



Eureka Flood Reduction and Sea Level Rise Resiliency Project

**Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative
Declaration; SCH # 2023060362**

City of Eureka

August 14, 2023

→ The Power of Commitment



Eureka Flood Reduction and Sea Level Rise Resiliency Project

Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND); SCH #: 2023060362

This document has been prepared for:



City of Eureka, Public Works Department
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August 14, 2023

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Response to Comments and Errata Documentation

This document provides responses to comments received on the 2023 circulated Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND) for the proposed Eureka Flood Reduction and Sea Level Rise Resiliency Project (Project). The ISMND was circulated between June 13, 2023 and July 13, 2023. The ISMND identified the likely environmental consequences associated with the Project, and recommended mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts.

This document, together with the ISMND, constitutes the Final ISMND if the City of Eureka (the City) adopts it as complete and adequate under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

1.2 Environmental Review Process

CEQA requires lead agencies to consult with public agencies having jurisdiction over a proposed project, and to provide the general public and project applicant with an opportunity to comment on the ISMND. This Response to Comments has been prepared to respond to the comments received on the ISMND, including an errata which contains changes to the Project Description and inclusion of updated supporting documents (i.e. Figure 2.3A).

The Notice of Completion and ISMND were filed with the Humboldt County Recorder's Office and the Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse on June 13, 2023, and the ISMND was made available for public review also on June 13, 2023. The Notice of Intent was published in the Times-Standard on June 13, 2023. The review period ended at 5:00 pm on July 13, 2023. The document was made available for review at the following locations: 1) Eureka City Hall, located at 531 K Street, Eureka, California, 95501; and 2) on the City's website. The ISMND was distributed to responsible and trustee agencies via the Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse. The general public was advised of the ISMND through the public notice posted in the Times-Standard and by the County Clerk as required by law.

This ISMND will be provided to the City for their review, and consideration as a full disclosure of potential impacts, and mitigation measures. If the Project is approved, the ISMND will be adopted, and the recommended mitigation measures will be implemented as specified in the City's resolution and an accompanying Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

The additions made in this Response to Comment and Errata of the ISMND do not constitute "significant new information" requiring recirculation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21092.1 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15073.5(c)(4). The Final ISMND merely clarifies, amplifies, and makes insignificant modifications to the adequate ISMND, per CEQA Guidelines Section 15073.5.

1.3 CEQA Requirements

The Response to Comment is organized into the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction. This chapter discusses the use and organization of this Final ISMND, and environmental review process.
- Chapter 2 – Comments and Responses. This chapter includes the names of agencies and individuals who commented on the ISMND and responses to those comments. The response to each comment are keyed to the comments which precede them.
- Chapter 3 – Errata. This chapter includes proposed minor changes to portions of the ISMND, including appendices. Proposed changes to the ISMND and appendices are presented in errata format, which includes

excerpts of original text from the ISMND with text proposed for deletion marked with strike through (~~example~~), and text proposed for insertion in bold underline (**example**).

2. Comments and Responses

2.1 Comments Received

During the public comment period for the ISMND, the City received one comment letter which included nine comments on the ISMND. The comment letter was received from Jesse Robertson of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) on June 30, 2023. The unmarked comment letter is included as Appendix A to this document.

Comment Letter – Caltrans

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 1
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June 30, 2023

1-HUM-101-77.24
Eureka Flood Reduction Project
SCH# 2023060362

Mr. Jesse Willor, P.E.
Public Works Department
City of Eureka
531 K Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Mr. Willor:

Thank you for giving Caltrans the opportunity to review and comment on the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the proposed Eureka Flood Reduction and Sea Level Rise Resiliency Project. The project proposes to reduce flooding, increase sea level rise resiliency, and improve water quality in Humboldt Bay. The Project would increase the storage capacity and conveyance of the storm drain network, implement flow attenuation and water quality improvements, reduce trash conveyance into waterways, and enhance tidal circulation to provide flood reduction and sea level rise resiliency. A portion of the project is located within State right-of-way, at the intersection of Del Norte Street and US 101, for the stormwater pipe replacement between B Street and the Eureka Waterfront Trail. We have the following comments:

Little information has been provided about the proposed work within State right of way. We have concerns about the potential impacts to US 101 from the construction methods for replacing a 60-inch stormwater pipe under US Route 101 at Del Norte Street, due in part to conflicts with other existing utilities at that location. Directional boring would require large sending and receiving jacking pits that would require a detailed traffic control plan prior to approval. Ground settlement monitoring is likely to be recommended with jacking and boring as well. We also request to review the proposed methods for resurfacing and/or restoring US 101 to State standards once the stormwater pipe has been replaced. These issues will need to be resolved with the District Permits staff before an encroachment application is submitted.

