

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

**Contra Loma Reservoir and Recreation Area
Resource Management Plan Project**

Issues and Opportunities Report

California, Mid-Pacific Region



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Introduction

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is developing a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Contra Loma Reservoir and Recreation Area (Contra Loma) in Antioch, Contra Costa County, California. The Contra Loma RMP will be a long-term plan to guide management of the reservoir, the recreation areas, and surrounding lands owned by Reclamation. The RMP is being developed based on a comprehensive inventory of environmental resources and facilities; input from the current local managing partners (i.e., the East Bay Regional Park District [EBRPD], the City of Antioch [the City], and the Contra Costa Water District [CCWD]); and input from the public. The primary emphasis of the RMP is to protect water supply, water quality, and natural resources, while enhancing recreational uses.

The overall objective of this RMP is to establish a set of management objectives, goals, and actions to be implemented by Reclamation, either directly or through its management agreement(s) that will:

- establish uniform policy and land management guidelines that promote organized use, development, and management of the Contra Loma Reservoir and the surrounding recreation area lands compatible with applicable federal and state laws;
- protect the water supply and water-quality functions of Contra Loma Reservoir;
- protect and enhance natural and cultural resources in and around the reservoir, consistent with federal law and Reclamation policies;
- provide recreational opportunities and facilities to enhance and develop management strategies, consistent with Reclamation policies, and state water policies; and
- provide guidance for future decision making.

Contra Loma Reservoir was constructed as part of the Central Valley Project and is managed by Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Region through its South-Central California Area Office. The reservoir receives water from the Contra Costa Canal and stores it until it is released back to the canal via gravity flow. The reservoir is primarily used as a regulating reservoir for peak or short-term municipal water supplies for CCWD customers, for emergency storage, and as a backup water supply during maintenance of upstream facilities. The CCWD operates and maintains the reservoir and manages its water level. EBRPD is responsible for managing the surrounding recreational lands as provided for

under a management agreement between Reclamation and EBRPD. On September 19, 1972, Reclamation transferred responsibility of land use management and development, construction, and maintenance of public recreational facilities to EBRPD. The City operates and manages the Antioch Community Park in the northwestern portion of Contra Loma under a license agreement with EBRPD, granted in January 1990. EBRPD, CCWD, and the City are the current managing partners for Contra Loma.

The management agreement between Reclamation and EBRPD expires on December 31, 2010. Reclamation issued an extension on December 6, 2010 to extend the agreement with EBRPD through completion of the RMP process, which is scheduled for early 2013. After completion of the RMP process, Reclamation will negotiate a new long-term management agreement with one or more local managing partner(s). The managing partner(s) may include EBRPD, the City, and/or other local partner(s). The RMP will provide the overall resource and recreation management direction and framework for Contra Loma and will serve as a guidance document for the local managing partner(s) for day-to-day operations and long-range planning.

The purpose of this issues and opportunities report is to provide an overview of the facilities and the natural and cultural resources that will be addressed in the RMP and to identify potential issues, constraints, and opportunities relating to management of the resources. Under each resource topic, the discussion includes a brief description or overview of the resource, identification of any gaps in information currently available, an approach to collecting the additional information, and the potential issues and opportunities that should be considered during development of the RMP. If it is anticipated that specific technical studies will be required, these are identified under the appropriate resource topic. The information presented in this report will be used to help identify issues and opportunities in developing alternatives and will become the basis for the existing conditions/affected environment chapter of the RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Summary of Topics and Issues Identified Through Scoping and Public Workshops

Reclamation held the first scoping meeting for the RMP/EIS on February 8, 2010, at the Nick Rodriguez Community Center in Antioch. Reclamation held a public workshop on August 4, 2010, at Sutter Elementary School in Antioch to seek ideas, concerns, and comments that will inform the development of the RMP/EIS. Reclamation also solicited written scoping comments between February 8 and 22, 2010, and solicited written comments to inform the RMP between August 4 and 31, 2010.

