



Resource Conservation District

Ventura County

CEQA Notice of Preparation

<u>Date</u>	August 5, 2009
<u>Program Title</u>	Calleguas Creek Watershed Arundo/Tamarisk Removal Program (CCARP)
<u>Lead Agency/ Project Contact</u>	Ventura County Resource Conservation District (VCRCD) Debra Gillis P.O. Box 147, Somis, CA 93066 Phone: 805-386-4489 Email: debragillis@sbcglobal.net
<u>Consultant</u>	Noreen Murano Wildscape Restoration, Inc. 2977 Sexton Canyon Rd., Ventura, CA 93003 Phone: 805-644-6852 Email: noreen@wildscaperestoration.com
<u>County</u>	Ventura
<u>Program Location</u>	The CCARP will occur within the riparian corridors of the Calleguas Creek watershed (Watershed) in Ventura County, California, including the cities of Simi Valley, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, and Camarillo. Implementation of CCARP through individual removal projects would occur at sites within these riparian corridors that have established stands of arundo (<i>Arundo donax</i>) and/or tamarisk (<i>Tamarix</i> spp.), or that become infested in the future.

1. NOTICE AND COMMENTS

In compliance with state guidelines for the implementation of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this second **Notice of Preparation** is hereby sent to inform agencies and interested parties of the development of the CCARP Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The first Notice of Preparation for the CCARP EIR was sent in December of 2008 with a comment period ending on Monday, February 2, 2009 and the intent to provide a scoping meeting within the comment period. However, due to a California State budget freeze for projects funded by Proposition 50, the VCRCD was unable to provide this scoping meeting within the comment period. Therefore, the VCRCD is providing this second comment period and Notice of Preparation in order to provide this scoping meeting for any interested party that would like to provide verbal comments. This scoping meeting will be held on **Wednesday, September 9, 2009, 6:30 p.m., City of Moorpark, City Hall, Citrus Room, 799 Moorpark Road, Moorpark, CA 93021.**

Please note that any comments that were submitted to the VCRCD during the comment period for the first Notice of Preparation for the CCARP EIR will be addressed by the VCRCD and do not need to be resubmitted during the second comment period.

All agencies, organizations, and individuals will need to use this EIR prepared by the VCRCD when considering your permit or other approval for removal projects as part of the CCARP. California state law mandates the response from agencies and the public must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this Notice of Preparation. Responses may be submitted in writing, or by providing oral comments at a scoping meeting that will be held on the date and time listed above.

Requests for noticing and written comments should be directed to Debra Gillis at the VCRCD at the address provided above, and should be received no later than **5:00 pm, Tuesday, September 15, 2009.** This NOP and the Initial Study for the CCARP can be found online using the following links:

Link for Initial Study on Website: <http://www.vcrd.org/pdfs/CCARP%20Initial%20Study%20Final%2020081217.pdf>
Link for Notice of Preparation on Website: <http://www.vcrd.org/pdfs/CCARP%20Second%20NOP%2020090805.doc>

2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The VCRCD proposes the development of the CCARP, a program to guide stakeholders in implementing non-native invasive plant removal projects, with an emphasis on arundo and tamarisk, within the Calleguas Creek watershed. CCARP stakeholders include federal, state, and local agencies and private individuals and organizations. The CCARP will develop a Long-Term Implementation



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Plan (LTIP) that includes a set of methods for the removal and disposal of arundo and tamarisk, and the revegetation of removal areas. Best management practices will be described in the LTIP to reduce potential impacts from individual CCARP removal projects. In addition, the CCARP will provide a programmatic review and permitting process on a watershed-wide basis, including a programmatic EIR to evaluate the potential impacts associated with adopting and implementing a programmatic-level document to guide in the removal of arundo and tamarisk.

There are numerous negative effects associated with the establishment of arundo and tamarisk in riparian areas, including: decreased water quality and supply; increased flooding; fire and erosion hazards; displacement of native vegetation and habitat; and a reduction in diversity and abundance of riparian-dependent wildlife. In addition, several regulatory agencies have jurisdiction over riparian areas in the Calleguas Creek watershed. Each agency has a separate permitting process with different timelines and fee structures. The financial burden and coordination time of preparing environmental compliance documents and obtaining permits for individual removal projects can be prohibitive.

Therefore, the inception of the CCARP programmatic review and permitting process will facilitate the removal of arundo and tamarisk on a watershed-wide basis. Primary examples of the benefits offered by programmatic review and permitting include: public agencies, environmental groups, and other stakeholders have ample opportunity to voice concerns about the potential removal methods; the overall cost of environmental review is reduced; funding for removal projects becomes more readily available; and the amount of on-the-ground work that can be performed is increased for the same cost as individually permitted projects. In addition, without the CCARP, areas infested by arundo and tamarisk and the negative impacts these species generate will continue to increase in the Watershed. The planning and permitting required for individual removal projects will remain an obstruction to a collaborative watershed-wide removal effort.

3. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

An Initial Study identifying the potential impacts of the program has been prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063. A copy of this Initial Study can be obtained online at the link listed in section three below. This study determined that CCARP projects may cause potentially significant impacts to air quality, biological resources, coastal beaches and sand dunes, ambient noise levels, water resources, agricultural resources, paleontological resources, cultural resources, hydraulic hazards, fire hazards, and public health. In addition, this study found the potential for less than significant impacts to visual resources, transportation and circulation, and recreation. Therefore, a determination to prepare an EIR was made by the VCRCDD, the lead agency for the CCARP.

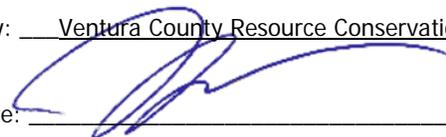
The CCARP is expected to result in a net environmental benefit to the Watershed due to the removal of arundo and tamarisk. Potential long-term positive impacts from the removal of these species include an increase in water levels in the natural corridors of the Watershed, a reduction of water temperature and salinity, increase in native habitat for wildlife, improvement of stream flow, and decrease in erosion and fire hazards.

As part of the environmental analysis for the CCARP, the EIR will evaluate all mitigation measures and best management practices described in the LTIP and determine whether additional or modified measures and practices are necessary to reduce the potential impacts from implementation of removal projects for the CCARP. The EIR will also include an analysis of project alternatives and cumulative impacts. Stakeholders and other agencies will utilize this programmatic EIR to evaluate the potential impacts associated with adopting and implementing a programmatic-level document to guide the removal of arundo and tamarisk.

Typed or Printed Name: Marty Melvin

Title: District Manager

Agency: Ventura County Resource Conservation District

Signature: 

Date: August 5, 2009