

Owens River Water Trail Final EIR Overview & Board Recommendation

Inyo County Water Commission
CEQA Adequacy Review



What the Commission Is Being Asked to Do



Assess the adequacy
of the FEIR under
CEQA



Determine whether
environmental impacts
are fully disclosed



Recommend
certification of the EIR
and adoption of
mitigation measures



Quick Project Overview

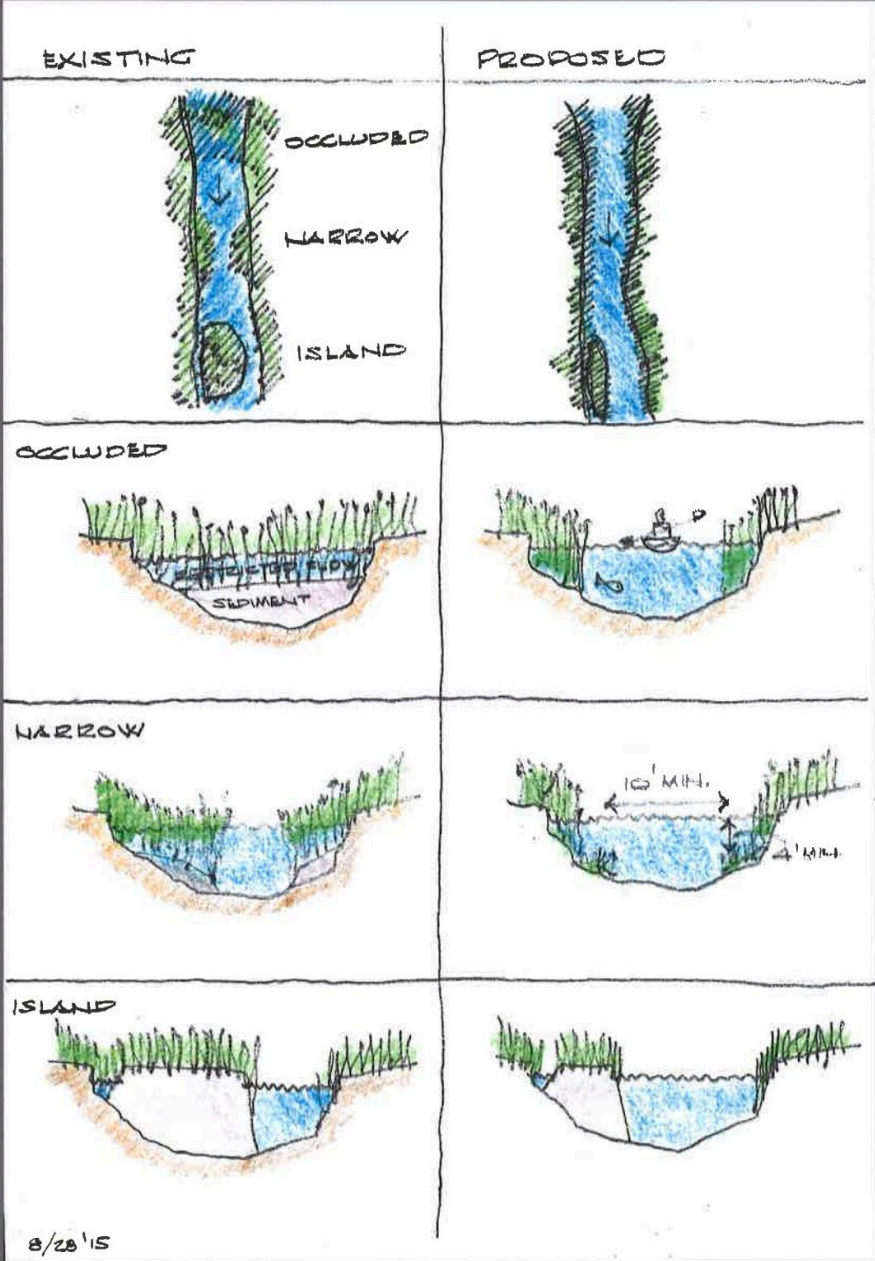
6.3-mile non-motorized water trail on the Lower Owens River for kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards

