

1.1 Introduction

Applegate is a community in Placer County (County) located approximately 9 miles northeast of the City of Auburn along Interstate 80 (I-80) (Figure 1-1). The County provides public sewerage to a portion of Applegate. To comply with an enforcement order from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB), the County is moving forward with the Applegate Regional Sewer Pipeline Project (Proposed Project). The Proposed Project would comply with the terms of the enforcement order by constructing a pipeline to convey wastewater flows from Applegate to the County's Sewer Maintenance District No. 1 (SMD 1) service area, and by closing the existing Applegate Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP).

The proposed improvements would decommission the treatment ponds at the Applegate WWTP, install pump stations and a force main to convey Applegate's wastewater to the existing sewer conveyance system that drains to the SMD 1 WWTP on Joeger Road in North Auburn, and upgrade a portion of the existing wastewater collection system to accommodate Applegate's existing flows. The wastewater would be treated at the SMD 1 WWTP and discharged to Rock Creek.

1.2 Purpose of this Document

Prior to approving the Proposed Project, the County must evaluate its potential environmental impacts as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Title 14, California Administrative Code, Section 1400 *et seq.*). The Proposed Project is also subject to evaluation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 United States Code [USC] 4321–4347) because it is being funded in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Prior to making further funding decisions for the Proposed Project, the EPA as the federal lead agency must consider the environmental impacts of its actions through preparation of a NEPA document. The analysis of environmental impacts presented in this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be used by the EPA to inform the NEPA document. This Draft EIR has been prepared to

fulfill the requirements of both CEQA and NEPA. It serves as an informational document to be used in the local planning and decision-making process, and does not recommend approval or denial of the Proposed Project.

This Draft EIR describes the Proposed Project, the existing environmental setting (before implementation of the Proposed Project), and the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project. In addition, any measures that would mitigate potentially significant impacts are also included in the EIR and in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (Appendix A).

This Draft EIR will be circulated for a 45-day public and agency review, as required by CEQA and NEPA. Comments on the Draft EIR will be evaluated, and responses will be prepared to address any substantial evidence that the Proposed Project may have significant impacts on the environment that have not been identified in the document. The comments received will be incorporated into the Final EIR that will be prepared for the Proposed Project.

1.3 Opportunities for Public Comment

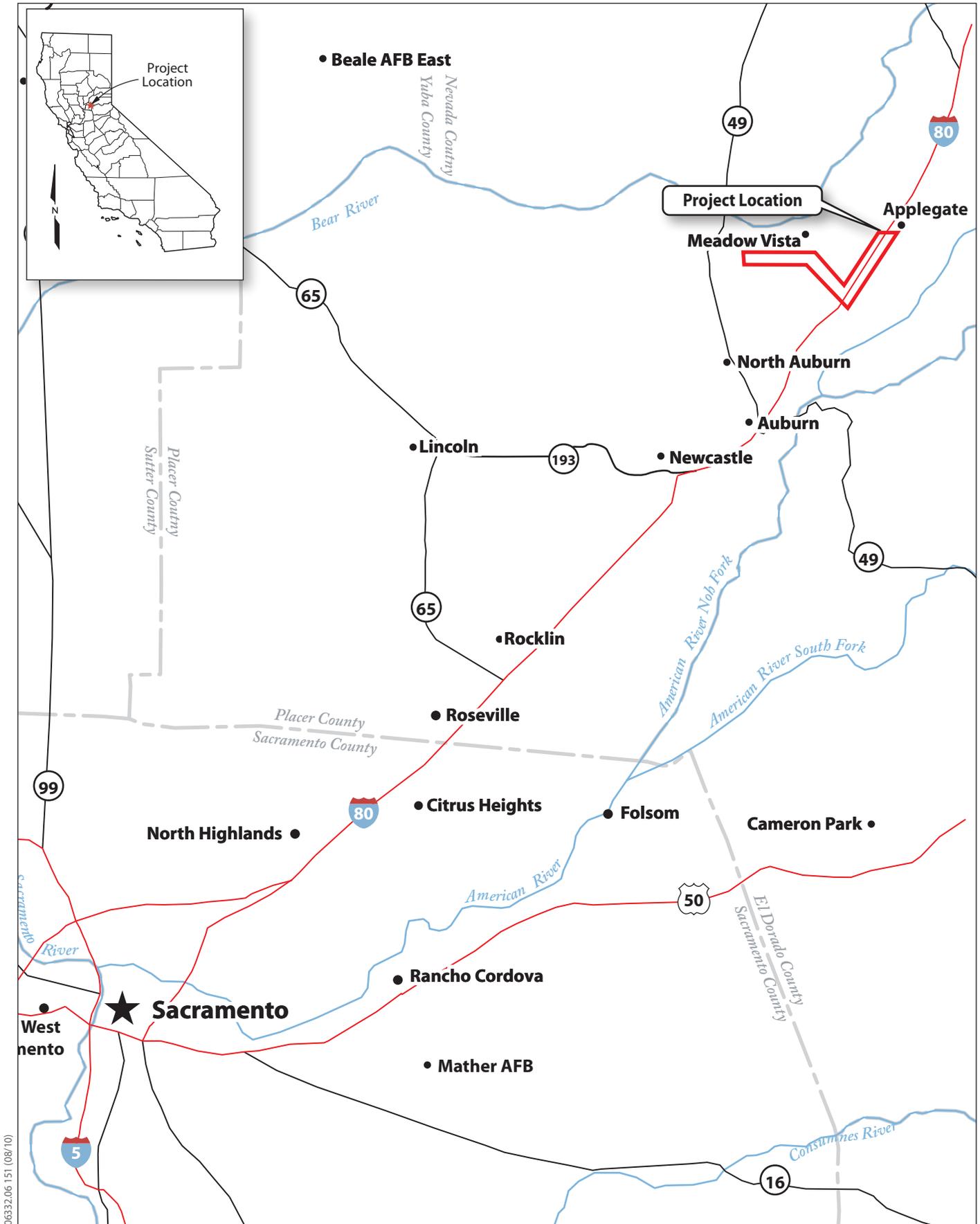
Public input was solicited during a 30-day public scoping period, which included a public meeting held on September 17, 2008, in Auburn, California at the offices of Placer County. Written and verbal comments received during the public scoping period were used to develop this Draft EIR.