Topics Identified During Public Outreach

These public-outreach opportunities resulted in many written and verbal comments about management of the reservoir and recreation area and issues to consider during development of the RMP. Specific topics identified during the initial scoping period are:

- Soccer fields at Antioch Community Park
- Recreational opportunities and facilities at Contra Loma Reservoir
- General improvement and maintenance of the park
- Management agreement with EBRPD
- Water quality of the reservoir
- Fluctuations in the level of the reservoir
- Largemouth bass populations
- Invasive aquatic species
- Wildlife habitat restoration
- Wildlife habitat and movement
- East County Parks Habitat Conservation Plan

Specific additional topics identified during the August 2010 comment period are:

- Enjoyment of Contra Loma
- Water quality of the reservoir
- Dead clams and fish carcasses along the shoreline
- Relative abundance of insects and small fish along the shoreline
- Fish populations (largemouth bass and crappie)
- Fish stocking
- Algae blooms in the reservoir
- Illegal fishing (poaching)

- Fishing docks
- Weeds and tules that may hinder fishing
- Animal feces (geese, horses, dogs) near the reservoir
- Job opportunities for lifeguards and swimming instructors
- Swimming/lifeguard lessons and programs at the lagoon
- Picnic areas
- Swim lagoon size, capacity, and facilities
- Public safety services (police/fire)
- Community enrichment
- Bird and wildlife habitat
- Naturalist programs
- Educational opportunities for children
- Trail quality, condition, shade, connections
- Dog use
- Parking supply
- Expansion or renovation of facilities
- Addition of a park residence
- Restroom facilities
- Kayaking restrictions
- Mountain bike loop-trail opportunities
- Litter and clean-up
- Communications among park staff
- Swimming events in the reservoir
- Running and other community events

- Disc golf course
- Integrated pest management program
- Water infrastructure for grazing
- Team sports at Antioch Community Park
- Mix of baseball and soccer fields at Antioch Community Park
- Staffing and security at Antioch Community Park
- Cleanliness at Antioch Community Park
- Trail and grass conditions at Antioch Community Park
- Trail connections at Antioch Community Park
- Operating hours of Antioch Community Park
- Pathway lighting improvement at Antioch Community Park
- A botanical garden at Antioch Community Park

Issues Raised During Public Outreach

The following is a list of resource management issues raised by the public and the current managing partner agencies during the public outreach process. These issues should be considered during development of the RMP.

Recreational Facilities and Opportunities at Contra Loma Regional Park

Swim lagoon

- Increase the size of the swim lagoon to accommodate demand.
- Provide a safe swim area or splash pad for small children.
- Provide more shade around the swim lagoon lawn.
- Add benches in the swim lagoon area.
- Increase parking at the swim lagoon.
- Consider the effects of the swim lagoon on the visual character and peacefulness of the recreation area.

- Prohibit smoking at the lagoon and designate smoking areas down-wind from swimmers.

Fishing

- Improve shoreline access for fishing by controlling vegetation along the shoreline.
- Replace aging fishing docks.
- Modify fishing docks to allow safe, continuous fishing during reservoir drawdowns.
- Add more fishing docks, possibly on the east shore.
- Enforce poaching regulations.
- Increase fish stocking.
- Control vegetation in the reservoir.
- Repair the fish-cleaning facility.

Reservoir recreation (non-fishing)

- Ease restrictions on kayaking intended to reduce body contact with the reservoir.
- Reintroduce swimming in the reservoir.
- Reintroduce swimming events in the reservoir.

Trail system

- Improve the existing East Shore–West Shore trails loop with an all-season surface.
- Provide more shade along the trails.
- Increase availability of trails for mountain biking.
- Increase loop-trail opportunities for mountain biking.
- Create multi-use trail connectors in several locations.

Other recreation

- Install shade structures to support recreational uses and to provide shade in parking areas.
- Construct more picnic sites where useful and appropriate.

- Provide a playground structure.
- Continue or increase running events in Contra Loma.
- Continue to provide outdoor educational experiences for children.
- Consider overnight group camping as part of the current day-camp programs or for special events.
- Consider building a disc golf course.
- Consider the effects of additional improvements on the character of the recreation area.
- Ensure that improvements are consistent with EBRPD's future habitat-restoration projects and its future Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP).
- Construct a fishermen's shelter.
- Increase off-leash dog areas.

