DATE: February 14, 2019

TO: State Clearinghouse
Governor's Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of Environmental Impact Report

A. Notice of Preparation

Notice is hereby given that the Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (Lead Agency) will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Randall Road Debris Basin Project (Project). The EIR will address the potential physical and environmental effects of the Project for each of the topic areas outlined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The District has prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to provide Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and other interested parties with a description of the proposed Project and to identify potential environmental effects pursuant to CEQA requirements. Public agencies that have a role in reviewing, approving, and/or implementing the Project will need to consider the EIR during project review.

The NOP has been filed with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors and is posted for review in the office of the Clerk (105 E. Anapamu Street, Room 407, Santa Barbara CA, 93101). The District has not prepared an Initial Study. A Lead Agency may, under CEQA, proceed directly with an EIR without preparing an Initial Study if it is clear that an EIR would be required (CEQA Guidelines Section 15060[d]). The District has made such a determination for this Project.


B. Public Review and Comment Period

Further notice is hereby given that the District invites comments on the scope and content of the EIR in response to this NOP. Pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, this NOP will be circulated for a 30-day review period.
Due to time limited mandated by State law, responses must be received no later than 20 days after receipt of the NOP. Responses to this NOP should focus on the potentially significant environmental effects that should be addressed in the EIR, ways in which those effects might be minimized, and potential alternatives that should be addressed in the EIR. The response to the NOP, at a minimum, should identify:

- Your name,
- The name of your agency or organization (if applicable),
- Whether the agency will be a Responsible Agency or a Trustee agency (if applicable),
- Contact information.

Comments on the NOP may be submitted in writing to:

Attn: Randal Road NOP
Andrew Raaf
Santa Barbara County Flood Control District
130 East Victoria Street, Suite 200
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

C. Public Scoping Meeting

Further notice is hereby given that the District has scheduled a Public Scoping Meeting at the time and location indicated below:

- Tuesday February 26th
- 6:00pm to 8:00pm
- Planning Commission Hearing Room (Room 17)
- County Engineering Building
- 123 East Anapamu Street
- Santa Barbara, CA 93101

The purposes of the Public Scoping Meeting are to describe the proposed Project concepts and the environmental review process, and to obtain verbal comment and input on the preliminary project concepts and scope of the EIR. The District will consider comments, written and verbal, in determining the scope of the evaluation and the Project alternatives to be included in the EIR.

D. Project Description

The proposed Project involves construction of a new debris basin and associated flood-control facilities along San Ysidro Creek channel, in Montecito, CA (Figure 1).

San Ysidro Creek originates in the Santa Ynez Mountains and runs through several developed neighborhoods. The upper watershed was severely burned during the 2017-18 Thomas Fire. The devastating debris flow that followed in January 2018 resulted in damage and destruction of many properties, public infrastructure, and natural habitats in the watershed and nearby.

The area of Randall Road, near Highway 192, suffered some of the most severe damage of the disaster zone. Many homes and properties between Randall Road and San Ysidro Creek channel, as well as downstream, were destroyed beyond recognition and repair.
The proposed debris basin near Randall Road would increase debris-holding capacity and would reduce potential flooding and debris flow impacts at Highway 192 and downstream infrastructure and properties (Figure 2).

E. Proposed Project Components

Preliminary design concepts for the proposed Project include excavation to widen and deepen the property adjacent to the creek channel, upstream of the Highway 192 bridge/culvert, thus creating a catchment area to collect debris during storms and/or emergency events (Figure 3). A spillway or diverter structure may be incorporated into the channel to divert high storm flows and/or large debris into the excavated basin, while the central stream-channel would be configured as a natural creek channel through the main flow-line of San Ysidro Creek, retaining creek function and habitat similar to the surrounding watershed. Fish-passage components and natural habitat features would be incorporated as needed to protect habitat for native species.

Appurtenant structures such as retaining walls, access ramps, fencing, debris racks, grading, landscaping/screening, walking trail, and vehicle parking, are also considered as part of the project design to be evaluated in the EIR.

The project would require the purchase of several privately-owned parcels and access easements or partial acquisition of adjacent parcels.

Periodic excavation would be required to maintain the site, and to prepare for and respond to storms and debris mobilization. Operation and maintenance would include heavy equipment operations, truck trips to transport sediment after major storm events, seasonal maintenance, concrete repairs, culvert repairs, vegetation trimming and removal, and related facility maintenance, similar to the District’s other debris basin sites.

F. Project Location

The project location is in Montecito, CA, north and east of the intersection of Highway 192 and Randall Road.

