

## **WELCOME**

Welcome to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) scoping meeting for the San Jacinto and Upper Santa Margarita River Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) / Master Streambed Alteration Agreement (MSAA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

## **FORMAT**

This meeting is an open house format. The public is invited to view the exhibits and provide written and/or verbal comments. Introductory remarks will be made by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Game.



*San Jacinto and Upper Santa Margarita River SAMP/MSAA*



## **COMMENTS**

**The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Game want to hear what subjects you think should be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement / Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR).**

**Please provide your comments by:**

- 1) Providing written comments on a comment card located at the information table; or by
- 2) Speaking with the stenographer who will record your comments.



## DOCUMENTATION

### **What is a joint Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report?**

A joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/ Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a public disclosure document prepared by a federal agency in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and by a state agency in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of an EIS/EIR is to inform the public and decision-making bodies of the potential impacts associated with a particular project or program and to document the measures that will be implemented to reduce these impacts.



## **SAMP AND MSAA**

### **What is the purpose of the SAMP and MSAA?**

The purpose of the SAMP and MSAA is to develop and implement a watershed-wide aquatic resource management plan and implementation program. The SAMP/MSAA will include preservation, enhancement, and restoration of aquatic resources, while allowing reasonable and responsible development activities within the study area.



## **NEED**

### **Why is there a need for the SAMP and MSAA?**

Future growth and development in the San Jacinto and Upper Santa Margarita River watersheds will potentially alter the aquatic resources regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Game. Therefore, there is a need to:

- a) Develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to protecting aquatic resources.
- b) Implement a more informed, consistent, and coordinated permitting evaluation and decision process that will ensure efficient, timely and predictable agency decisions.
- c) Enhance degraded aquatic resources to offset impacts of future development and other activities such as infrastructure.



## SUPPORTING DATA

### What data will be used to support the EIS/EIR?

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Engineering and Research  
Development Center (ERDC):

- ◆ Planning Level Delineation – identification of aquatic resources
- ◆ Landscape Level Functional Assessment – characterization of Riparian Ecosystems
- ◆ Hydrologic and Water Quality Studies – determination of quantitative and qualitative differences in flood peak, sediment transport, pollutant loading, and other factors.
- ◆ Habitat Studies – determination of habitat suitability for aquatic species.

Background information from other sources (partial list):

- ◆ County of Riverside
- ◆ General plans
- ◆ Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan
- ◆ Regional transportation plans



## KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

***Aquatic Resources*** –potential effects on aquatic resources due to changes in the biological, hydrological, and water quality conditions. Aquatic resources include riparian, freshwater marsh, alkali marsh, and other wetland ecosystems.

***Water Quality*** –potential effects on the quality of surface and ground water resources due to construction activities and urban stormwater runoff associated with future development.

***Threatened and Endangered Species*** – potential effects on listed species that utilize aquatic habitats. Examples include arroyo toad, Riverside fairy shrimp, and least Bell's vireo.

***Cultural Resources*** – potential effects on archaeological, ethnographic, paleontologic, and historic resources.



# RIPARIAN ECOSYSTEM

## What is a Riparian Ecosystem?

Riparian ecosystems occupy the transitional areas between a channel and the adjacent uplands. These ecosystems are usually identified by a corridor of trees, shrubs, or herbs that grow within and adjacent to a channel. Riparian ecosystems are dependent upon surface and ground water associated with the stream channel. Hydrologic interaction with surface water from the stream channel results in two distinct zones, although either zone may be narrow or absent under certain geologic or geomorphic conditions. The first zone includes areas that are regularly inundated by overbank flooding (i.e., typically at least once every five years). These areas often exhibit geomorphic features associated with recurring flooding such as point bars, areas of scour, sediment accumulation, natural levees, and debris wrack. This portion of riparian ecosystems is referred to as the active floodplain or the lower riparian zone (Zone I) (Figure 1).