Infrastructure and Administrative Facilities at Contra Loma Regional Park

Restrooms

- Provide more and better restroom facilities to accommodate existing user needs.
- Replace the existing chemical toilets with modern vault restrooms.
- Provide a restroom facility near the northwest-shore fishing dock.
- Consider installing sewer lines that connect the regional park to the City's wastewater system.

Buildings and structures

- Expand or renovate existing park offices, the EBRPD police substation, the secondary storage yard, and the buildings near the swim lagoon to better provide for public service and safety.
- Add structures and facilities for classes, including swimming and safety lessons.
- Build a new park residence.
- Expand the gravel/overflow parking areas.
- Consider paving the existing gravel parking areas.

- Consider a fueling station and storage tank at or near the maintenance yard for park staff and public safety officers.

Other infrastructure

- Consider adding a radio communication tower and other needed facilities to improve communications for EBRPD and public service providers.
- Install water infrastructure to support grazing.

Facility Management at Contra Loma Regional Park

Litter and animal feces (dogs, horses, geese)

- Increase litter cans on the east and northwest shores and the dam and along trails.
- Provide signage with telephone contact information to report litter and feces problems.
- Increase the education of park users about keeping the park clean with signage and rangers, especially in the picnic areas.
- Issue littering tickets.
- Provide stations for dog-feces bags throughout the park.
- Reduce occurrence of horse feces near the reservoir.
- Patrol and clean up trails more frequently to remove litter and feces.

Other facility management

- Continue and expand programs to manage zebra and quagga mussels, New Zealand mud snails, and carp.
- Continue to implement an integrated pest management plan (weeds, rodents, wasps).
- Clarify law enforcement and public safety roles for each managing partner agency.
- Consider a donation box for walk-in users.
- Consider increasing EBRPD's irrigation allotment of 100 acre-feet per year by 50 percent.

Recreational Facilities and Opportunities at Antioch Community Park

Soccer and baseball fields

- Increase ball fields and/or modify ball field use to meet the demand for particular sports (e.g., baseball, soccer).
- Expand soccer and multi-use areas by adding fields south of the existing fields.
- Increase the size of some soccer fields to accommodate older youths and adults (i.e., 70 yards x 110 yards).
- Reduce the focus on baseball fields and increase opportunities for mixed-use fields.
- Improve maintenance of the soccer fields to reduce drainage problems, eliminate gopher holes and uneven surfaces, and improve turf quality.
- Improve soccer fields to allow use in wet weather.
- Replace natural turf with artificial turf or a more robust grass.
- Install lighting for the soccer and multi-use fields to enable evening use throughout the year.
- Improve drainage on the south side of the southern baseball field.
- Increase parking if additional ball fields are built.

Other recreation

- Increase opportunities for community involvement through special event notices.
- Increase public input regarding marketing of recreation programs on the site.
- Increase the number of trails along the creek and riparian area and improve the interconnection between trail systems.
- Create a botanical garden in the open space adjacent to the soccer fields.
- Reduce erosion and muddy conditions in the area between the parking lot and the trail on the west side of the park.
- Improve pathway lighting.

Facility Management at Antioch Community Park

Litter, feces, and graffiti

- Take measures to reduce litter and graffiti.
- Provide bags for dog feces at stations throughout the park.

Staffing

- Increase ranger or security presence.
- Improve parking lot security to reduce car break-ins.

Other facility management

- Specify gate closure times.
- Improve the cleanliness of play structures.
- Clear the firs from the play area more regularly.

Reservoir Management and Reservoir Water Quality

Reservoir level fluctuation

- Manage reservoir levels to avoid conflict with the reproductive cycles of largemouth bass, crappie, and other fish.
- Manage reservoir levels to avoid conflict with the reproductive cycles of birds, waterfowl, and other aquatic life along the shoreline.
- Operate the reservoir in a manner that reduces occurrence of algae blooms and clam mortality along the shoreline.
- Operate the reservoir to improve recreational fishing and to increase catches.

Reservoir water quality

- Distribute water-quality sampling locations more widely around the reservoir and at varying depths.
- Reduce occurrence of animal feces (e.g., geese, horses, dogs) around the reservoir.
- Reduce occurrence or duration of fish carcasses, whether left by birds, fishermen, or nature, along the shore.
- Remove fish carcasses daily.
- Remove trash and dead tules from the reservoir when water levels are low.