#1
#2
#3
#4
#5

The City's Flood Reduction project overlaps with the location of the Caltrans proposed Koster Couplet and Middle Couplet projects currently in development. Proposed underground work, particular vaults and other features with surface developments must be coordinated with Caltrans engineering staff to ensure elevations allow for

#6
#7

"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment"

Mr. Jesse Willor, P.E.
6/30/2023
Page 2

present and future roadwork compatibility. There are two locations on Koster and one at Washington Street which may be a concern. Future curbs planned for those areas will also have associated drainage structure and grades.

#8

As noted in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, any work within Caltrans Right-of-Way will require an Encroachment Permit from Caltrans. Permit applications are reviewed for consistency with State standards and are subject to Department approval. To streamline the Encroachment Permit application and review process, we require the applicant to consult with Caltrans Permits staff prior to submittal. Requests for Encroachment Permit applications can be sent to: Caltrans District 1 Permits Office, P.O. Box 3700, Eureka, CA 95502-3700, or requested by phone at (707) 498-5684. For additional information, the Caltrans Encroachment Permit Manual and Standard Application is available online at: <<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep>>.

#9

Please contact me with questions or for further assistance at (707) 684-6879, or by email at: <jesse.robertson@dot.ca.gov>.

Sincerely,

Jesse G. Robertson

Jesse Robertson
Transportation Planning
Caltrans District 1

e-copy: State Clearinghouse
Heidi Quintrell, Chief, Caltrans District 1 Encroachment Permits

2.2 Response to Comment

Response to Comment #1

It is noted that Caltrans has concerns about the potential impacts to US 101 from the construction methods for installing a 60-inch stormwater pipe under US Route 101 at Del Norte Street, due in part to potential conflicts with other existing utilities at that location. To avoid potential conflicts with existing utilities, the City will identify utility location and elevation by “pot-hole” prior to construction and will accommodate in the Project plans. The portion of the Project within the Caltrans right-of-way will be constructed to state highway standards. The 60-inch stormwater pipe will be installed using trenchless installation, or an open trench, or a combination of both. Installation methods will be detailed in the Project plans and submitted to Caltrans to review prior to submission of the Encroachment Permit application.

Response to Comment #2

It is noted that the use of directional boring methodologies would require large sending and receiving jacking pits that would require a detailed traffic control plan prior to approval. The City is expecting to implement a standard Caltrans-approved traffic control plan as mentioned in Section 1.10.2 of the ISMND (page 1-19). The potential requirement for a detailed traffic control plan will be discussed further with Caltrans prior to submittal of the Caltrans Encroachment Permit application.

Response to Comment #3

It is noted that ground settlement monitoring is likely to be recommended by Caltrans if jacking and boring methods are implemented. The City will discuss this potential requirement with Caltrans to reach agreement on the specifications prior to submittal of the Caltrans Encroachment Permit application.

Response to Comment #4

It is noted that Caltrans requests to review the proposed methods for resurfacing and/or restoring US 101 to State standards once the stormwater pipe has been replaced. The City will provide said methods prior to submittal of the Caltrans Encroachment Permit application.

Response to Comment #5

It is noted that Caltrans requests these issues be resolved with Caltrans District Permits staff before an encroachment permit application is submitted. The City will begin dialogue with Caltrans District Permits staff to discuss Caltrans' concerns mentioned in comments #1 through #5.

Response to Comment #6

It is noted that the City's Project overlaps with the location of two Caltrans projects that are currently in development: Koster Couplet and Middle Couplet, which is noted on page 3-74 of the ISMND.

Response to Comment #7

It is noted that coordination with Caltrans engineering staff is requested for the proposed underground work (including particular vaults) with surface developments with respect to elevations and allowance for present and future roadwork compatibility. The City will coordinate with Caltrans engineering staff regarding the compatibility of elevations with future Caltrans roadwork.

