

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Purpose of the EIR

The City of Palo Alto, as the lead agency, has prepared this Draft EIR to provide the public, and responsible/trustee agencies reviewing this project, information about the potential effects, both beneficial and adverse, of the proposed project on the local and regional environment. This Draft EIR was prepared in compliance with CEQA, the state EIR guidelines, and California Administrative Code, Title 14.

The Draft EIR describes the potential environmental impacts of the various components of the proposed project, and suggests mitigation measures for reducing impacts to less-than-significant levels. The impact analyses in this report are based on a variety of sources, including agency consultation and field surveys completed by Environmental Science Associates staff.

This Draft EIR evaluates the proposed project, which implements the *City of Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan* (1998-2010); the *City of Palo Alto 2005 Urban Water Management Plan* (2005); and the *SFPUC Water System Improvement Program* (2005). This Draft EIR also builds upon information contained in *Carollo Engineers' Water Wells, Regional Storage, and Distribution Study* (1999); *Groundwater Supply Feasibility Study* (2003); and *Long-Term Water Supply Study* (May 2000), all of which examined various resource scenarios in an effort to identify cost-effective, emergency water supply strategies for the City. The individual plans are available for review at the City of Palo Alto Utilities located at 250 Hamilton Avenue, in Palo Alto, California.

CEQA EIR Process

Notice of Preparation

In accordance with Sections 15063 and 15082 of CEQA Guidelines, the City, as lead agency, prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR (see Appendix A). The NOP was circulated to local, state, and federal agencies, and to other interested parties in February 2006. No Initial Study was prepared because the City decided that an EIR would be required for this project.

As indicated in the NOP, the Draft EIR addresses a full range of resource analyses, including: Land Use, Agricultural Resources, and Recreation; Visual Quality; Geology, Soils, and Seismicity; Hydrology and Water Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Traffic and

Circulation; Air Quality; Noise and Vibration; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Population and Housing; and Public Services and Utilities. The NOP provided a description of the proposed action, a description of sites for proposed facilities and upgrades, and a preliminary list of potential environmental impacts. Table 1-1 summarizes NOP comments received and Appendix A includes copies of scoping comment letters.

Public Scoping Meetings

A public scoping meeting for the City of Palo Alto Emergency Water Supply and Storage Project EIR was held on March 8, 2006 in Palo Alto. Public notices were placed in local newspapers informing the general public of the scoping meetings. The purpose of the meeting was to present the proposed project to the public through use of photos and a presentation describing project components and potential environmental impacts. City of Palo Alto staff, management, and members of the public attended the scoping meeting. Attendees were provided an opportunity to voice comments or concerns regarding potential effects of the project. Table 1-1 also summarizes public scoping meeting comments.

Issues raised during scoping included concerns regarding: adequacy of project goals; ability of wells to serve all city residents; use of generators as an emergency power supply for the well pumps; the taste of blended water; seismological concerns; stream impacts; effects of an underground reservoir on surface permeability; the aesthetics of above-ground structures; and recycled water use.

The scope of the Draft EIR includes issues raised in the NOP and at the public scoping meeting. Issues outside the scope of the proposed project, such as the use of grey or recycled water to meet fire suppression needs, are not addressed in the Draft EIR.

Draft EIR

This document constitutes the Draft EIR. It contains a description of the project, description of the environmental setting, identification of project impacts and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, and an analysis of project alternatives. The Draft EIR addresses environmental issues that could result in potentially significant environmental effects from project implementation.

Significance criteria have been developed for each environmental issue analyzed in this Draft EIR and are defined at the beginning of each impact analysis section. Impacts are categorized as follows:

- 1) Significant and unavoidable
- 2) Potentially significant, but can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level
- 3) Less than significant (mitigation is not required under CEQA, but may be recommended)
- 4) No impact
- 5) Beneficial

**TABLE 1-1
SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED ON THE SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE DRAFT EIR^a**

