identify

feasible mitigation measures that would reduce any significant recreation impacts of the proposed project.

## **Socioeconomics/Environmental Justice**

Consistent with NEPA requirements, the EIR/EIS will present the socioeconomic conditions in the action area, including demographic information on the local population. The EIR/EIS will assess the effects of project construction and operation activities on minority and low-income populations in the vicinity of the project area.

## **Soils, Seismicity and Geologic Resources**

The EIR/EIS will discuss the existing geologic and soil conditions on the project site. Potential impacts to be evaluated include seismic hazards and/or increased exposure of structures to seismic hazards related to ground-shaking in the event of an earthquake, exposure of structures to geologic hazards (such as liquefaction, poor soil conditions, or unstable slopes), and soil erosion. The EIR/EIS will also include an evaluation of the effects of removal and replacement of the ocean outfall structure on the rate and occurrence of coastal erosion and bluff retreat, including the consequences of sea level rise on those processes.

## **Traffic and Transportation**

The EIR/EIS will identify describe current traffic conditions within the project area. The traffic analysis will describe and assess impacts to roadway conditions, circulation patterns, parking, transit systems, traffic hazards, emergency access and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

## **Alternatives to the Project**

The EIR/EIS will consider a range of alternatives, including alternative tunnel alignments and capacities, stormwater detention structures, and lake level scenarios. The EIR/EIS will also identify and evaluate alternatives that might reasonably be assumed to reduce project impacts, especially significant impacts. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e) and NEPA Regulations Section 1502.14(d), the EIR/EIS will also evaluate a No Project/No Action alternative to provide decision-makers the information necessary to compare the relative impacts of approving and not approving the project. For each alternative, the EIR/EIS will assess the degree to which it might reduce one or more project impacts, whether it could result in other or increased impacts, its feasibility, and the degree to which it is consistent with the project objectives. The EIR/EIS will also identify the Environmentally Preferable/Superior Alternative.

## **Cumulative Impacts**

The EIR/EIS will include a discussion of the potentially significant cumulative impacts of the project when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area. This section will cover all relevant subject areas discussed in the EIR/EIS (e.g., traffic, air quality, and noise) and will specify which of the areas are anticipated to experience significant cumulative impacts.

## **Other Required Sections**

The EIR/EIS will also include other information typically required for an EIR/EIS. These other sections include the following: 1) Growth Inducing Impacts; 2) Significant and Unavoidable Impacts; 3) Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes; 4) Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources; 5) References; and 6) EIR/EIS Authors. Relevant technical reports will be provided as technical appendices.



SOURCE: ESA

Vista Grande Drainage Basin Improvement Project. 207036.01

**Figure 1**  
Project Location



SOURCE: ESA

Vista Grande Drainage Basin Improvement Project. 207036.01

**Figure 2**  
Project Components