G. Existing Conditions

The proposed project area was severely impacted by the Thomas Fire and resulting 1/9/18 Debris Flow. The majority of the homes and infrastructure in the project area were destroyed and swept away during the disasters. Emergency response and cleanup operations are ongoing. The project area is currently mostly bare rock, boulders, and sediment, with limited resprouting vegetation in the creek channel. Some areas of undamaged vegetation remain sporadically throughout the project area. Residential properties in various stages of damage, demolition, and re-construction are present in and adjacent to the project area.

H. Potential Environmental Impacts

Based on preliminary review, the following CEQA environmental issue areas will be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Hydrology and Water Quality
Aesthetics – This impact analysis will focus on changes in public views associated with construction and operations of the Randall Road Debris basin. The proposed project may include fencing, landscaping, trees and shrubs, walking trail, and other visual components. The project area around the basin would be re-vegetated with native species. Vegetation within the basin could re-colonize and persist during interim seasons when emergency operations (such as fire response or debris flow cleanup) are not performed. The EIR will evaluate whether the project would adversely affect the visual character or quality of the project site and surroundings.

Air Quality – The project would require truck trips and heavy equipment work to excavate material and construct the facility. The EIR will describe the potential impacts and mitigation measures based on Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District methodologies. The EIR will assess the project’s alignment with state and local plans pertaining to climate action, greenhouse gases and climate change.

Biological Resources – Much of the project site was disturbed or damaged during the 1/9 Debris Flow and subsequent emergency response operations on public and private land. San Ysidro Creek runs through the project site and some remaining vegetation and habitat would be affected by project construction and operation. A segment of San Ysidro Creek, which is critical habitat for the endangered steelhead trout, would be reconfigured as part of the project, incorporating fish-passage components and natural habitat features to allow aquatic habitat to persist. The project area would be revegetated and re-colonized with native species, which would persist during interim seasons when emergency operations (such as fire response or debris flow cleanup) are not performed. The EIR will examine the potential for adverse effects on biological resources.

Cultural Resources – Much of the project site was previously developed residential homes, and was subsequently disturbed during the 1/9 debris flow and emergency response. The EIR will review the potential effects of the project on any historic resources and/or archaeological sites, and will include a consultation with Native American representatives.

Geology and Soils – The proposed project would involve significant excavation and grading to construct the basin. The ongoing function and operation of the debris basin would alter sediment distribution and flow patterns during storm events. The potential for soil erosion and changes in sediment transport will be assessed.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials – The potential for public exposure to hazardous materials during construction and transport will be assessed for the proposed Project. In addition, the potential for public exposure to fuels and other hydrocarbons associated with equipment will be assessed.

Hydrology and Water Quality – San Ysidro Creek runs through the project site. The proposed project would involve modification of a section of the creek and the adjacent property to create the debris basin. The ongoing function of the debris basin would change sediment distribution and flow patterns during storm events. The EIR will assess whether the project would result in
adverse effects on hydrology and water quality associated with runoff, creek flow, and flooding, using information for flood maps and flow data. The analysis will consider:

- Changes in flood water elevations and potential flooding of adjacent properties associated with the proposed project and maintenance practices,
- Changes in water circulation,
- Potential to adversely affect beneficial uses of surface waters identified in the Central Coastal Basin Water Quality Control Plan,
- Potential effects on groundwater storage and recharge.

Noise – Noise levels would increase associated with the construction of the proposed project. Ongoing operations and maintenance would involve periodic noise from trucks and heavy equipment. The EIR will analyze the potential for noise impacts from construction equipment and vehicle trips. The EIR will consider ambient noise relative to land use compatibility and sensitive receptors.

Policy Consistency Analysis - The EIR will include a policy consistency analysis to address the proposed project and ongoing operations and maintenance. The EIR will assess whether the proposed project is consistent with applicable local and regional community plans, zoning, land use policies, and regulations. Plans to be considered include the Santa Barbara County Coastal Land Use Plan, Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan, Energy and Climate Action Plan, Montecito Community Plan

Public Services and Recreation - The proposed project may incorporate a walking trail, landscaping, and public access for passive recreation. The EIR will consider the beneficial impacts of passive recreational use at the project area.

Transportation/Traffic - The proposed project would convert up to 8 residential parcels to non-residential land use. Randall Road, currently a dead-end street used only to access these residences, would be closed to public vehicle traffic. Randall Road would be used for vehicles and equipment during construction, and thereafter occasionally for maintenance and emergency response. The EIR will consider the potential impacts to vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic that may result from the proposed project.

Although the project is not likely to result in potentially significant environmental effects to the following CEQA issue areas, these topics will be addressed as needed:

- Population and Housing
- Mineral Resources

The EIR will examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the projects, including a No-Project Alternative.

I. Figures

See attached Figures 1, 2, 3.
Figure 1
Proposed Randall Road Debris Basin
Figure 2
Randall Road Debris Basin Preliminary Project Location
CEQA Notice of Preparation