Establish designate all-abilities launch and take-out locations

Clear river of emergent vegetation blockages to open river to boats access



CHANNEL IMPROVEMENTS

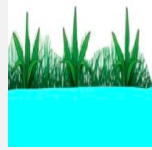


8/28/15





What Gets Built



Selective in-channel
vegetation clearing



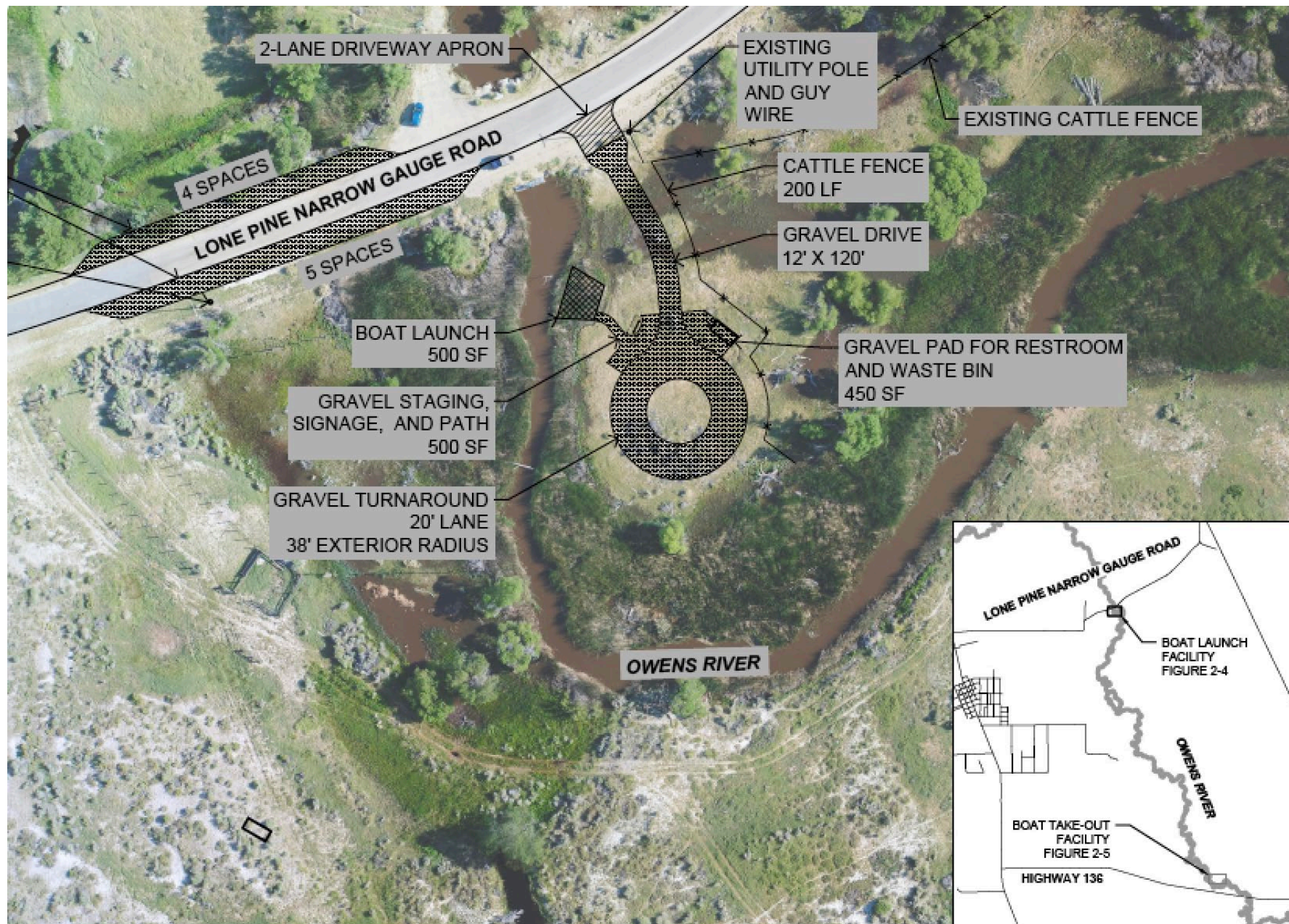
Removal of localized
obstructions

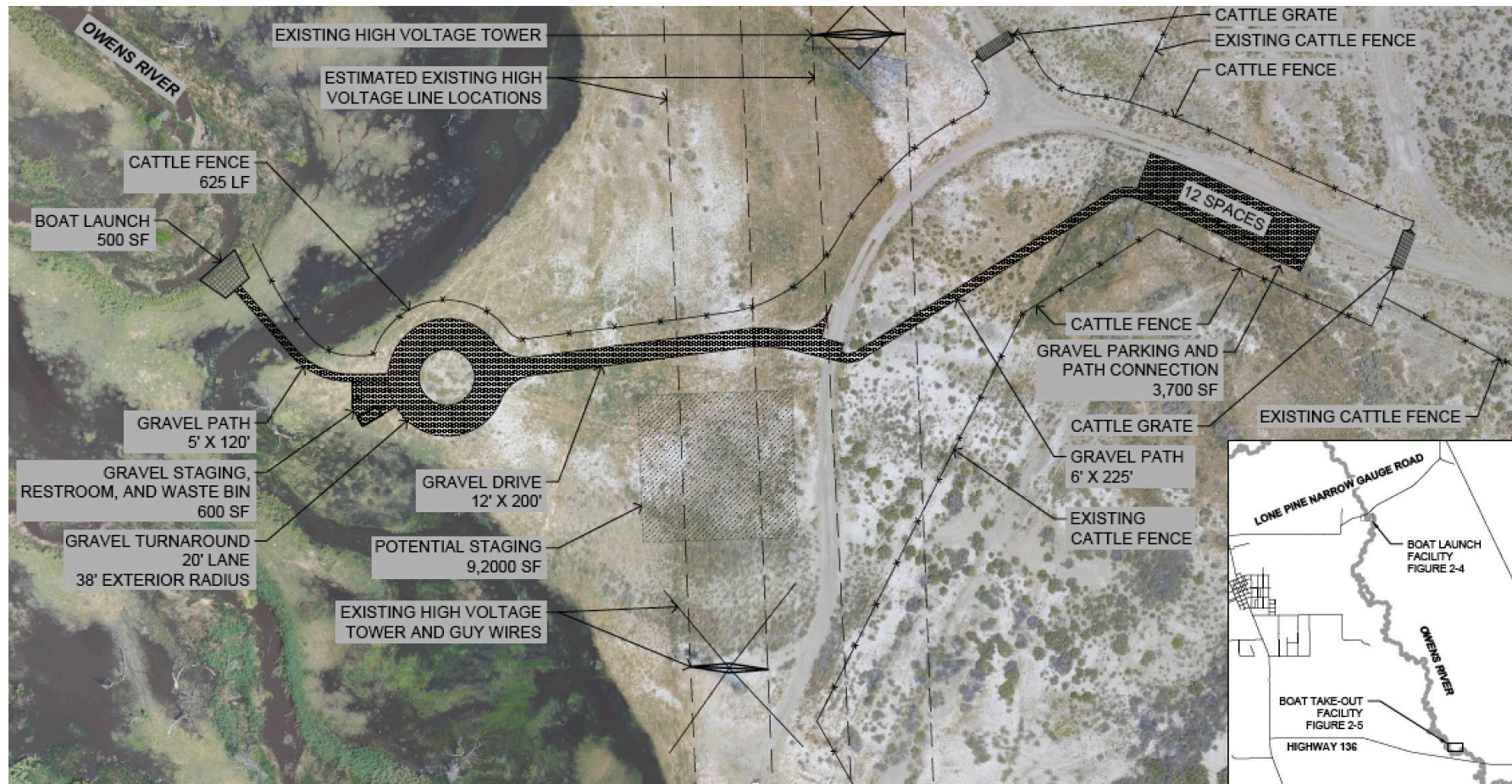


Two ADA-oriented
launch/take-out facilities



Signage, safety markers,
wildlife-proof trash, and
vault restroom





BACKGROUND AERIAL SOURCE: INYO COUNTY
INUNDATION: 190 CFS ON JULY 7, 2017

NATURAL-SURFACE LAUNCH DESIGN

Launch construction with natural soil surfaces works best with fine mineral soils, including clays and loams. Natural bedrock outcroppings can also act as highly functional launch sites. Grashed stone is used when subsoils are unstable. Blended launches and tanks with existing topography as much as possible to minimize stream impact and construction costs (Figure 3A-C).