Response to Comment #8

It is noted that there are two locations on Koster Street, and one at Washington Street which may be a concern to Caltrans due to future curbs planned for those areas which will also have associated drainage structure and grades. The City will communicate with Caltrans engineering staff regarding compatibility of the projects.

Response to Comment #9

The City plans to acquire a Caltrans encroachment permit for all work occurring in the Caltrans right-of-way, and plans to consult with Caltrans Permits staff prior to submittal.

2.3 Summary of Responses

The portion of the Project within the Caltrans right-of-way will be constructed to meet state highway standards. The 60-inch stormwater pipe will be installed using trenchless installation, or an open trench, or a combination of both. Installation methods will be detailed in the Project plans and submitted to Caltrans to review prior to submission of the Encroachment Permit application. In summary, the City will consult with Caltrans District Permits staff prior to submittal of the Caltrans Encroachment Permit application regarding the location of existing utilities, traffic control plan(s), ground settlement monitoring, and proposed methods for resurfacing and/or restoring US 101 to State standards following stormwater pipe placement. City staff will also coordinate with Caltrans engineering staff regarding the compatibility between the proposed Project and Caltrans' Koster Couplet and Middle Couplet projects.

3. Errata

The purpose of this errata is to document minor modifications to the ISMND, and appendices of the ISMND, since it was submitted to the Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse on June 13, 2023, and publicly circulated between June 13, 2023 and July 13, 2023. The following Project details and documents are addressed in this errata, as shown in Table 3-1, below. Text changes include additional detail on the location of proposed placement of excavated fill within subsided portions of Palco Marsh to restore salt marsh elevations. Initially the ISMND did not identify specific areas for excavated fill placement, rather it was assumed that fill would be placed within areas of subsidence which occur within and outside of the Project Area. To remedy this lack of clarity, Figure 2.3 (provided in Appendix A of the ISMND) has been updated to depict areas where excavated fill may be placed and is labeled as Figure 2.3A and included in Appendix B of this Final ISMND. This area is considered a component of the Project and all details on Project construction remain the same, (i.e. dewatering would still occur in tandem with the low tide and aquatic surveys would occur prior to any construction activity including fill placement).

The errata includes excerpts of text from the ISMND that are proposed for modification, and does not include the entire ISMND. Specifically, the entire subsection that contains the text proposed for modification is copied into the errata, and newly proposed text in the errata is underlined, deleted text from the original ISMND is stricken, and unchanged text remains in normal font. Only the subsections of the original ISMND that are proposed for modification are copied into the errata, subsections that do not contain proposed changes are not copied into the errata.

Table 3-1. ISMND Text modified in Errata

Section/Page number of ISMND	Topic of Proposed Changes
1.8 – Palco Marsh (pg. 1-12)	Area of placement of excavated soils for beneficial reuse
1.10.2 – Construction Activities and Equipment (pg. 1-18)	Mention of placement of excavated soils for beneficial reuse
3.1 – Aesthetics (pg. 3-3)	Mention of placement of excavated soils for beneficial reuse
3.4 – Biological Resources (pg. 3-12)	Mention of placement of excavated soils for beneficial reuse
3.4 – Biological Resources (pg. 3-21)	Mention of placement of excavated soils for beneficial reuse
3.11 – Land Use and Planning (pg. 3-56)	Mention of placement of excavated soils for beneficial reuse

1.8 Palco Marsh

Activities within Palco Marsh include replacing the existing outfall structure with a new structure that contains a TCD and tide gate; excavation of approximately 350 feet of new channel in the northern extent of Palco Marsh to between elevation 2 ft to 2.5 ft; excavation of a tidal pond with a sill at Mean Tide Level (MTL) in an existing low elevation area; deepening 800 feet of existing channel ranging in flow line elevation 3 ft to 5 ft to a range of 1.5 ft to 2 ft; and placement of excavated soils in Palco Marsh in locations that have subsided and no longer exhibit marsh habitat **in order to restore salt marsh elevations** (see ~~Figure 2.3~~ **Figure 2.3A**). The existing outfall structure will be removed and disposed. The existing stormdrain pipes from the existing structure to the channel between Palco Marsh and Del Norte Street Park no longer functions without routine excavation of the channel to remove accumulated sediment. These discharge pipes and outfall will either be removed and backfilled or abandoned in place.

