

City of Merced

Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

Date: July 9, 2018

Project Title: City of Merced Sewer Master Plan Update

To: Responsible Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

Lead Agency: City of Merced
678 W 18th St
Merced, CA 95340
(209) 385-6800

Contact: Ken Elwin, PE, Public Works Director, City of Merced

INTRODUCTION

The City of Merced (City) will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that addresses the potential impacts of implementing the proposed Updated Wastewater Collection System (WCS) Master Plan (Master Plan or proposed Project) to address key wastewater infrastructure needs within the City. Your input is requested in the form of written comments regarding the scope of the EIR including potential environmental impacts and alternatives to be considered.

The EIR is being prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Under CEQA, upon deciding to prepare and EIR, the City, as lead agency, must issue a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform trustee agencies, the public, and responsible agencies of the decision. Accordingly, the purpose of this NOP is to provide information describing the Master Plan including associated potential environmental effects to those in the public 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 is related to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the Master Plan.

The EIR will provide an evaluation of potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Master Plan at a project- and program-level where appropriate. The Master Plan location, description, and environmental resource areas that may be affected by development of the Master Plan are described below. The EIR will evaluate potentially significant environmental impacts of the Master Plan, on both a direct and 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 impact to the Master Plan.

PROJECT LOCATION/SETTING

Figure 1, Project Vicinity, shows the setting of the proposed Project area in the Merced County region. The proposed Project is located entirely within the boundaries shown in the City's *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, including the University of California at Merced (UC Merced) campus and additional community planning areas (Figure 2). This area includes the area within existing City limits, as well as the authorized sphere-of-influence (SOI) for the City, as recognized by the Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Development of the WCS Master Plan has been an iterative process from 2002 to 2017 to evaluate and assess function, expansion, and replacement of the wastewater collection system within the City to accommodate existing and future development. Wastewater generated within the City is collected in a series of pipelines which the City owns, operates, and maintains. The system includes over 400 miles of gravity sewers which collect wastewater from a majority of residential users, as well as, commercial users, industrial users, and public uses.