Overview of Affected Environment

Contra Loma is part of the Central Valley Project and is one of EBRPD's regional parks that they currently manage on behalf of Reclamation. It encompasses approximately 776 acres of grasslands, scattered woodlands, and park facilities and includes an 80-acre reservoir on the northern edge of the Diablo mountain range in the north-central portion of Contra Costa County. Land uses in the vicinity of Contra Loma include development associated with the City of Antioch to the north and east; the City's Lone Tree Golf Course to the east; and undeveloped, rolling hills associated with the Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve to the south and west. The Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta is less than 5 miles north of Contra Loma, and the San Francisco Bay is 30 miles west. The Contra Costa Canal forms the northern boundary.

This section of the report contains an overview of the resources and facilities at Contra Loma and identifies resource management constraints and potential opportunities for resolving the resource management issues listed in Section 2.2 above. This section is not intended to provide a detailed description of each resource topic, but to present a summary of available information on each topic. Additional details on each resource and additional discussion of potential issues, constraints, or opportunities identified through the public involvement process will be available in the resource inventory report and the RMP/EIS. Resources that are not present at Contra Loma are described below and will not be discussed in detail in subsequent documents.

Operational Conditions

Operational conditions include recreational uses, recreational and operational facilities, utilities, and public health and safety. Fishing is a primary recreational activity at Contra Loma and will be discussed in this section. The primary use of the reservoir is to meet customer water demands during shortages as discussed further below.

Summary of Current Conditions

EBRPD operates the recreational component of Contra Loma Regional Park, including reservoir recreation, and the City manages the community park. Common recreational activities at the regional park include fishing, hiking, swimming (only at the swim lagoon), windsurfing, kayaking, canoeing, picnicking, and horseback and bicycle riding. Visitation is about 160,000 annually. The regional park contains various facilities that support the recreational uses offered at the park (e.g., trails, picnic tables, food concession, parking areas, fishing docks, boat launch) and provide means to manage the land (e.g., fencing, access gate, roads). Many, but not all, of the recreational facilities are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). EBRPD has offices, maintenance equipment and facilities, and law enforcement

vehicles onsite. The regional park has potable (drinking) water, restrooms and showers with a septic tank, portable chemical toilets, electricity, telephones, and a radio communication system.

Fishing is a very popular activity at Contra Loma. The reservoir supports 14 species of fish including 8 species of game fish. EBRPD and California Department of Fish and Game plant (i.e., stock) rainbow trout and channel catfish in the reservoir. The reservoir also supports self-sustaining populations of largemouth bass, crappie, redear sunfish, and bluegill, which are also popular with anglers. A state fishing license and an EBRPD Fishing Access Permit are required for all anglers 16 years and older.

Some regional park users have expressed specific concerns related to recreational fishing. Some believe fluctuations in the reservoir level in April and May conflict with the reproductive cycles for largemouth bass, crappie, and other fish, thereby inhibiting reproduction and reducing fish populations and catches. Fish population data for the past several years would be needed to understand population trends for these species. Even with accurate trend information, it may be difficult to precisely identify the causes of population changes. Fluctuations in water level during the spawning season, water temperature, and excessive legal and illegal harvesting can all contribute to reduced fish populations.

The primary uses of the community park are baseball, softball, soccer, picnicking, group activities, and hiking. Because of the community park's proximity to the regional park, its trails serve as pathways into the regional park. The community park has two parking lots.

CCWD manages and operates the Contra Loma Reservoir for water supply and emergency storage. The Contra Loma Dam is on the northern side of the reservoir and contains a pumping system to collect water from the Contra Costa Canal. Water returns to the canal via gravity flow. Operation of the reservoir entails periodic pumping from and releases to the canal, which can cause reservoir levels to fluctuate substantially.

Potential Constraints and Opportunities

The following operational constraint must be considered when developing the RMP. Its relative level of sensitivity is shown in parentheses.

- Compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies (high sensitivity)

The following list describes opportunities for resolving the operational issues that should be considered when developing the RMP:

- Available space could be used to expand recreational and administrative facilities in the vicinity of the reservoir.

