DATE: August 7, 2023

TO: Interested Persons

FROM: Jeff Schuette, Senior Environmental Supervisor

RE: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETING FOR THE CACHE CREEK CHANNEL AND LEVEE REHABILITATION PROJECT

COMMENT PERIOD

August 7, 2023 – September 5, 2023

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

Website: water.ca.gov/News/Public-Notices

SCOPING MEETING

In-Person Meeting on August 24, 2023; TIME: 5 p.m.

ADDRESS:
California Agricultural Museum
1958 Hays Lane
Woodland, CA 95776

Trustee and responsible agencies and members of the public are invited to attend and provide input on the scope of the EIR. Written comments regarding relevant issues may be submitted during the meetings.

INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is the Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Cache Creek Channel and Levee Rehabilitation Project (proposed project). The EIR to be prepared by DWR will evaluate potential significant environmental effects of construction of the proposed project. Written comments regarding the issues that should be covered in the EIR, including potential alternatives to the proposed project and the scope of the analysis, are invited.

The EIR for the proposed project is being prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Consistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines section 15082, DWR as lead agency has issued this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform responsible agencies, the public, and trustee agencies of the decision to prepare an EIR. The

purpose of this NOP is to provide information describing the proposed project and its potential environmental effects for those who may wish to comment regarding the scope and content of the information to be included in the EIR. Agencies should comment on such information as it relates to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the project.

The EIR will provide an evaluation of potential environmental impacts associated with development of the proposed project. The proposed project location, description, and environmental issue areas that may be affected by the proposed project are described below. The EIR will evaluate potentially significant environmental impacts of the proposed project, on a direct, indirect, and cumulative basis; identify mitigation measures that may be feasible to lessen or avoid such impacts; and identify alternatives that may lessen one or more potentially significant impacts of the proposed project.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Cache Creek drains an area of approximately 1,139 square miles in Lake, Colusa, and Yolo Counties. Cache Creek is a component of the Sacramento River Flood Control Project (SRFCP), serving as the sole discharge of the Cache Creek drainage basin into the Yolo Bypass. Cache Creek levees provide flood protection to the Town of Yolo, the City of Woodland, and the adjacent agricultural lands. The portion of Cache Creek within the SRFCP includes levees on both banks in the lower reach of the creek and the Cache Creek Settling Basin (CCSB), which was constructed to prevent the discharge of sediment into the Yolo Bypass downstream. Cache Creek's levees were constructed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in the 1960s to provide three feet of freeboard during a design flow of 30,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), a flow approximately equivalent to a 10-year storm event. Following their construction, USACE transferred responsibility of operations and maintenance of the levees to the State (Central Valley Flood Protection Board). Under California Water Code (CWC) section 8361, DWR, on behalf of the State, operates and maintains the levees.

Since then, sediment deposits and thick vegetation have accumulated in Cache Creek, combined with the effects of vertical ground displacement (i.e., subsidence), have reduced the overall flow capacity of the channel. Intermittent floods over several decades have continued to deposit new sediment throughout the channel. Hydraulic evaluation indicates there is a high likelihood that continued vertical displacement in the region contributes to deposition by decreasing the channel slope, which in turn decreases flood flow velocities. Constrictions due to sediment deposition, compounded by thick vegetation growth (woody and invasive) prevalent along the main channel, further reduce capacity to convey the design flood flow.

The reduced capacity in Cache Creek caused water to overtop both levees on February 27, 2019, despite flood flow measuring less than the conditions the levees were designed to contain. Because of the severe freeboard deficiencies on both levees along the project reach, the channel cannot safely contain the original design flows with required freeboard. The flood carrying capacity of Cache Creek must be restored to contain flood flows and protect adjacent communities.

PROJECT LOCATION/SETTING

DWR is proposing to restore the design flood conveyance capacity along an approximately nine-mile-long reach of Cache Creek (referred to as the project reach) by removing sediment along with vegetation and slightly raising levee elevations at selected locations. The project reach is located in unincorporated Yolo County near the Town of Yolo, approximately two miles

north of the City of Woodland and about 4.5 miles west of the Sacramento River, in Yolo County, as shown in Figure 1. The following transportation bridges cross Cache Creek (in order from upstream to downstream): Interstate 5 (I-5) southbound and northbound, County Road 99W, Union Pacific Railroad, State Route (SR) 113, and County Road 102. The upstream end of the project reach is approximately 1.6 miles west of the I-5 bridge. The downstream end of the project reach is at the terminus of a training levee where the channel extends into the CCSB.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the proposed project is to meet DWR's public safety and flood maintenance responsibilities. Objectives include:

- restore the capacity of the Cache Creek channel along the project reach to provide three feet of freeboard during the original design flow of 30,000 cfs;
- implement the goals of the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan by reducing flood risk to local urban and rural areas,
- implement a combination of actions such as sediment removal along with vegetation removal, and raising levees to efficiently and cost effectively restore channel capacity;
- improve levees to not exceed the original design parameters to the extent possible; and
- conduct project activities in a manner that minimizes impacts to riparian habitat and other sensitive biological resources.