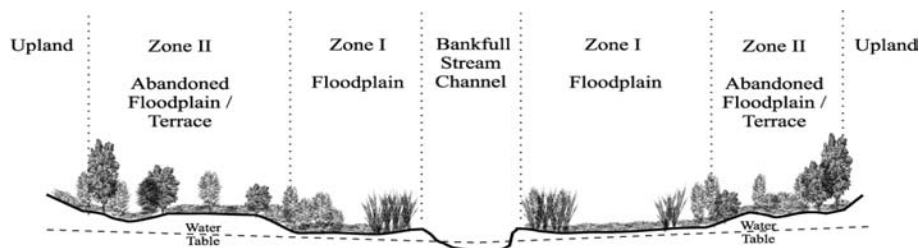


Figure 1. Generalized cross section of a riparian ecosystem. The second zone consists of abandoned floodplains and historical terraces formed by fluvial processes operating under different climatic conditions or hydrologic regimes. Under current climatic conditions and hydrologic regimes, these areas are only flooded during larger magnitude events. This portion of riparian ecosystems is referred to as the abandoned floodplain/terrace or the upper riparian zone (Zone II) (Figure 1).





## DELINEATION

### What is a Planning Level Delineation and why do we need it?

The first step in any watershed management plan is to identify what resources are present in the watershed. For example, how many acres of Arroyo Willow Riparian Woodland exist along the San Jacinto River? How much freshwater marsh exists within the Upper Santa Margarita River?

An innovative methodology that combines remote sensing and fieldwork was used to identify the aquatic resources at a planning-level scale over Western Riverside County. Expert botanists, geologists, and geographers map the vegetation and physical features in the field and interpret these features.

These two features of the watershed: the vegetation (or habitat) types and the physical features are the subjects of the maps presented here today. The vegetation is grouped into plant community types, such as Southern Willow Scrub and Southern Sycamore Riparian Forest. Physical features are grouped into three categories: the low-flow channel (or “bankfull” channel), the active floodplain channel, and floodplain terraces.

This planning-level delineation gives an overview of the type and quantity of aquatic resources present in the watershed. With this information, we can begin to assess the quality of these areas.



# FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

## What is a Landscape Level Functional Assessment and why do we need it?

The second step toward development of a watershed management plan is to determine the quality of resources present in the watershed. A functional assessment measures the quality, or “integrity” of an ecosystem compared to its natural condition. For this project, riparian ecosystems with high integrity are defined as areas that exhibit a full range of physical, chemical, and biological attributes that would be present without human alteration.

The quality of aquatic systems is difficult to quantify. So, we rely on indicators to determine the quality of a riparian area. The indicators are grouped into three categories:

**Hydrologic integrity:** the natural range of stream flows and the interaction of these flows with surrounding floodplain areas.

**Water quality integrity:** the natural range of chemical, nutrient, and sediment “cycling” (deposition and removal) that historically characterized riparian ecosystems in the region.

**Habitat integrity:** the maintenance of a fully functioning biological system that historically characterized the region’s riparian ecosystems.



## **SAMP / MSAA PROCESS**

### Phase I:

Planning Level Delineation  
Landscape Level Functional Assessment  
Hydrologic and Water Quality Studies  
Habitat Studies

### Phase II:

Notice of Intent (NOI) / Preparation (NOP)  
Public Scoping  
Baseline Conditions Report  
Alternatives Identification  
Alternatives Analysis

### Phase III:

Draft EIS/EIR  
Restoration and Management Plan  
Public Review of Draft Documents  
Public Hearing  
Final Restoration and Management Plan  
Final EIS/EIR  
Record of Decision  
Issuance of Permits



## **HAVE THE SAMP AND MSAA PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED ALTERNATIVES THAT WILL BE STUDIED IN THE EIS/EIR?**

The SAMP and MSAA participants have identified a general range of alternatives that will be studied in the EIS/EIR.

These include:

### **No SAMP/MSAA Alternatives (also called No Action Alternatives)**

- a) No SAMP/MSAA would be prepared, all future development would be reviewed under the current project-by-project review.
- b) No-fill Alternative, where no construction requiring a Corps permit would occur. (required alternative)

### **SAMP/MSAA Alternatives**

Alternatives that may be considered under this category include those based on the following goals:

- a) Maximize opportunities to protect, restore, and manage aquatic resources while allowing minimal impacts to aquatic resources.
- b) Limit new impacts to aquatic resources in areas containing high hydrologic, water quality, and habitat integrity, or in low integrity areas that serve as important corridors or regionally rare aquatic resources.
- c) Limit new impacts to aquatic resources that provide habitat for federal and state listed aquatic species.