1.10.2 Construction Activities and Equipment

All construction activities would be accompanied by both temporary and permanent erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs). Project construction would include the following activities:

- Jackhammering – Site preparation/removal of existing sidewalk concrete material.
- Trenching – To create access to stormwater pipe alignments to be replaced.
- Placement of imported and native fill and compaction – within trenches and under structures, **and within subsided areas of Palco Marsh to restore salt marsh elevations.**
- Clearing, grubbing – To prepare LID installation areas.
- Installation of new piping, LID and tide gates.
- Excavation – Channel excavation and culvert installations within Palco Marsh.
- Grading and paving – Atop and within disturbed segments of street and sidewalk, where pipe, LID and/or tidegate installations occurred.
- Installation of RSP – Near the culvert outfalls to Humboldt Bay, Palco Marsh and Clark Slough.
- Hauling – Transport of material to and from the Project Area.
- Staging of excavated material and sampling - contaminant characterization and proper disposal identification
- Storage, sampling and treatment of groundwater - contaminant characterization and proper disposal identification
- Pumping and disposal of water – Within excavations

- Horizontal Direction Drilling and or Horizontal Auger Boring – installation and relocation of pipes

3.1 Aesthetics (pg. 3-3)

Palco Marsh enhancement activities include channel excavation, channel enhancements, **placement of excavated soils throughout areas of Palco Marsh that have subsided to restore salt marsh elevations (as shown in Figure 2-3A)**, and replacement of an existing outfall pipe and headwalls into Humboldt Bay with two parallel 4-by-4-foot box culverts with vertically adjustable tide gates and new concrete headwalls, wingwalls and aprons constructed on each side or maintain a similar configuration as existing by expanding the inverted siphon and crossing with additional pipes to avoid utility conflicts. The culverts would be located mostly subsurface, with minimal visibility of the headwalls, wingwalls and aprons above ground (similar to current conditions). The inverted siphon would also look similar to existing conditions. Channel excavation and enhancements would be consistent with the existing natural and open space aesthetic of Palco Marsh. The culverts and tide gates would have a low profile and would not obstruct views to or from Humboldt Bay or the waterfront trail. Palco Marsh is zoned Natural Resources (NR), and the proposed Project work at Palco Marsh would not conflict with this zoning designation.

3.4 Biological Resources (pg. 3-12)

In general, Project activities would be localized and temporary and are not expected to result in any long term or significant impacts to sensitive biological resources with mitigation incorporated. The construction of the Project is anticipated to impact aquatic resources, Northern Red-legged Frogs, and migratory birds via the following activities: clearing and grubbing, placement of fill (**including in areas of subsidence throughout Palco Marsh to restore salt marsh elevations as shown in Figure 2.3A, and for** installation of a new outfall within the tidal channel, and installation of new pipes associated with an existing outfall in the tidal channel), temporary dewatering to accommodate work in the Humboldt Bay tidal inlet, Palco Marsh, and (if not dry) within Clark Slough, and the potential need to relocate fish in the channel in association with dewatering. Identified special-status plants would be avoided. These anticipated construction-related impacts are discussed below.

3.4 Biological Resources (pg. 3-21)

Prior to anthropogenic modifications, Palco Marsh was part of a larger salt marsh network along the Humboldt Bay shoreline. With the construction of the railroad, the marsh area was disconnected from Humboldt Bay tidal sediment sources (Exhibit 3-3). Salt Marsh elevations are typically coincident with a small range above and below Mean Higher High Water (MHHW). MHHW at the open tidal location of the Palco Marsh to Humboldt Bay crossing is 6.5 ft (NAVD 88). Salt marsh areas of Palco Marsh typically exhibit an elevation between 5 and 6 feet (NAVD 88) suggesting land subsidence and lack of mineral sediment deposition (Exhibit 3-4). Several areas of the historical marsh plain within Palco Marsh have transitioned from salt marsh to mudflat due to the compounding effects from land subsidence and lack of sediment supply to maintain marsh elevations. Cascadia Geosciences documented that the Humboldt Bay area, including Palco Marsh, is subsiding due to plate tectonics (Cascadia GeoSciences, 2017). USGS conducted a study of Humboldt Bay salt marshes noting that increases to sediment supply, as a result of climate projections of increased precipitation and streamflow may partially or wholly mitigate sediment demand caused by the combined effects of subsidence and sea level rise (USGS, 2021). However, historic isolation of Palco Marsh and limited tidal exchange through the existing crossing does not provide equivalent availability of sediment compared to salt marshes experiencing the full tidal range in Humboldt Bay. Therefore Palco Marsh is not anticipated to receive the amount of sediment to counteract tectonic subsidence. This phenomenon would occur independent of the Project, however placement of excavated materials within the **beneficial fill placement area and** Project footprint (**see Figure 2.3A)** would slow this transition (described below).

