City of Atwater

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT
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September 2026

NOTICE OF AVAILABLILITY OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE BERT CRANE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT DISCHARGE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City of Atwater, as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the Bert Crane Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge Improvements Project. This Notice of Availability is provided in accordance with Sections 15085 and 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines to advise responsible and trustee agencies and the public that the Draft EIR is available for review and comment.

PROJECT LOCATION: The Project in the jurisdiction of the City of Atwater and County of Merced, California, located east of South Bert Crane Road, between Bear Creek and Oak Avenue Alignment. The site includes portions of six (6) parcels identified as Merced County Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 056-200-026, 056-200-011, 056-200-021, 056-200-024, 065-020-012, and 056-200-002. The proposed pipeline alignments and outfall improvements extend south and southwest of the WWTP to Black Rascal Creek and Bear Creek.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The City of Atwater owns and operates the Bert Crane Regional WWTP, which provides tertiary-level treatment of wastewater. Treated effluent is currently discharged via an effluent pump station and a 42-inch force main to the Atwater/Peck Drain, which flows through Joseph Gallo Farms (Gallo Ranch), where a significant portion is diverted for agricultural and wetland use. In order to meet Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) groundwater recharge requirements, the City proposes to construct improvements to discharge treated effluent to the Merced Irrigation District (MID) via Black Rascal Creek or Bear Creek. The improvements would connect to the existing force main with a tee fitting and automatic actuated butterfly valves integrated into the City's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, allowing the City to redirect effluent flows to the Gallo Ranch, the creeks, or both.

The Draft EIR evaluates three alternatives for the discharge improvements: Alternative 1 – Bert Crane Road Alignment, Alternative 2 – South WWTP Alignment, and Alternative 3 – Deckert Lateral Alignment. Improvements common to all three alternatives include connection to the existing force main; installation of a 42-inch x 42-inch x 18-inch tee, a 42-inch automatic actuated butterfly valve, an 18-inch automatic actuated butterfly valve, an air relief valve, and an 18-inch magnetic flow meter; construction of a new pump station; installation of a power source and connection to the City SCADA system; and construction of a new outfall structure equipped with a flap valve. Alternative 1 would include approximately 4,400 linear feet of 18-inch pipeline and a new outfall structure into Bear Creek. Alternative 2 would include approximately 4,300 linear feet of 18-inch pipeline and a new outfall structure into Black Rascal Creek. Alternative 3 would include connection to the existing Deckert Lateral

culvert, approximately 5,400 linear feet of 18-inch pipeline, increased capacity of MID's Deckert Lateral, and replacement of the existing MID outfall structure to Black Rascal Creek. Traffic control, flow diversion, and dewatering would be implemented as applicable to each alternative.

HAZARDOUS WASTE AND SUBSTANCES SITES: Pursuant to Section 15087(c)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines and Section 65962.5 of the Government Code, the Project site is not included on any of the lists of hazardous waste and substances sites (Cortese List).

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The Draft EIR analyzes the potentially significant environmental impacts associated with approval and implementation of the Bert Crane Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge Improvements Project. The Draft EIR evaluates the environmental issue areas contemplated under CEQA Guidelines, including those set forth in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, and recommends mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.

With implementation of the mitigation measures proposed in the Draft EIR, the following environmental impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level: Biological Resources (Impacts 4.1-1, 4.1-2, 4.1-3, and 4.1-4, and Cumulative Impact 4.1-7); Cultural Resources (Impacts 4.2-1, 4.2-2, and 4.2-3, and Cumulative Impact 4.2-4); Geology and Soils (Impact 4.3-6 and Cumulative Impact 4.3-7); Hydrology and Water Quality (Impact 4.4-3); and Tribal Cultural Resources (Impact 4.5-1 and Cumulative Impact 4.5-2). All other impacts were determined to be less than significant or to result in no impact and require no mitigation. The Draft EIR concludes that the Project would not result in any significant and unavoidable environmental impacts; therefore, no Statement of Overriding Considerations would be required under Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.

PUBLIC REVIEW: The Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with Section 15084 of the CEQA Guidelines and will be circulated for a 45-day review period, during which written comments regarding the adequacy of the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR are welcomed. The Draft EIR comment period will be from September 4, 2026 through October 19, 2026.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY: The Draft EIR is available for review during regular business hours at the City of Atwater City Hall, Community Development Department at 1350 Broadway Avenue, Atwater, CA 95301 and on the City of Atwater website, www.atwater.org/public-notices. Written comments may be submitted to Jonnie Hanson Lan at the above address prior to the end of the public review period.

For any questions, contact:
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