PROJECT ELEMENTS

The proposed project would restore the original design flow and freeboard within the leveed area of Cache Creek. Specifically, DWR is proposing to: 1) remove sediment and vegetation from the channel; and, 2) slightly raise existing levee elevations. The overall schedule for construction of the proposed project is anticipated to begin in 2024 and proceed over two years to completion in 2026. Operation and maintenance (O&M) of the Cache Creek channel and flood infrastructure are covered under the existing Environmental Permitting for Operations and Maintenance Project EIR (State Clearinghouse Number (SCH #) 2015052035) that was approved and certified on January 5, 2018. Therefore, O&M will not be included in the analysis of impacts of the proposed project described in this NOP. The proposed project site boundary and elements are described below and are identified on **Figures 2**, **3**, and **4**.

Sediment Removal

DWR proposes to excavate approximately 200,000 cubic yards (cy) of sediment from Cache Creek to help restore the channel's capacity. No fill would be added to the main channel as part of the project. Areas where channel excavation would occur are shown in Figures 3 and 4. The typical depth of cuts would range from approximately 1 to 2 feet for limited removal and between 5 and 30 feet for sections of substantial removal. Typical side slopes on areas of removal would vary, targeting 2:1 slopes. To accommodate sediment removal, DWR would also remove vegetation within the channel at sediment removal locations.

Levee Improvements

DWR proposes to raise some of the levees on the east and west banks of Cache Creek up to 2.5 feet. Typical levee side slopes would be approximately 2:1 on the landside and 3:1 on the waterside. Some impacts to adjacent land may occur where the levee footprint must expand to meet the new height and additional rights-of-way may need to be acquired at these locations.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND SCOPE OF THE EIR

The EIR will analyze potentially significant impacts that could result from construction of the proposed project. Pursuant to section 15063(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, DWR has determined that an EIR is necessary, and an Initial Study has not been prepared for the proposed project. The EIR will evaluate the full range of environmental issues contemplated for consideration under CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, as follows:

- **Aesthetics –** Temporary changes in views or visual character of the creek during construction and potential long-term changes from improvements to the creek and levee system.
- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources –** Potential conflict with agriculture operations near construction activities.
- **Air Quality –** Temporary, short-term increases in pollutant emissions associated with construction activities.
- **Biological Resources –** Short- and long-term effects on terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including riparian habitat, and special-status species.
- **Cultural Resources –** Potential disturbance or destruction of known or unknown historic or archaeological resources during construction.
- **Geology, Soils and Paleontology –** Temporary and short-term increases in erosion during construction and potential disturbance or destruction of known or unknown paleontological resources during construction.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions –** Temporary, short-term increases in greenhouse gas emissions associated with construction activities.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials –** Potential introduction of contaminants into water courses and exposure of construction workers to hazardous materials during construction activities.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality –** Potential short- and long-term transport of sediments and other pollutants into water courses and potential effects on flood conveyance and flood control.
- **Land Use and Planning –** Potential conflicts with land use plans and zoning designations.
- **Noise and Vibration** - Temporary and short-term increases in noise and vibration levels near sensitive receptors during construction.
- **Recreation –** Temporary and short-term disturbance of land-based recreational activities in areas adjacent to construction sites.
- **Transportation –**Temporary and short-term disruption of traffic or emergency access by

haul truck traffic during construction.

- **Tribal Cultural Resources –** Potential disturbance or destruction of known Tribal cultural resources during construction.
- **Utilities and Service Systems –** Temporary and short-term disruption of utilities within construction zones that require removal or relocation.
- **Wildfire –** Temporary, short-term increase in wildfire risk associated with construction activities.
- **Growth Inducement –** Potential for indirect growth inducement from flood protection improvements.
- **Cumulative Impacts –** Potential contribution to cumulative impacts from construction activities.

