

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
FOR THE
WESTERN AGGREGATES LLC YUBA COUNTY OPERATIONS
AMENDED RECLAMATION PLAN**

Public notice is hereby given that a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is available for public review for the Western Aggregates LLC Yuba County Operations Amended Reclamation Plan (proposed project). The State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) is seeking comment on the content of the Draft EIR.

Project Description and Location: Western Aggregates LLC (Western) operates an active aggregate (sand and gravel) mining operation pursuant to vested rights, which were confirmed in 2010 by the SMGB to cover an approximately 3,900-acre area (Western's Vested Rights Area) situated in the historic Yuba Goldfields in Yuba County, California, approximately 6 miles northeast of Marysville. The project site is approximately 1 mile south of the Yuba River, north of Hammonton-Smartsville Road, and approximately 2 miles north of Beale Air Force Base (AFB). The project site is within the planning area for the Beale Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) and the Beale AFB Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The project site is not included on the Government Code Section 65962.5 list of hazardous waste sites.

The proposed project is the implementation of a reclamation plan in accordance with the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA). The project site and surrounding area have previously been greatly disturbed by gold and aggregate mining activities of predecessor companies that dramatically altered the landscape prior to the enactment of SMARA. Under its vested right Western plans to continue to remove aggregates to a depth of up to approximately 100 feet below the average lake surface level over an approximately 1,960-acre area, which is a portion of the overall vested area, during a phased 45-year surface mining operation, creating a series of five discrete lakes totaling approximately 1,600 acres with shorelines bordered by vegetated woodlands and dikes or berms. Because the surface mining operations are vested, the impacts of such operations are not subject to environmental review under CEQA to determine whether mitigation measures are required for the mining operations. However, the potential effects of implementing reclamation activities to comply with SMARA requirements are evaluated in the Draft EIR. Western proposes to reclaim the mine site in three 15-year phases to maintain the five large pond/lake areas created by mining, including revegetating the area to provide an end land use consisting of open space and wildlife habitat with aquatic lake, emergent marsh, riparian woodland, and riparian upland vegetation communities. Revegetation would use commercially available native species, and monitoring would be performed annually for a minimum of 5 years to ensure the success of revegetation. All mining equipment and structures would be removed prior to final reclamation.

Potentially Significant Impacts: Based on the Initial Study/Notice of Preparation (IS/NOP) prepared for the proposed project, which was made available for public review in April 2013, and comments received on the IS/NOP, the analysis in the Draft EIR addresses the following:

biological resources, hydrology/water quality, and land use. The Draft EIR determined the reclamation activities could result in potentially significant impacts on special-status plants, giant garter snake, burrowing owl, vernal pools and swales supporting special-status species, valley elderberry longhorn beetle, nesting raptors and migratory birds, and riparian habitat. The Draft EIR identifies mitigation measures to reduce all the biological resources impacts to less than significant. Reclamation would not result in any project-level significant impacts on groundwater levels, Yuba County Water Agency Main Canal flows, or Yuba River flows, but long-term maintenance of the reclaimed lakes, in combination with lakes created and reclaimed by other nearby mining projects, could have a significant effect on Yuba River flow and water temperature. The Draft EIR identifies mitigation measures and an alternative that would reduce the project's contribution to this impact to levels that would be less than cumulatively considerable. Through the maintenance of the large lakes, the proposed project's proximity to Beale AFB has the potential to increase bird/aircraft collisions, both at the project level and cumulatively. The Draft EIR identifies mitigation measures and an alternative that would reduce this impact to less than significant. The proposed project would not result in any significant and unavoidable impacts.

Document Review and Availability: The public comment period for the Draft EIR is from **October 6, 2014 to November 19, 2014**. Copies of the Draft EIR are available for public review at:

State Mining and Geology Board
801 K Street, Suite 2015
Sacramento, CA 95814-3528
(916) 322-1082

or on the SMGB website at:

<http://www.conservation.ca.gov/smgb/Pages/Index.aspx>

During the public review period, written comments on the Draft EIR should be provided to:

Will Arcand, Senior Engineering Geologist
State Mining and Geology Board
801 K Street, Suite 2015
Sacramento, CA 95814-3528
Will.Arcand@conservation.ca.gov

Written comments must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on November 19, 2014.

Public Hearing/Meeting: A public hearing will be held before the SMGB, at which time the SMGB will consider comments received on the Draft EIR during the review period, consider the Final EIR and determine whether the EIR was completed in compliance with CEQA, and make a determination whether to approve the proposed project. It is anticipated that the hearing will be held at a regular meeting of the SMGB in early 2015. Interested parties should consult the SMGB website to confirm the meeting agenda, time, and date, or call (916) 322-1082.