- Flat, disturbed grazing land east of the reservoir could be used for additional ball fields
- Existing ball fields could be reconfigured to accommodate a variety of sports.
- Underused shoreline could accommodate additional fishing docks.
- Additional fish stocking could be done.
- Fish habitat could be created or modified to increase the numbers of desired fish.
- Sewer trunk lines serving nearby City neighborhoods might accommodate park wastewater.

Approach to Resolving Issues

In addition, general information gathering via websites, agency contacts, and literature reviews will be ongoing as the RMP/EIS is developed to obtain background information on various topics relating to operational conditions. The agencies responsible for managing Contra Loma have provided documentation from previous studies and analyses, and they will continue to provide valuable information to describe and characterize the environment at Contra Loma.

With respect to the relationship between fish populations and water level fluctuations, Reclamation will review available EBRPD data to better understand population trends of potentially affected species. Even with accurate trend information, it may be difficult to precisely identify the causes of population changes without additional investigation. The time and expense of performing such investigations are likely not warranted for the purposes of the RMP. Instead, the RMP will identify cost-effective opportunities for improving the reservoir's recreational fishery, if desirable.

Natural Resources

Natural resources include climate, air quality, hydrology, water quality, geology, soils, vegetation, and wildlife. Fisheries are discussed in Section 3.1.

Summary of Current Conditions

The climate of the region is hot and dry during the summer and mild and wet during the winter. The strong predominance of westerly winds blowing through the Carquinez Strait disperses air pollutants, reducing the atmospheric potential for air pollution in the vicinity of Antioch. Federal and state air quality standards occur primarily are exceeded during meteorological conditions

conducive to high pollution levels, such as cold, windless winter nights or hot, sunny summer afternoons (Antioch 2003).

Although most of Contra Loma is relatively flat, the surrounding hills to the west create a barrier between San Francisco and the reservoir and recreation area. Some hills in Contra Loma have fairly steep slopes (greater than 10 percent grade) and, when combined with the high clay content of the soils, create unstable building conditions. The drainage pattern of the area is to the north toward the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta. The western half of Contra Loma drains into the reservoir, while the eastern half follows the former drainage pattern of the area and flows north away from the reservoir and through the community park. Maintaining reservoir water quality is very important because of its use for water supply. Sediment and pollutants draining from the surrounding uplands have the potential to affect water quality. Litter, animal feces (e.g., cattle, dogs, wildlife), and human contact with the reservoir can also affect water quality.

Contra Loma is dominated by grasslands and the reservoir, while also supporting scattered woodlands, riparian habitat, wetlands, and landscaped areas. The less-developed areas of Contra Loma support a variety of plant and wildlife species, which may include several special-status species. Some of the special-status species that are known or suspected to occur at Contra Loma are Alameda whipsnake, California tiger salamander, burrowing owl, and San Joaquin kit fox. California quail are also present.

Potential Constraints and Opportunities

The following list describes natural resources constraints that must be considered when developing the RMP. The relative level of sensitivity is shown in parentheses.

- Comply with existing contracts/agreements with CCWD about reservoir operations (high sensitivity)
- Protect and maintain the water quality of the reservoir (high sensitivity).
- Protect the water supply function of the reservoir (high sensitivity).
- Enforce body contact restrictions for the reservoir (high sensitivity).
- Avoid conflict with EBRPD's future HCP/NCCP (high sensitivity).
- Avoid/protect wetland and riparian habitat (high sensitivity).
- Avoid/protect special-status plant and wildlife species (high sensitivity if present).

- Avoid/protect California quail habitat and EBRPD's quail habitat enhancement programs (high sensitivity).
- Avoid conflict with EBRPD's barn owl project to control pocket gophers (medium sensitivity).
- Steep slopes across much of the recreation area constrain development (high sensitivity).
- Clay soils have high degrees of shrink-swell, which make them susceptible to erosion and slumping (medium sensitivity).
- Clay soils have high runoff potential (low sensitivity).

The following list describes opportunities for resolving the natural resources management issues that should be considered when developing the RMP:

- The expansive natural areas are suitable for habitat restoration.
- EBRPD's planned HCP/NCCP may represent an opportunity to expand resource stewardship.