The following resource topics are not contemplated for evaluation in the EIR due to the determination by DWR that there will be no impacts:

- **Energy –** Project implementation would not include wasteful or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, because it would be required to meet air quality and greenhouse gas criteria that require the use of efficient equipment. The proposed project would be constructed within two field seasons using efficient equipment. Because the proposed project would not change operations and maintenance from existing conditions, it would cause no long-term impacts to energy resources and would not conflict with renewable energy or energy efficiency plans. Consequently, the proposed project would not have the potential to cause a potentially significant impact on energy resources.
- **Mineral Resources –** The project site is designated MRZ-1 in the Yolo County General Plan; an MRZ-1 designation means that adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present on the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the long-term loss of access to regionally or locally important deposits of mineral resources and would not preclude future mineral resource extraction.
- **Population and Housing –** The proposed project does not include housing or commercial development that would directly or indirectly induce population growth. Project construction would occur in an undeveloped area, would not displace people or housing, and would be completed by local construction workers that would not need temporary housing. Consequently, the proposed project would have no impact on population and housing.
- **Public Services –** The proposed project would not require any new or increased public services. Moreover, the proposed project would not affect existing public services. The proposed project would be constructed within flood control easements and undeveloped land that does not have public services that could be adversely affected. Consequently, the proposed project would not have the potential to cause a potentially significant impact on public services.

In addition, the EIR will identify and evaluate alternatives to the proposed project. The No-Project Alternative and at least one other alternative to the proposed project will be evaluated in the EIR in accordance with CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. DWR conducted preliminary evaluations of potential alternatives as part of the preliminary design process to develop the proposed project and is currently identifying feasible alternatives that could reduce at least one potentially significant impact of the proposed project.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS

Comments and suggestions as to the appropriate scope of analysis in the EIR are invited from all interested parties. Written comments or questions concerning the EIR for the proposed project should be directed to DWR at the following address by 5:00 p.m. on September 5, 2023. Please include the commenter's full name and address (verbal comments or questions will not be recorded or accepted into the EIR administrative record).

Mr. Jeff Schuette
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California Department of Water Resources,
Flood Maintenance and Operations Branch (FMO)
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Sacramento, CA 95821
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Figure 1. Cache Creek Regional Location