	Issue	Section Addressing These Issues
1	Use of grey water or alternative water source	2 Project Description 5 Alternatives
2	Eight hours' protection inadequate	2 Project Description
3	Specifics of Stanford shopping center location	2 Project Description
4	Concerned how the project will affect neighborhood properties	2 Project Description 3.8 Traffic and Circulation 3.10 Noise
5	Opposed to a reservoir at Palo Alto High School	2 Project Description 5 Analysis of Alternatives
6	Opposed to a reservoir at the Town & Country Shopping Center	2 Project Description 5 Analysis of Alternatives
7	Consideration of liquefaction and earthquake damage	3.4 Geology, Soils and Seismicity
8	Consideration of an archeological records search, encroachment permits	2 Project Description 3.7 Cultural Resources
9	Consideration of neighboring water districts	2 Project Description
10	Consideration of a well in South Palo Alto	2 Project Description
11	Use of generators—refueling, noise, fumes	3.9 Air Quality 3.10 Noise and vibration
12	Consideration of construction impacts on creek bank erosion and water quality	3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality 3.6 Biological Resources
13	Permits required for well construction and work near creek banks	3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality 3.6 Biological Resources
14	Specifics of Fernando and Matadero Well improvements and preservation of SCVWD access to facilities	2 Project Description
15	Concerned about stream proximity and construction-related impacts	3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality 3.6 Biological Resources
16	Consideration of East Palo Alto and Barron Park's emergency needs	2 Project Description
17	Emergency power supply for wells	2 Project Description
18	Consideration of the aesthetics of above-ground facilities	3.3 Visual Quality
19	Cost projections	2 Project Description
20	Notification of Menlo Park residents in project area	3.8 Traffic and Circulation 3.10 Noise and Vibration
21	Effects of storm runoff on stream quality	3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality
22	Effects of an underground reservoir on surface permeability	3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality
23	Aesthetics of blended water	2 Project Description 3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality
24	Contemplation of a gravity-fed system from a larger, uphill reservoir	5 Analysis of Alternatives
25	Traffic congestion	3.8 Traffic and Circulation
26	Contemplation of planning far enough into the future	1 Introduction 6 Growth Inducement
27	Project name too restrictive	1 Introduction 2 Project Description
28	Calculation of the 8 hour emergency water supply	2 Project Description

TABLE 1-1 (continued)
SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED ON THE SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE DRAFT EIR

Issue	Section Addressing These Issues
29 Integration with water treatment scenarios (relationship to other plans)	2 Project Description
30 Provision of well-specific capacity trends analyses	2 Project Description
31 Consideration of alternative water tank locations	5 Analysis of Alternatives
32 Explanation of well site locations	2 Project Description 5 Analysis of Alternatives
33 Depth-to-groundwater variation	2 Project Description 3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality
34 Effects of facility operation on local hydrology	3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality
35 Coordination of water supplies	3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality
36 Impacts of groundwater extraction on the subbasin	3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality
37 Fuel leak sites near well locations	3.11 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

^a Comments identified from written responses to the NOP and insight provided during a public meeting held in Palo Alto.

CEQA requires that a lead agency shall neither approve nor carry out a project as proposed unless the significant environmental effects have been reduced to an acceptable level, where possible (CEQA Guidelines §15091 and §15092). An acceptable level is defined as eliminating, avoiding, or substantially lessening the significant effects. If such a reduction is not possible, a lead agency must adopt Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations. As defined in CEQA Guidelines §15093, a Statement of Overriding Considerations balances the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental consequences.

Public Review

This document is being circulated to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested organizations and individuals who wish to review and comment on the report. Publication of this Draft EIR marks the beginning of a 45-day public review period, during which written comments may be submitted to the City at the following address:

Jim Flanigan, Project Engineer
 City of Palo Alto Utilities
 250 Hamilton Avenue
 Palo Alto, CA 94301

During the 45-day review period, the City of Palo Alto Planning and Transportation Commission will hold a formal public hearing on the Draft EIR.

Final EIR publication

Written and oral comments received in response to the Draft EIR will be addressed in a Response to Comments addendum document which, together with the Draft EIR, will constitute the Final

EIR. The City will then consider EIR certification, and upon certification, the City may proceed to take action on project approval.

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting

In January 1989, California enacted Assembly Bill 3180 (Cortese Bill), which required lead agencies to “adopt a reporting and mitigation monitoring program for the changes to the project which it has adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment” (CEQA Section 21081.6, CEQA Guidelines Section 15097). The specific “reporting or monitoring” program required by Assembly Bill 3180 is not required by CEQA Guidelines to be included in the EIR. Throughout the Draft EIR, however, mitigation measures have been clearly identified and presented in language that will facilitate establishment of a monitoring program. Any measures adopted by the City as conditions for approval of the project will be included in a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program to ensure compliance.

Public and Agency Involvement

Early coordination with the general public, appropriate public agencies, and local jurisdictions is encouraged in the environmental review process in order to determine the scope of the environmental document, the level of analysis, and related environmental requirements. One scoping meeting was held to allow agency consultation and public involvement for the Draft EIR.

Consultation and Coordination with Public Agencies

The City of Palo Alto Emergency Water Supply and Storage Project is subject to CEQA. The City is the lead agency for development of the EIR, which incorporates input and coordination provided by member agencies, other responsible agencies, and local jurisdictions. In compliance with CEQA requirements, the NOP for the EIR was distributed in February 2006 to over 60 public agencies, elected officials, community groups, and other interested parties.

References – Introduction

Carollo Engineers, Groundwater Supply Feasibility Study, April 2003

Carollo Engineers, *Long-Term Water Supply Study*, May 2000.

Carollo Engineers, *Water Wells, Regional Storage, and Distribution Final Study*, December 1999.

City of Palo Alto, *Enhancing the New Century: Palo Alto Comprehensive General Plan 1998-2010*, December 1998.

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPU), *Water System Improvement Program*, prepared for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report, February 2005.