Approach to Resolving Issues

The primary approach to resolving issues about natural resources at Contra Loma is to compile and review available information on the resources. Existing data and reports from the agencies, personal communications with agency specialists, and literature reviews will provide the majority of the information for the RMP/EIS. To supplement this information, reconnaissance-level field surveys of Contra Loma will describe current habitat conditions, identify suitable habitat for special-status species, and identify areas in the park that might be restored or enhanced to improve habitat conditions, if needed. Focused surveys are not anticipated at this level, but may be a component of the alternatives or a requirement for subsequent plans or projects.

The information review and surveys will guide alternatives development by identifying plant and wildlife species that should be more actively managed or protected, identifying soils or geologic constraints, providing information on water-quality goals and ways to protect water quality, and providing other useful information to set the framework for overall management of Contra Loma. Public input regarding natural resources from the scoping process will also be considered, and input from technical experts will be valuable.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Socioeconomic conditions include population, demographics, socioeconomics, and environmental justice.

The purpose of the RMP is not to encourage or induce growth in nearby communities, but to manage natural, cultural, and other resources at Contra Loma. The RMP would not remove obstacles to growth in the nearby communities. By its nature, the RMP would not induce growth; therefore, growth-inducing effects will not be discussed further.

Summary of Current Conditions

Contra Costa County, one of nine counties in the San Francisco–Oakland bay area, is a fairly populous county with more than 1 million residents. The City of Antioch is located in eastern Contra Costa County and has more than 100,000 residents. The City offers a variety of employment opportunities, affordable housing, shopping, and recreational activities.

Contra Loma is entirely in the City boundary. Residential developments around Contra Loma are primarily single-family homes with some multi-family homes. Visitors to the reservoir and recreation area include local residents, Bay Area residents, and, to a lesser extent, people traveling from more than 100 miles away. Contra Loma attracts visitors of all ethnicities and backgrounds and often receives non–English-speaking visitors.

Management of the regional park is funded by EBRPD, with partial funding from Reclamation in accordance with the management agreement, and the City of Antioch funds operation of the community park. CCWD funds operation of the reservoir to maintain water quality and use it for water supply and has provided funding for some improvements at the regional park (e.g., the swim lagoon).

Potential Constraints and Opportunities

The following socioeconomic constraint must be considered when developing the RMP. Its relative level of sensitivity is shown in parentheses.

- Some park users may not be able to communicate effectively in English (medium constraint).

The following opportunity for resolving socioeconomic issues should be considered when developing the RMP:

- Increase the use of multi-lingual written and verbal communications techniques.

Approach to Resolving Issues

Few socioeconomic issues are anticipated, but those listed above will be addressed similarly to operational conditions (Section 3.1.3). Reclamation will develop a reasonable range of alternatives that considers the issues and opportunities of each resource topic and takes into account public and agency input.

Existing Land Uses and Management

Existing land uses and management topics include land use, ownership, transportation, parking access, noise, special uses, and visual resources.

No hazardous materials or cleanup sites have been reported at Contra Loma, although several sites are in various stages of cleanup throughout the City of Antioch (Department of Toxic Substances Control 2010). These sites would not be expected to affect management of Contra Loma, and the RMP would not need to address cleanup of hazardous material sites. This topic will not be discussed further.

State Routes 680 and 24 in southeastern Contra Costa County have been officially designated by the State as scenic highways. Both of these routes are on the opposite side of Mount Diablo from Contra Loma and do not offer views of Contra Loma. A segment of State Route 4 in eastern Contra Costa County is eligible for designation, but it is also distant from Contra Loma and does not offer views of the park. The RMP will not need to address management of scenic highways; therefore, this topic will not be discussed further.

Summary of Current Conditions

Contra Loma is owned by Reclamation but is managed by EBRPD, CCWD, and the City of Antioch via a subcontract from EBRPD. It is designated as open space by the City's general plan (City of Antioch 2004). Surrounding uses include residential and open space (Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve and Lone Tree Golf Course). EBRPD adopted a land use development plan for the regional park in the mid-1970s (East Bay Regional Park District 1977). The land use plan established a natural environment unit, recreation cluster, and reclamation zone for purposes of managing the recreation area. Certain special uses, such as group or community events, are allowed with a permit.