This Draft EIR is being circulated for public review and comment. Comments may be submitted to Christina Hanson, Senior Planner, Placer County Environmental Engineering, 11476 C Avenue, Auburn, California, 95603 or by email at sewer@placer.ca.gov. In addition, information may be obtained at the public meeting to be held during the public comment period as announced in the Notice of Availability for this Draft EIR.

Following the public review of the Draft EIR, a Final EIR will be prepared. The Final EIR will be an edited version of the Draft EIR, based primarily on input received during the public comment period. The Final EIR will also include a summary of the public process and all comment letters and responses.

Upon its completion, the Final EIR will be distributed for a 10-day public review period, which will be announced through the same venues used for the Draft EIR.

After the Final EIR review period has been completed, the County will conduct a review of the Final EIR to evaluate project alternatives and to make a decision on the Proposed Project. The final decision-making process and analysis will be disclosed in a CEQA Notice of Determination (NOD).



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Figure 1-1
Project Vicinity Map

1.3.1 Scoping

The County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on August 26, 2008, announcing its intent to prepare an EIR under CEQA and to invite the public to provide comments on the scope of the EIR analysis. The NOP also included an Initial Study (IS) that was prepared to focus the scope of the environmental analysis presented in this Draft EIR (Appendix B) (ICF Jones & Stokes 2008a). As described above, this Draft EIR will be used by the EPA in support of compliance with NEPA.

On September 17, 2008, the County held a public scoping meeting in Auburn, California to give the public an opportunity to comment on the scope of the EIR analysis. The meeting was advertised in the local newspapers. The meeting was also announced through letters to interested parties. Comments were received orally at the meeting, and in letters received after the meeting. This Draft EIR was prepared with consideration of issues raised during the public scoping process.

1.4 Project Updates

The NOP included consideration of an additional alternative for the proposed pipeline alignment, the Dry Creek Alternative, that traveled southwest along Dry Creek Road after crossing I-80. Since issuing the NOP, the County has determined that the alignment proposed under Dry Creek Alternative is no longer feasible. Therefore, it is not considered for further evaluation in this Draft EIR. Additional information about this alternative and other alternatives that have been considered but dismissed from detailed evaluation is presented in Chapter 2.

The County has determined that a pipeline alignment down Placer Hills Road that connects to the existing collection system in Winchester is more feasible. Therefore, this alternative, a modified version of this alternative, and a No Project/No Action alternative (referred to as Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, respectively in this Draft EIR) are being carried forward for further evaluation. These alternatives are described in more detail in Chapter 2.

Since issuing the NOP, the County has also determined the potential need to upgrade a portion of the existing Winchester collection system to accommodate the proposed flows from the Applegate WWTP. The EPA has subsequently determined that the potential upgrade is not part of the Federal action, because it is speculative and would not receive federal funding and, therefore, would not require evaluation under NEPA. However, because there is the potential that the existing system would have to be upgraded to some extent, this element is included in the Proposed Project description and is being evaluated under CEQA.

1.5 Project Overview

1.5.1 Location of the Proposed Project

The project area is located approximately 8 miles northeast of Auburn (Figure 1-1). The project area includes the Applegate WWTP and the footprint of the proposed and alternative pipeline routes. The Applegate WWTP is located on a 6.8-acre parcel (Assessor's Parcel Number 073-120-013) immediately east of a Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) right-of-way (Figure 1-2). The proposed and alternative pipeline alignments would be located to the west of the treatment ponds primarily within existing road rights-of-way. The alignment and alternatives to the Proposed Project are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, Project Alternatives.