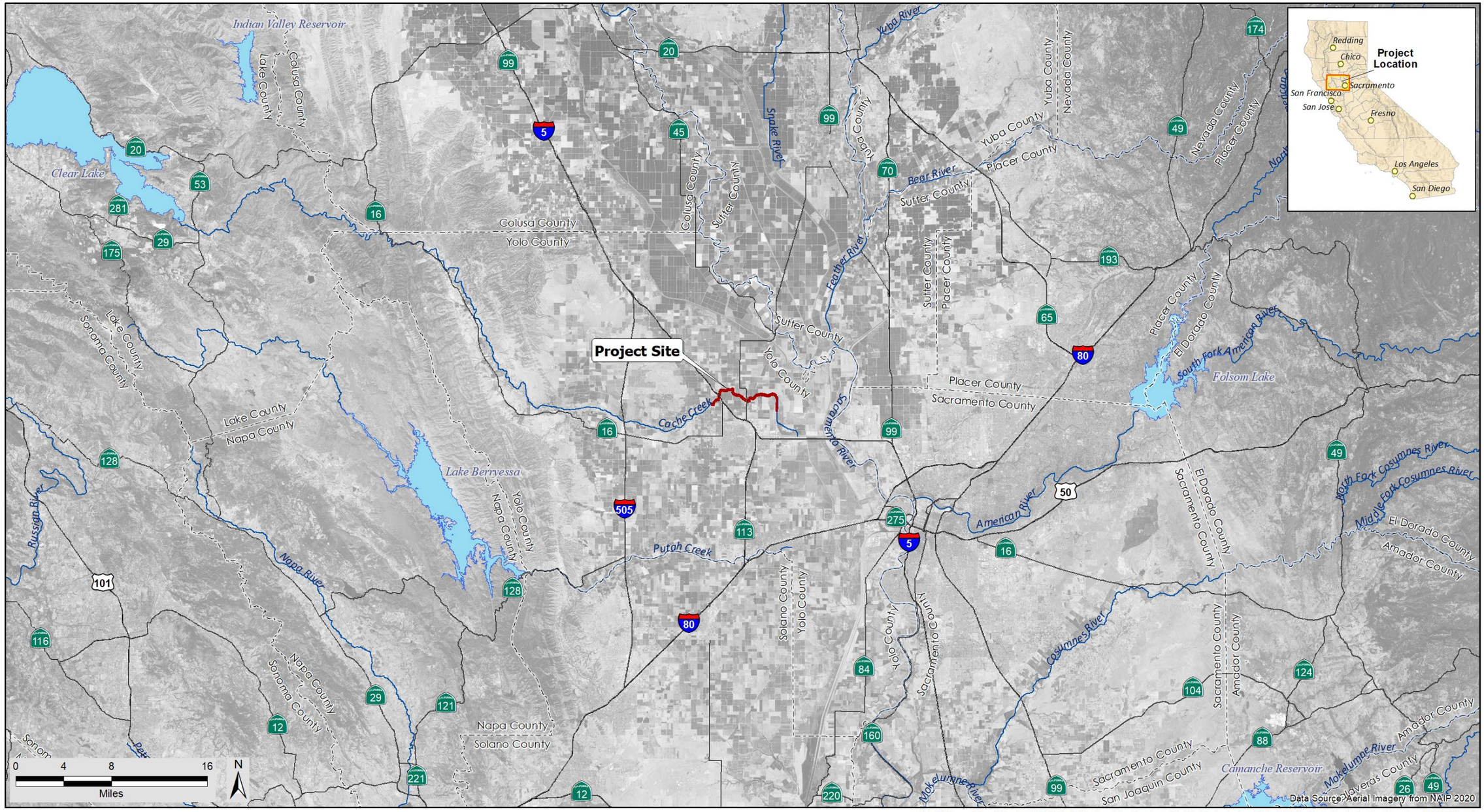

Figure 2. Project Site Overview

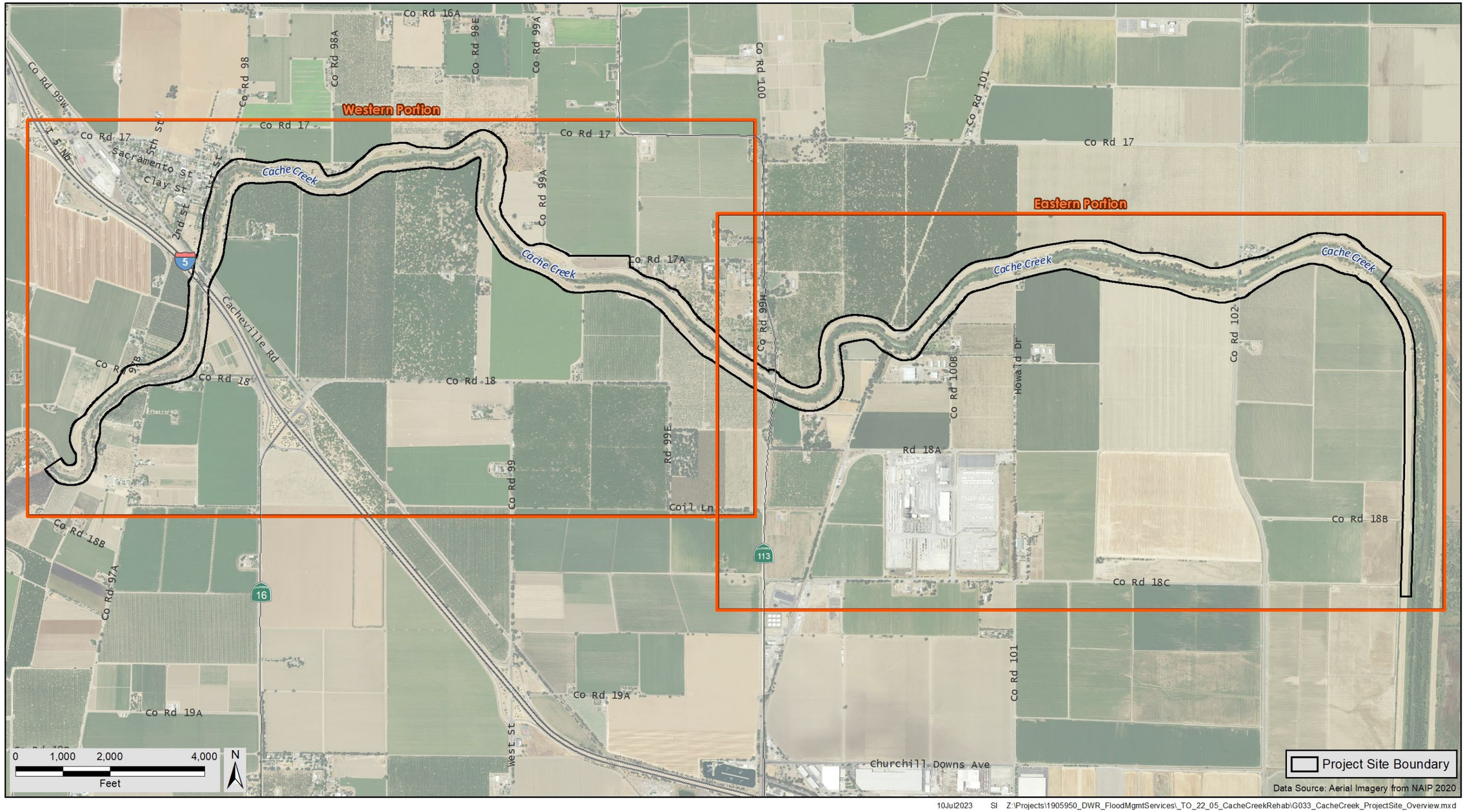