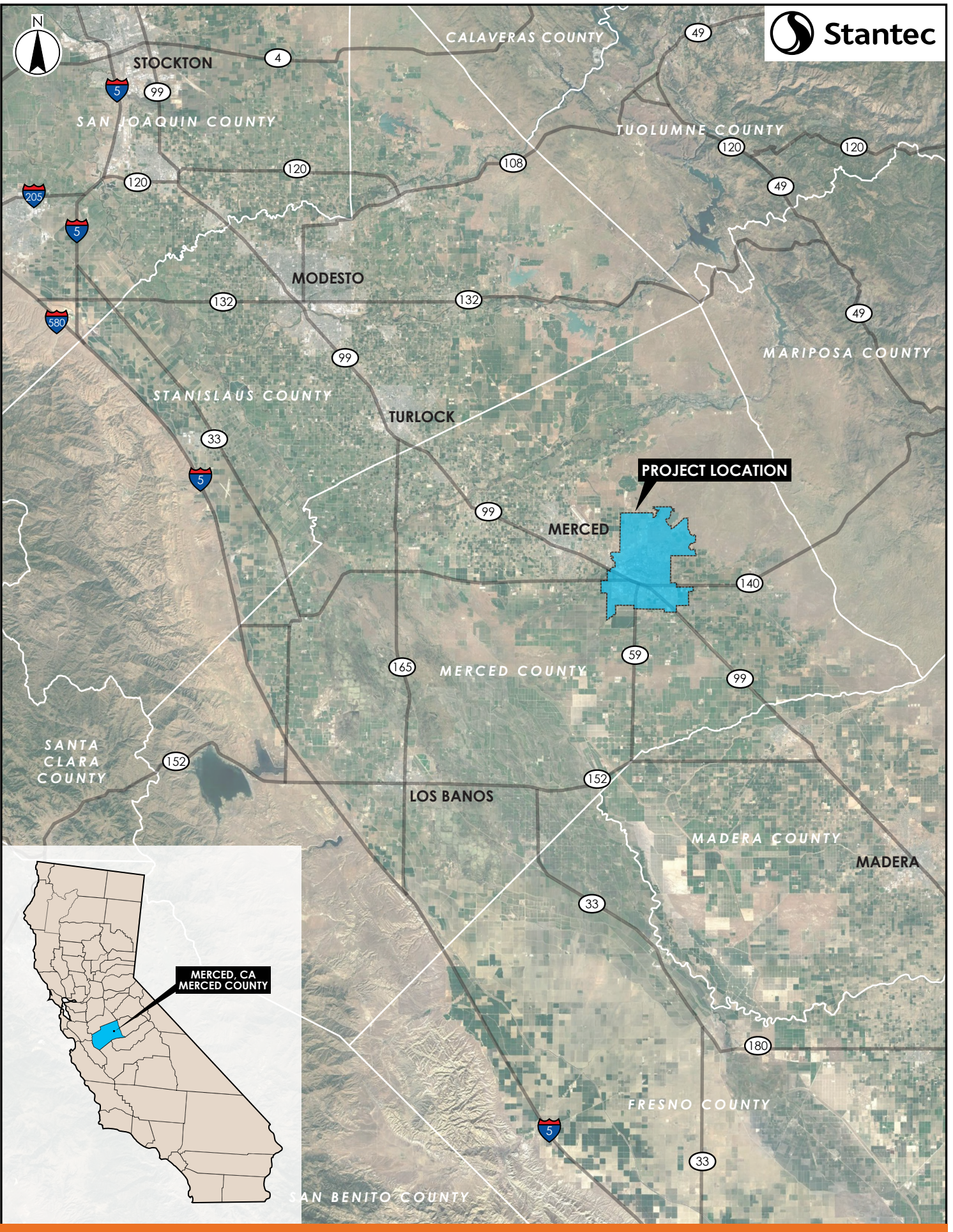
The current Master Plan identifies potential capacity constraints within the existing sewer system, assesses the future demand for these services, and develops recommendations for short- and long-term Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) to address the identified issues needed to serve the anticipated future capacity. During preparation of the Master Plan the City attempted to minimize impacts to the four natural streams that flow through the City: Fahrens Creek, Black Rascal Creek, Cottonwood Creek and Bear Creek, while working to maximize gravity flow of the sewer system to reduce energy and pump station costs.

This most recent draft Master Plan, released in December 2017, incorporated elements from other planning documents that have been developed, including the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and the University of California (UC) Merced 2020 Project Addendum Long Range Development EIS/EIR. These planning documents, combined with the Master Plan, have led to the identification of Alternative Plan A as the preferred alternative to address the long-range sewer system planning needs for the City.