1.5.2 Existing Wastewater Collection and Treatment Components

Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Operations

In 1974, failing private wastewater treatment facilities and available grant funding prompted the County to provide public sewerage to the Applegate community. A collection system of approximately 2 miles of pipeline and one pump station now connects 28 parcels in the Applegate area to a small WWTP on a 6.8-acre parcel immediately east of a UPRR right-of-way (Figure 1-2). Wastewater flows by gravity under the UPRR tracks to the Applegate WWTP.

The Applegate WWTP consists of three evaporation and percolation ponds, each approximately 1 acre in size and about 6 feet deep (Figure 1-2). The ponds were designed to operate in series. A chlorination system was added to the Applegate WWTP to disinfect partially treated effluent flowing from Pond 2 to Pond 3 in anticipation of annual discharges from Pond 3 to Clipper Creek. These discharges, caused by a lack of wet weather capacity at the WWTP, violated the Applegate WWTP's Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR).

In view of continuing surface water discharges from the Applegate WWTP, the CVRWQCB issued a Cleanup and Abatement Order in May 2001. This order required the County to operate the Applegate WWTP in compliance with its WDR, provide greater disinfection of flows into Pond 3, and develop and implement short and long term improvements to prevent discharges.

In response to the Order, the County proposed construction of a community leach field and began to divert excess flows to temporary storage tanks for subsequent hauling to the SMD 1 WWTP. However, following further surface water discharges caused by heavy rainfall and sewage spills in 2005 and 2006, the CVRWQCB imposed an administrative civil liability on the County in June 2006 for noncompliance with the Cleanup and Abatement Order. Following

negotiations, the administrative civil liability was resolved in December 2006 via a Settlement Agreement between the County and the CVRWQCB. Under the Settlement Agreement, and in addition to other requirements, the County is required to:

- design and construct a pipeline to convey wastewater from the Applegate WWTP to the SMD 1 WWTP; and
- collect and haul away all wastewater and demonstrate by October 15 of each year that wastewater from all sewer connections has been diverted from the Applegate WWTP to temporary storage tanks until the pipeline can be built. This is to ensure that any wastewater remaining in the ponds at the end of the summer season can percolate and evaporate away prior to the onset of winter rains, and that any winter season overflows from the ponds consist solely of infiltrated groundwater and rainfall.

Wastewater Flows

The Applegate wastewater conveyance and treatment systems were designed for a buildout population of 100, generating an average daily dry weather flow of 10,000 gallons per day (gpd). The collection system consists of approximately 8,000 linear feet of 6-inch-diameter sewer pipe and a wastewater pump station. The collection system currently provides service to approximately 54 equivalent dwelling units (EDUs) (37 active and 17 inactive). The active EDUs are comprised of 23 single-family homes and five commercial connections, including a church, a firehouse/civic center, offices, a motel, and a library.

The ponds were designed for a daily average flow of 10,000 gpd. Because of the inflow of rainwater during the wet season, the pond system's capacity is hydraulically inadequate for wastewater flows. The maximum day flow (mdf) in 2006 was approximately 1,000 gallons in excess of the design mdf. Pond 3 is also subject to seasonal groundwater inflow under artesian conditions. The groundwater inflow during the winter months is sufficient to fill and overtop Pond 3 even if no wastewater is discharged into it (Central Valley Regional Water Quality Board 2006).

1.6 Proposed Project Objectives and Purpose and Need

The intent of the Proposed Project is to meet the requirements of the Settlement Agreement described above. Under the Proposed Project, the Applegate WWTP would be decommissioned and wastewater would be rerouted to the SMD 1 WWTP via the new pipeline. This would enable the County to meet the terms of the Settlement Agreement and would eliminate the need to temporarily store and haul wastewater.

1.7 Organization of this Document

The content and format of this document are designed to meet the requirements of CEQA and NEPA. Where relevant, CEQA terminology is listed first, followed by NEPA terminology.

- Chapter 1, Introduction, identifies the purpose, scope, and terminology of the document and identifies public involvement procedures.
- Chapter 2, Project Alternatives, describes the objectives and characteristics of the Proposed Project, and identifies the required permits and approvals.
- Chapter 3, Environmental Setting, Environmental Consequences, and Proposed Mitigation, describes the environmental setting, an analysis of the impacts associated with the Proposed Project and its alternatives, and proposed mitigation measures for those impacts that have been determined to be significant.
- Chapter 4, Other Considerations, addresses the potential cumulative and growth inducing impacts of the Proposed Project and its alternatives and the potential socioeconomic effects and environmental justice considerations.
- Chapter 5, Distribution List, identifies all the agencies and organizations to which this Draft EIR is circulated.
- Chapter 6, References, identifies all printed references and personal communications cited in this Draft EIR.
- Chapter 7, List of Preparers, identifies the individuals involved in preparing this Draft EIR and their areas of technical specialty.
- Appendix A, Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan
- Appendix B, Initial Study/Environmental Assessment
- Appendix C, Air Quality Data
- Appendix D, Biological Resources
- Appendix E. Department of Parks and Recreation Forms