Figure 3. Western Portion of Proposed Project Site

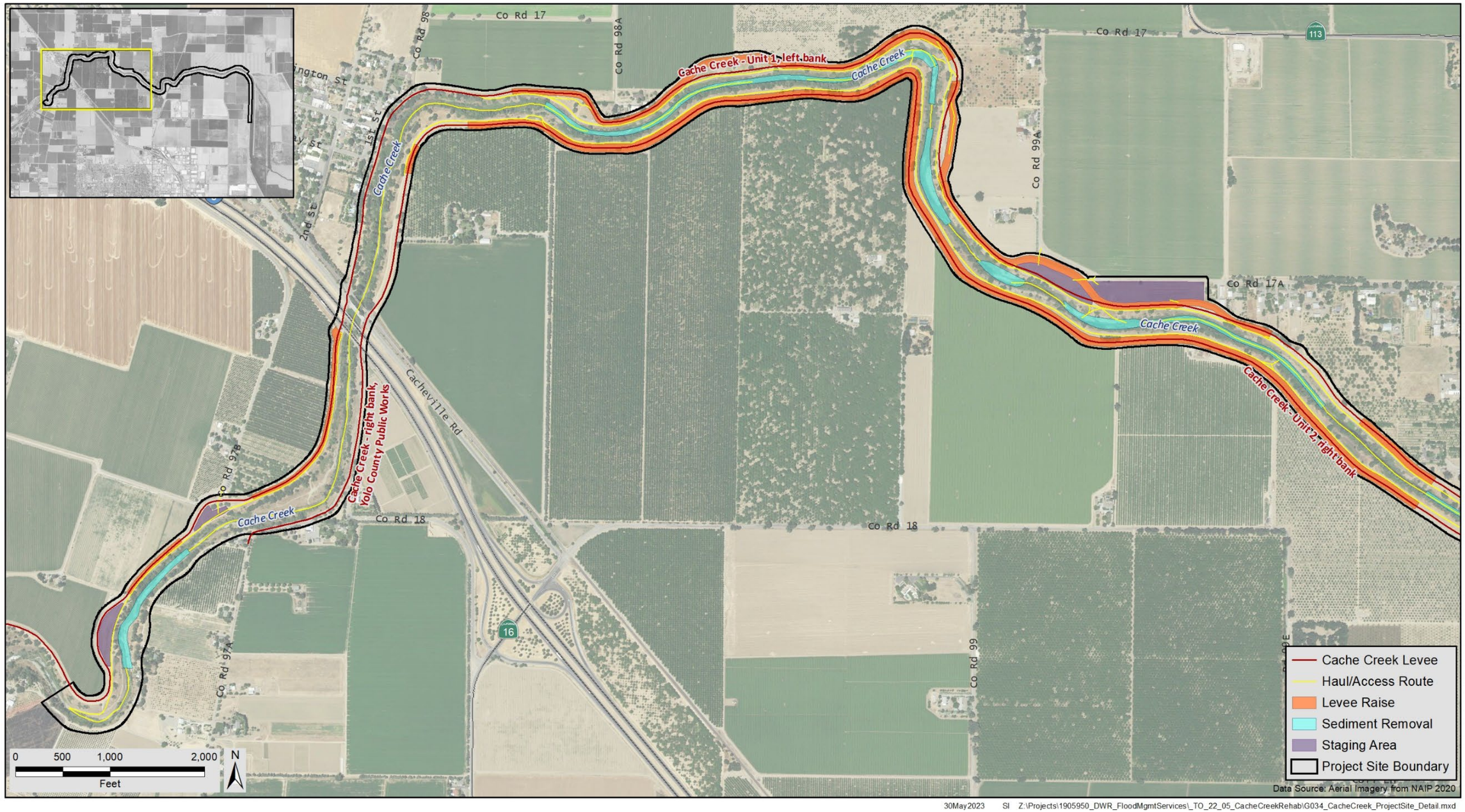

Figure 4. Eastern Portion of Proposed Project Site