As sea levels rise, the tidal range within Humboldt Bay and Palco Marsh will shift up in elevation, increasing the duration of inundation on the marsh plain. Without adequate sediment supply or intervention, salt marshes

risk converting to mudflat. Excavated soils from the proposed channel would be placed in areas within Palco Marsh that were historically salt marsh and have transitioned to mudflat or would be used to increase the elevation of lower elevation salt marsh to prolong the life of the salt marsh habitat with additional sea level rise **(see Figure 2.3A).**

Replacement of the existing crossing from Palco Marsh to Humboldt Bay would provide additional hydraulic control to manage Palco Marsh for salt marsh habitat. Additionally, in the absence of available sediment accretion on the marsh, the crossing has the ability to be adjusted to maintain current water levels under future sea level rise conditions. Future sea level rise retreat strategies, such as expansion of tidal marsh habitat adjacent to Palco Marsh, would require increased tidal conveyance at the crossing to provide adequate hydraulics, which would be achieved with the proposed crossing structure and adjustments to the tide gate elevations. Therefore, the proposed Project is aiding in future sea level rise adaptation planning.

3.11 Land Use and Planning (pg. 3-56)

Temporary wetland disturbance would occur at one location, the Palco Marsh, for channel excavation, installation of the TCD and tide gate, ~~and~~ installation of replacement culverts, **and placement of excavated fill in subsided areas of Palco Marsh to restore salt marsh elevations as shown in Figure 2.3A.**

Agencies that regulate the filling of wetlands and waters include the USACE and the NCRWQCB, and the CCC (when in the Coastal zone). Since the proposed Project would affect USACE, NCRWQCB and CCC jurisdictional wetlands, the City would obtain the necessary permits to comply with respective regulations including Clean Water Act Section 404 permit, Section 401 water quality certification and a Coastal Development Permit. Additionally, some construction would occur within the State right-of-way along US 101 and therefore the City would also acquire an Encroachment Permit from Caltrans and adhere to associated requirements.

Appendices

Appendix A

ISMND Comment Letter from Caltrans

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 1
P.O. BOX 3700 | EUREKA, CA 95502-3700
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www.dot.ca.gov



June 30, 2023

1-HUM-101-77.24
Eureka Flood Reduction Project
SCH# 2023060362

Mr. Jesse Willor, P.E.
Public Works Department
City of Eureka
531 K Street
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Dear Mr. Willor:

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The City's Flood Reduction project overlaps with the location of the Caltrans proposed Koster Couplet and Middle Couplet projects currently in development. Proposed underground work, particular vaults and other features with surface developments must be coordinated with Caltrans engineering staff to ensure elevations allow for

Mr. Jesse Willor, P.E.

6/30/2023

Page 2

present and future roadwork compatibility. There are two locations on Koster and one at Washington Street which may be a concern. Future curbs planned for those areas will also have associated drainage structure and grades.

As noted in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, any work within Caltrans Right-of-Way will require an Encroachment Permit from Caltrans. Permit applications are reviewed for consistency with State standards and are subject to Department approval. To streamline the Encroachment Permit application and review process, we require the applicant to consult with Caltrans Permits staff prior to submittal. Requests for Encroachment Permit applications can be sent to: Caltrans District 1 Permits Office, P.O. Box 3700, Eureka, CA 95502-3700, or requested by phone at (707) 498-5684. For additional information, the Caltrans Encroachment Permit Manual and Standard Application is available online at: <<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep>>.

Please contact me with questions or for further assistance at (707) 684-6879, or by email at: <jesse.robertson@dot.ca.gov>.