Access to Contra Loma is via State Route 4 and surface streets in the City. Contra Loma Boulevard provides the only vehicle entrance to the regional park, and James Donlon Boulevard provides vehicle access to the community park. Multi-use trails in the vicinity connect the reservoir and recreation area to other parks and locales in the City and County. Portions of Contra Loma are fenced, the recreation area and reservoir are open to the public during daylight hours. The area immediately below (north of) the dam is restricted to authorized personnel only. Sources of noise at Contra Loma are primarily visitors, traffic, and occasional airplanes. Natural sounds, such as water, wind, and wildlife, also occur in the area.

The rolling hills and grasslands of the region create scenic views around the reservoir. The reservoir at normal water levels and riparian and woodland vegetation also contribute to the aesthetic values of the area.

Potential Constraints and Opportunities

The following land use constraints should be considered during development of the RMP. The relative level of sensitivity is shown in parentheses.

- Ensure that lighting, noise, traffic, and parking are compatible with nearby land uses (low sensitivity).
- Consider the rural open space character of a regional park (high sensitivity).

The following opportunity for resolving land use issues should be considered when developing the RMP:

- Locating additional ball fields in the land east of the reservoir and south of the existing soccer fields would reduce land use compatibility impacts for nearby residences.

Approach to Resolving Issues

Primary land use and management issues revolve around the agreements between Reclamation and the other agencies. These agreements will be a subject of discussion during development of the RMP/EIS and will need to be renewed or rewritten to meet the needs of the agencies and management strategies and objectives identified in the RMP. Other issues will be addressed similarly to operational conditions (Section 3.1.3). Reclamation will develop a reasonable range of alternatives that considers the issues and opportunities of each resource topic and takes into account public and agency input.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are the tangible and intangible elements of past and present human socio-cultural systems and can include sites, structures, landscapes, objects, districts, and artifacts of importance to a culture or community for traditional, religious, historical, and scientific reasons.

Indian Trust Assets are legal interests in property held in trust by the United States for Indian tribes or individuals. Examples of such assets are land, mineral rights, hunting and fishing rights, and water rights. No Indian Trust Assets are known to exist at Contra Loma; therefore, this topic will not be discussed further.

Summary of Current Conditions

Prehistoric human occupation of California dates back more than 10,000 years during the late Pleistocene Era. The earliest known occupation of the Bay Area region dates from approximately 8,000 BC to circa AD 1800 (the Historic era) and was recorded in the Los Vaqueros reservoir area approximately 11 miles southeast of Contra Loma (Milliken et al. 2007). The Karkin Costanoan (Ohlone) and Bay Miwok occupied the Contra Loma region during this period,

until the Spanish Empire expanded into the region as early as the 1760s to establish missions and convert the local people to Christianity. Several land grants were established by the Spanish during the expansion of the Spanish Empire, and these were maintained by Mexico after the missions were disbanded in the 1820s. Two land grants are in the vicinity of Contra Loma: the Rancho de los Medanos north of Contra Loma in the Antioch and Pittsburg area and the Rancho los Mejanos southeast of Contra Loma (Hulaniski 1917). The ranchos focused primarily on the hide-and-tallow trade and cattle ranching.

With the discovery of gold in the region, the 1850s were a period of rapid settlement of agricultural and industrially important lands in the Bay Area. Towns such as Antioch grew quickly, and the hinterlands around the towns became dominated by ranches and farms. In the last half of the 19th century, the main industries and economic focus of the region in and around Contra Loma were farming, ranching, and dairying (Hulaniski 1917). Several homestead patents in the park were awarded in the 1870s, and evidence of occupation may still exist. Coal mining was an important local industry between the 1860s and the 1890s. Although mining did not occur in the park boundaries, trails and roads through Contra Loma were used for travel between Antioch and the mines (e.g., wagon road, railroad).

Several cultural resource surveys and studies were conducted at Contra Loma between 1983 and 2008. The surveys covered the entire recreation area, but the most recent surveys were completed in the 1980s. Two formally recorded and archived archaeological resources (a prehistoric use site and the Contra Costa Canal) relate to Contra Loma.

