2 PLAN AREA SETTING

2.1 PLAN AREA LOCATION

The Rio Del Oro site contains approximately 3,828 acres located within the City of Rancho Cordova, approximately five miles south of US Highway 50 along the east side of Sunrise Boulevard. The northern boundary of the site is adjacent to White Rock Road. The southeastern corner of the site is located at the intersection of Americanos Boulevard and Douglas Road, adjacent to the "panhandle" portion of the SunRidge Specific Plan area. The southern boundary of the site is adjacent to Douglas Road and the remaining SunRidge Specific Plan area. The western boundary of the site is adjacent to Sunrise Boulevard along the south, while the remainder of the northwestern boundary is adjacent to existing developed Fitzgerald and Cordova Industrial Parks.

2.2 SITE HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

The Rio Del Oro project site has a past history of agricultural uses, gold mining and industrial uses, including missile testing. Approximately one third of the site has been used for grazing, while the remaining two thirds has been significantly altered by gold mining activities. The current use of the site is primarily cattle grazing with an area of aggregate mining occurring in the eastern portion of the site.

Existing dredger tailings

A considerable amount of the mining occurred in the 1920s, with additional mining occurring in the 1950s. The mining activities consisted of dredging ancient alluvial deposits. The areas that were mined are distinguished by alternating piles of rocky tailings and lower areas where the finer sediment settled out. The average depth of the dredger tailings is between 80-110 feet deep.

In 1956, Aerojet General Corporation purchased the Rio Del Oro site for use in development and testing of missile propulsion systems. McDonnell Douglas initially leased the land from Aerojet for its rocket testing activities, and then bought it outright in 1961. McDonnell Douglas ceased operations at the site in 1969, and then Aerojet reacquired it in 1984 for use primarily as a buffer zone from White Rock Road, but also as a place to burn excess rocket fuel and test small quantities of energetic material. Limited development of the site during this time included

Remaining rocket testing facility

construction of paved and unpaved access roads, various structures and buildings, and a limited infrastructure of utilities and drainage improvements. Numerous buildings, roads and structures associated with the prior use remain on the site today, primarily located in the southern/central portion of the site.

A small industrial park, Security Park, is located in the southeastern corner of the site, however the developed portion of Security Park is not a part of the RDOSP Area. The aerial photo in Exhibit 2-1 shows the existing conditions of the site.

2.3 ADJACENT LAND USES

The land surrounding the RDOSP is a mix of urban and limited agricultural. Land to the south and southeast is part the SunRidge Specific Plan Area, containing approximately 2,600 acres for mixed-use development. The neighborhoods adjacent to the Plan Area in the SunRidge development contain mostly low-density residential units. The land to the west contains a variety of existing commercial, office and light industrial uses along the Sunrise Boulevard Corridor. The land to the north is owned by Aerojet General Corp and is presently used for limited agricultural and industrial uses. The remaining land to the east of the site is used for grazing, agricultural residential and some aggregate mining operations.

2.4 SITE FEATURES

2.4.1 Topography and Drainage

Due to the previous history of mining on the site, the topography and drainage is significantly disturbed from the natural condition on approximately two-thirds of the site. A tributary of Morrison Creek flows through the southern portion of the site, flowing from east to west. Numerous intermittent drainage channels occur throughout the site. Most of the channels lack riparian or emergent vegetation except for the lower reach of Morrison Creek.

2.4.2 Soils

Ten different soils types are mapped by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) within the Plan Area. Fiddyment, Hicksville, Natomas, Red Bluff, and Redding soils occur in the grasslands within areas which have not been disturbed by historic mining activities. Slickens and Xerorthent dredge tailings soils occur with areas that have been substantially disturbed by historic mining activities.

2.4.3 Wetlands

Jurisdictional wetlands occur within the Plan Area in the form of vernal pools, seasonal wetland swales and depressions, riparian wetlands and ponds. The vernal pools and seasonal wetland swales are found exclusively within grasslands in areas which have not been mined. The seasonal wetland depressions occur almost exclusively

Seasonal Wetlands

within the previously mined areas. Riparian wetlands occur only in the previously mined areas. They are topographically similar to the seasonal wetland depressions, but are characterized by the presence of trees and shrubs.

2.4.4 Vegetation

The characteristic plant community within the areas of the site not disturbed by the historic mining operations is non-native annual grassland. The vegetation is characterized by a dominance of non-native grasses and forbs. Three general plant communities occur in the areas of the site which were not significantly disturbed by historic mining activities. These communities occur on the dredge tailing piles, in low areas between the piles and in relatively broad flat areas lacking dredge tailings piles. Vegetation is sparse with yellow star thistle the dominant plant and few grasses. The areas between the tailings have soil, lack cobbles, and receive additional moisture draining laterally from the piles. Common species include Fremont cottonwoods, willows and coyote brush. A significant stand of elderberry shrubs exist on site.

2.4.5 Airport Compatibility

The Plan Area is located approximately 2 miles northeast of Mather Airport. The northwestern portion of the Plan Area lies within the runway approach pattern and is subject to noise levels of 60 to 70 CNEL. The Mather Airport Policy Area (MAPA) and the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) govern and restrict uses within this area to ensure compatibility. Specifically, residential uses are not permitted within the Mather Airport noise contour zone. The noise contours are subject to revision and refinement as part of the Mather Airport Master Plan (MAMP). If new noise contours affecting the Rio Del Oro Plan Area are subsequently adopted as part of the MAMP, the RDOSP may be modified or amended as outlined in Section 8.3 to allow for additional residential uses in conjunction with non-residential uses as part of a mixed use project (vertical or horizontal) in the commercial use areas.

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