Sincerely,

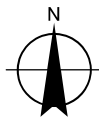
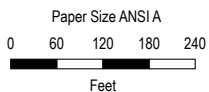
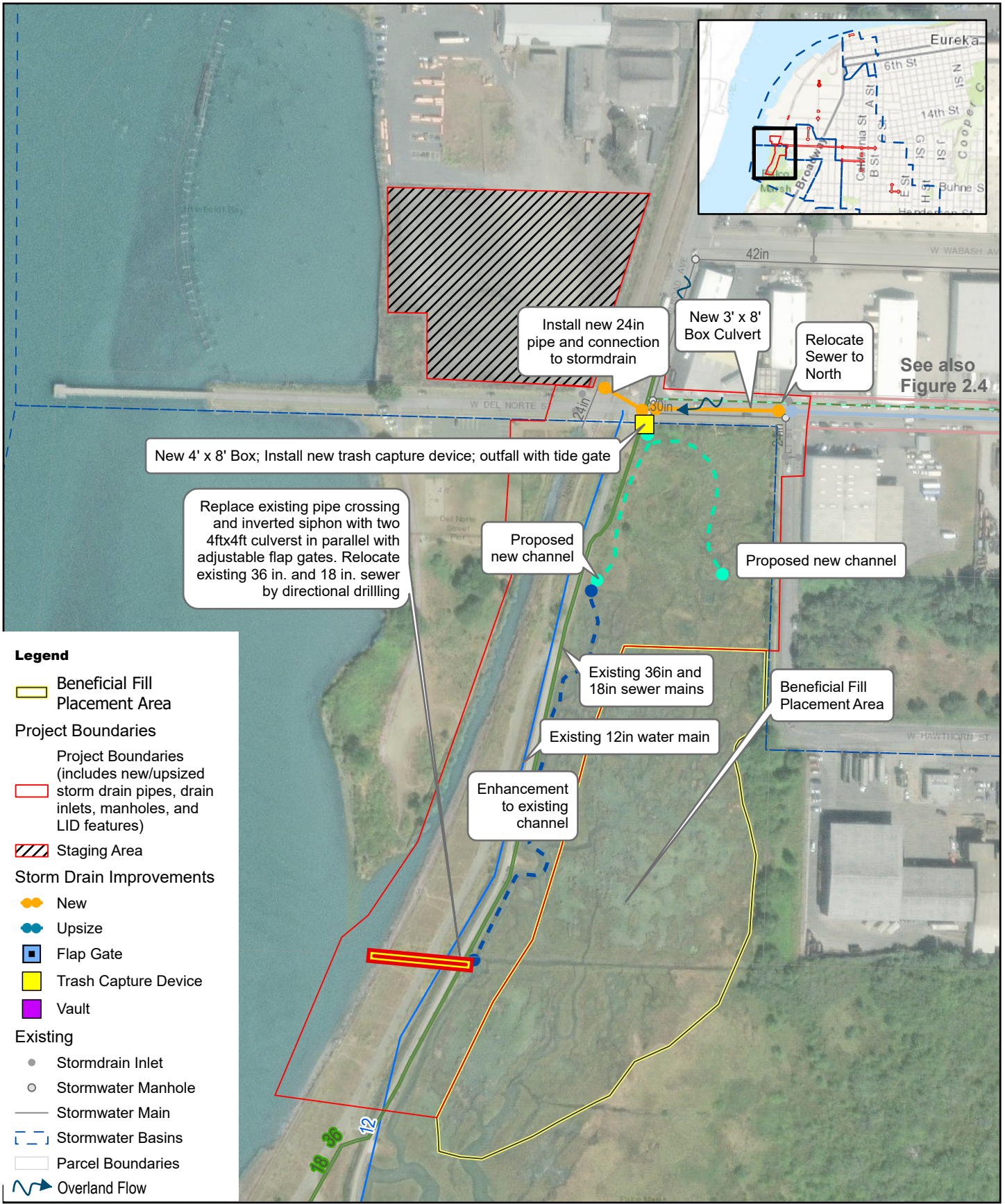
Jesse G. Robertson

Jesse Robertson
Transportation Planning
Caltrans District 1

e-copy: State Clearinghouse
Heidi Quintrell, Chief, Caltrans District 1 Encroachment Permits

Appendix B

Updated Figure



City of Eureka
Flood Reduction and
Sea Level Rise Resiliency Project

Project No. 12566459
Revision No. A
Date Aug 2023

Project Concept
Railroad Region & Staging Area

FIGURE 2.3 A