The previous surveys were conducted more than 20 years ago, and site conditions since then may have changed to expose more resources or modify the conditions of the recorded sites. If cultural resources have become exposed, the proximity of recreational activities near archaeological deposits can create an atmosphere of casual souvenir taking in which people remove small artifacts (e.g., projectile points, unusual colored rocks or glass, etc.). Also, some of these resources may be in locations where future recreation and infrastructure improvements may be considered. In addition, changes in archaeological techniques and research interests, coupled with the passage of time, might bring academic and public interest to archaeological deposits that were previously overlooked.

Potential Constraints and Opportunities

The following issues and constraints regarding cultural resources should be considered during development of the RMP:

- Protect and enhance cultural resources (sensitivity to be determined).

The following opportunity for resolving cultural resource issues should be considered when developing the RMP:

- Contra Loma’s history offers opportunities for interpretation and education related to cultural resources, such as through interpretive signs or kiosks.
- Interpretive opportunities could be designed around known sites to incorporate information about them while protecting them from the public.
- Natural resources such as plants of importance to local Native American groups could be promoted as areas of interest to the general public through the use of signs, or could be protected and made available for practitioners of traditional tribal practices.

Approach to Resolving Issues

Similar to natural resources, the approach for resolving issues about cultural resources at Contra Loma is to compile and review information on the resources. Because of the age of the most recent surveys, at a minimum, known archaeological sites should be revisited to monitor and record current conditions.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Conclusions

Some of the key issues and opportunities to consider regarding operational conditions are improvements to recreational facilities, expansion of recreational opportunities, and modification of park utility systems. Bilingual communications is an important key issue to consider under socioeconomic conditions, and Contra Loma’s location near the City of Antioch provides an excellent opportunity to attract local and regional residents to the park. Land use and management of Contra Loma will be a primary topic for the RMP/EIS and will focus on the best ways for each agency to manage the resources and benefit the public. Coordination between the agencies will be important during development of the alternatives. Additional public involvement and outreach and collection of additional background information will provide the means necessary to develop alternatives that reflect the various options for management of operational and socioeconomic conditions and land use.

Sensitive habitats, special-status plant and wildlife species, steep slopes, and water quality are key issues to consider for management of the natural resources of Contra Loma. The Contra Loma area has a rich history with potential for the presence of resources dating from 8,000 BC to the Historic Era, and cultural resources have also been documented at Contra Loma. Much information is available about these resources, and known archaeological sites should be revisited to monitor and record current conditions.

Potential Goal Statements

Based on the preliminary issues identified through the public involvement process and this report, the following goal statements might be considered to guide development of the alternatives:

1. Promote responsible stewardship of federal land and water resources for the public benefit.
2. Protect and maintain water quality.
3. Protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources at Contra Loma.
4. Protect and maintain existing recreational uses and educational opportunities.
5. Provide for enhanced or new recreational uses and facilities that are compatible with other RMP goals.
6. Maintain the character and ambience of Contra Loma's setting.
7. Promote continued compatibility with nearby land uses.

Next Steps

On December 8, 2010, Reclamation conducted a conference call with the current managing partners to present conceptual draft alternatives packages for the RMP and solicit comments from these agencies. Written comments from these agencies are due January 7, 2011. Reclamation will consider these comments and then refine the conceptual draft alternatives packages and present them at a public workshop that will take place in February 2011. After the February public workshop, Reclamation and North State Resources will further refine the alternatives and flesh out details and descriptions for inclusion in the Draft RMP. The RMP alternatives will include different strategies and objectives to achieve the management goals and will provide a reasonable range of management opportunities to reflect public and agency input. These alternatives will then be evaluated in the EIS.

Prior to preparation of the Draft RMP, Reclamation will prepare a resource inventory report (RIR). The RIR will provide a detailed description of the resources at Contra Loma and will serve as the affected environment section of the RMP/EIS. While the RIR is being prepared, Reclamation will develop alternatives to evaluate in the RMP/EIS. In addition to the alternatives and affected environment sections, the RMP/EIS will include sections required by Reclamation and the Council on Environmental Quality for compliance with the RMP Guidebook and National Environmental Policy Act. The issues and opportunities presented in this report and identified through additional public

outreach will feed directly into the alternatives and will be summarized in the RMP/EIS. Additional opportunity for public involvement will occur when the Draft RMP/EIS is released for public review and when the RMP/EIS is finalized.

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