The type of launch construction can lend itself to volunteer efforts, increasing the sense of local ownership of the water trail. However, volunteer projects require the same level of design and planning by qualified professionals as other launch designs. Construction without appropriate professional guidance can quickly cause stream and riparian damage. Failed volunteer construction projects can also be problematic in terms of maintaining future interest and involvement in the water trail.

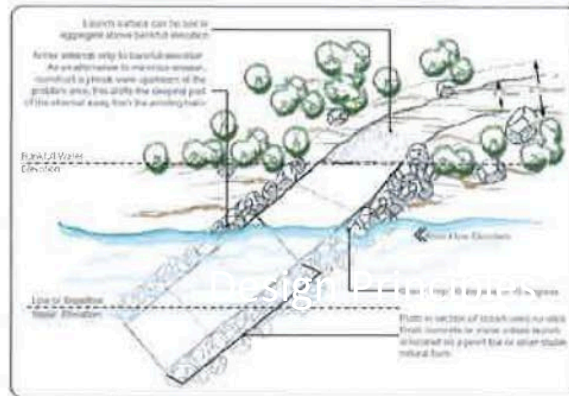


Figure 3A-6.
Neutral-Surfacing Launch Design

This slope or steepness depends on existing topography. In general, the greater the slope, the more likely it is to cause erosion. Erosion can be significantly reduced by constructing trails that traverse slopes, rather than run down them. Low-slope segments are also kinder than steep trails for water trail users.

- Parking-to-lands trail maximum slope should be 10 percent to the extent possible
- Portage trail maximum slope should be 12.5 percent to the extent possible
- Maximum trail cross slope should be 2 percent to the extent possible

Most trails, even those with low slopes, change surface drainage and have the potential to cause soil erosion. Eroded soil is one of the most common water pollutants in snow. With no trail design because of the probability of a subsiding or sink, some design alternatives minimize the damage. Avoid using trail design because they concentrate stormwater and form ponds. Use hard-surface crossings for small drainage areas or small aboveground structures for larger volumes as alternatives. Establishing dense vegetation on the slope of trails is advised because it slows and decreases stormwater runoff. Use increased stormwater infiltration. Minimize the length of trail that drains to a specific low point, known as a dip (Figure 3C-1).

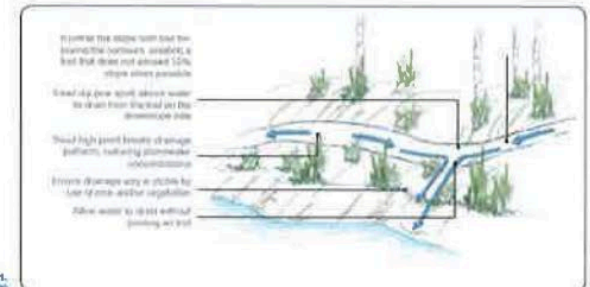


Figure 3C-1.

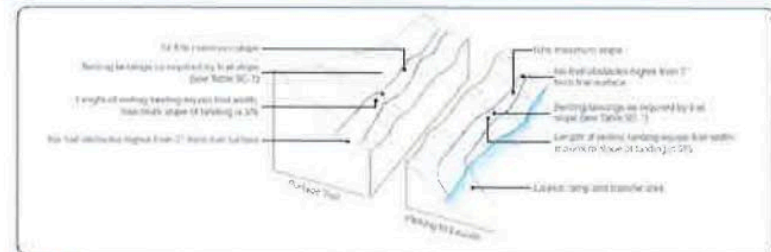


Figure 30-4
Acquisition ARA Successes by Year Ended

Water trail developers are encouraged to design and construct trails to meet Accessible ADA standards. Differences between accessible and non-accessible trails include slope, resting intervals, trail width, and height of protrusions. Figures 30-4 and 30-5 illustrate trail elements designed to meet ADA standards for accessible design.