Programmatic Section 404 permit(s) would be issued for specifically identified activities and permitting criteria would be established for other future activities pursuant to the requirements of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. SAMP/MSAA alternatives would be further refined throughout the process.



# REGULATORY DEFINITIONS

## What aquatic resources are regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and California Department of Fish and Game?

**Waters of the United States - ACOE:** All waters that are currently used, or were used in the past, or may be susceptible to use in interstate or foreign commerce, including all waters which are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide; All interstate waters including interstate wetlands; All other waters such as intrastate lakes, rivers, streams (including intermittent streams), mudflats, sandflats, wetlands, sloughs, prairie potholes, wet meadows, playa lakes, or natural ponds, the use, degradation or destruction of which could affect interstate or foreign commerce.

Non-Tidal Waters of the United States. The limits of jurisdiction in non-tidal waters:

- In the absence of adjacent wetlands, the jurisdiction extends to the ordinary high water mark, or
- When adjacent wetlands are present, the jurisdiction extends beyond the ordinary high water mark to the limit of the adjacent wetlands. When the water of the United States consists only of wetlands the jurisdiction extends to the limit of the wetland.

The term "**ordinary high water mark**" refers to the line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas.

Wetlands. Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

**Waters of the State – SWRCB:** “Any surface or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state.” Applies also to all tributaries of such waters, “isolated” waters (e.g., vernal pools and groundwater-supplied wetlands), ephemeral/seasonal streams and swales.

**Waters of the State (subject to Fish and Game Code Section 1600 *et seq.*) - CDFG:** The bed, bank, and channel of any river, stream or lake which flows at least periodically or intermittently and supports or has supported fish, other aquatic life, or riparian vegetation.

Sources: 33 Code of Federal Regulations Section 328 – US Army Corps of Engineers  
California Water Code Section 13050(e) - State Water Resources Control Board  
Fish and Game Code Section 1600 *et seq.*; California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 1, Sections 1.56 and 1.72 - California Department of Fish and Game



## USING THE PLANNING LEVEL DELINEATION MAPS

### Streams

**Blue lines-** These lines denote streams with widths from 1' up to 10' in width (unvegetated). An example would be a dry, ephemeral wash.

**Polygons-** Areas within the watershed larger than 0.1 acres in size are represented as polygons. These areas represent areas of riparian habitat / wetland adjacent to streams. An example would be a willow forest adjacent to a large stream.

### Vegetation

**Riparian vegetation:** Polygons of vegetation following the stream corridors, associated with either active flood plains or groundwater associated with confined discharge areas. These areas are typically dominated by various willow and wetland herbaceous vegetation.

**Vegetation community:** These areas are stands of similar overstory plant species. Either a single species can dominate the stand or a mixture of species. These communities are described based upon the most dominant species using either various methods such as photo-interpretation and site-specific plots.

**Non-floodplain riparian:** Vegetation associated with blue-line streams that have experienced "down cutting" (i.e., erosion and loss of sediment) due to various human influences. These vegetation polygons are typically at higher elevations than the floodplain surfaces.

### Geomorphic surfaces

**Bankfull Channel:** That part of the channel conveying low-flow discharges in streams.

**Active flood plain channel:** In general, these features represent the 10 year recurrence event. In western riparian areas these surfaces are associated with less vegetation cover, recently deposited fluvial materials dominated by sandy surfaces, and high flow channels that frequently bisect the abandoned floodplain terrace.

**Abandoned flood terraces:** These features are located above the bankfull and active floodplain. These alluvial terraces are surfaces that were formed when the river flowed at higher water and deposition levels than present. Most parts of the abandoned floodplain terrace are considered to be within the 100-year flood return interval or recognized by FEMA.