Required resting intervals are a notable difference between accessible and non-accessible trail design. Resting intervals are mini-level surfaces placed at varying distances inward on trail rings (Table 3C-1). On older trail networks designed to meet universal design standards, a hard-surface staging area is required adjacent to either the accessible parking stalls or the loading lane (Figure 3C-4).

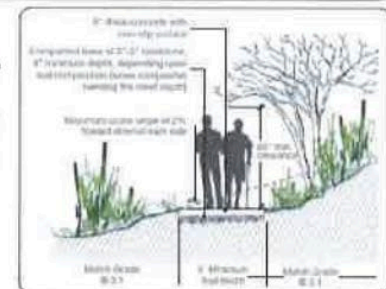


Figure 3C-6.
Typical Accessory ADA Trim

Design Principles



Operations and Maintenance



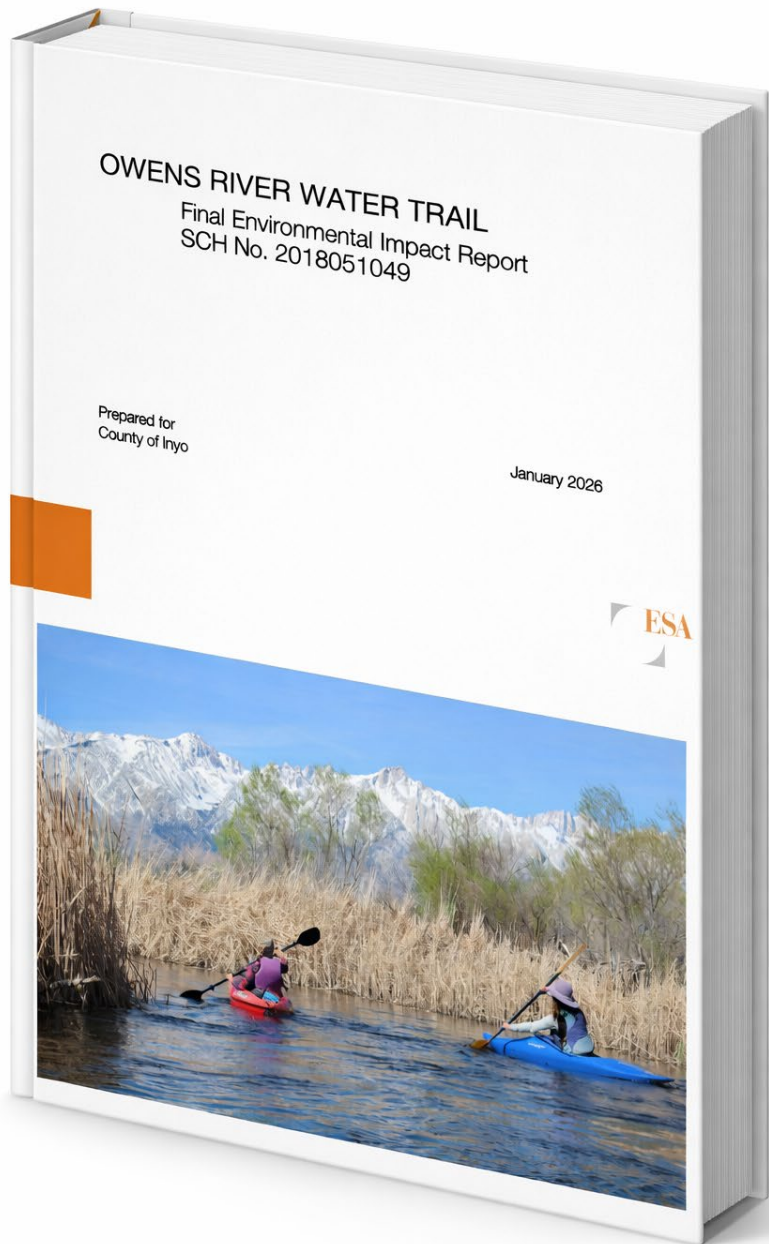
- Seasonal vegetation cutting only



- No routine excavation of riverbed



- Maintenance intensity declines over time



Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 2

Comments and Responses

Chapter 3

Modifications to the DEIR

Chapter 4

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Appendix G

Biological Resources Technical Report

CEQA Process and Public Review



NOTICE OF
PREPARATION
AND PUBLIC
SCOPING

May 24, 2018 -
June 25, 2018



DRAFT EIR
CIRCULATED
FOR
COMMENT

May 8, 2019 -
June 21, 2019



30 COMMENT
LETTERS
RECEIVED



FINAL EIR
INCLUDES
RESPONSES
AND
REVISIONS

Key Areas of Focus in the EIR



Biological resources
and wetlands



Hydrology and
water quality



Cultural and
paleontological
resources



Recreation and
ranching compatibility

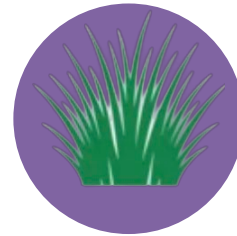
Biological Resources and Mitigation



PRE-CONSTRUCTION
SURVEYS



WORK
WINDOWS TO
AVOID SENSITIVE
PERIODS



REVEGETATION
AND RECOVERY
MONITORING



ADAPTIVE
MANAGEMENT
IF RECOVERY
FAILS

Construction Methods and Spoils

Emergent vegetation removed to
restore navigable channel



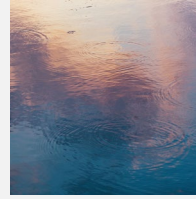
Excavated material thin-spread in
designated areas to compost



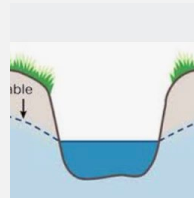
Spoils areas monitored for recovery



Hydrology



Analysis assumes
conservative
surface-water
modeling



Multiple data
sources show a
gaining river reach



Monitoring triggers
added for sensitive
resources

Cultural Resources Protections

Qualified
archaeologist
on site

Tribal monitor
on site

Worker
training

Inadvertent
discovery
procedures

Coordination
with Tribes and
local museums

Ranching and Recreation Compatibility

What could conflict

Active grazing

Conflicts with cattle (stress, gates/fences, safety)



How impacts are addressed (FEIR/MMRP)

Concentrate use at designated launch/take-out facilities (controlled access)

Seasonal separation (Practice of pasturing winter to spring outside recreation high season)

Signage (stay on water, respect livestock)

Facility design to discourage wandering (defined paths, barriers where needed)

Minimal cattle exclusion fencing at facilities

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Identifies each mitigation measure

Assigns responsibility

Defines timing and verification

Requires documentation of compliance

Resource Area	Identified Impact	Mitigation Approach	Monitoring / Enforcement
Biological Resources	Temporary disturbance to riparian vegetation and wetlands from channel clearing, access routes, and spoils placement	Seasonal work windows; avoidance of sensitive resources; revegetation and recovery requirements	Pre- and post-construction surveys; recovery monitoring; escalation if recovery fails
Hydrology / Wetlands	Localized changes in water surface elevation under construction scenarios	Conservative surface-water modeling; reliance on gaining-reach conditions	Monitoring triggers for sensitive vegetation and special-status plants
Cultural Resources	Potential disturbance of unknown archaeological or paleontological resources	Qualified archaeologist oversight; worker training; stop-work procedures; coordination with Tribes and museums	Inadvertent discovery protocols; documentation and notification
Recreation / Land Use	Increased public use and potential conflicts with ranching operations	Designated access points; signage; fencing at facilities where needed	Ongoing site management and compliance with facility design constraints

What Board Certification Means

EIR adequately
informs
decision-makers

Environmental
impacts disclosed
and mitigated

Project decisions
and approval may
proceed separately

Closing

- The Final EIR discloses impacts
- Significant impacts are mitigated
- Monitoring ensures accountability
- Staff recommends certification