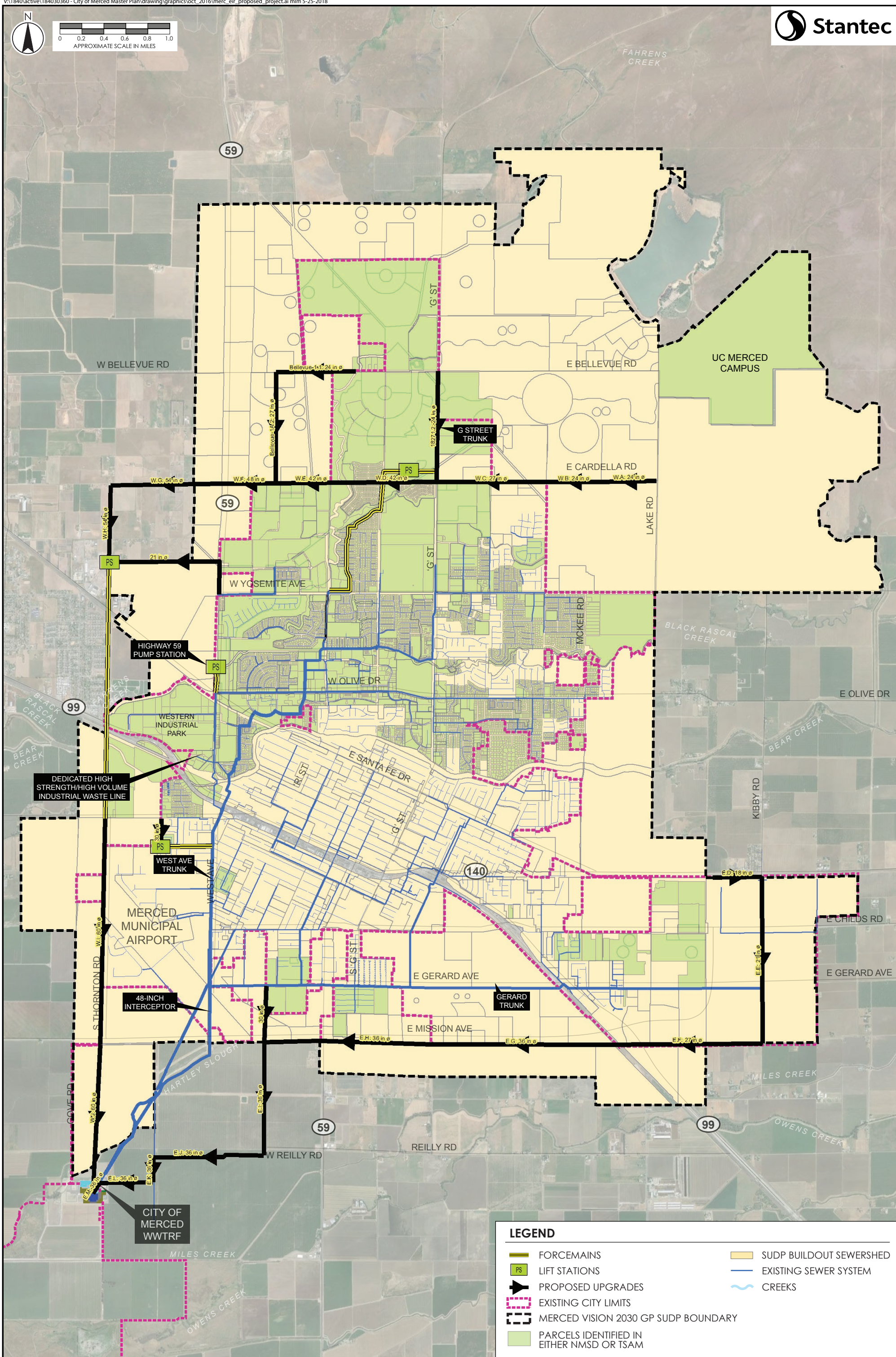
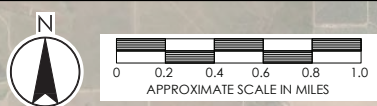
PROJECT ELEMENTS

The purpose of the Master Plan is to:

1. Update land use and wastewater flows accommodating the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*;
2. Assess the available capacity of the City's major sewers;
3. Determine the best means to sewer the build-out of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan SUDP*;
4. Develop an interim service plan and CIP for City growth; and
5. Establish a sewer repair and replacement program.



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LEGEND

- FORCEMAINS
- LIFT STATIONS
- PROPOSED UPGRADES
- EXISTING CITY LIMITS
- MERCED VISION 2030 GP SUDP BOUNDARY
- PARCELS IDENTIFIED IN EITHER NMSD OR TSAM
- SUDP BUILDOUT SEWERSHED
- EXISTING SEWER SYSTEM
- CREEKS

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND SCOPE OF THE EIR

The EIR will analyze potentially significant impacts that result from construction and operation of the Master Plan. Pursuant to section 15063(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, the EIR will evaluate the full range of environmental issues contemplated for consideration under CEQA statute and the CEQA Guidelines including:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Resources
- Energy Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Wildfires
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Utilities
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic

Potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Master Plan are anticipated to be analyzed at project-level where feasible and a program-level for all other considerations. Preliminary screenings indicate that any potential adverse effects can be avoided, redesigned, minimized and/or mitigated through the development of alternatives or adoption of appropriate mitigation measures. The EIR will consider a range of potential temporary construction-period impacts, permanent impacts, and cumulative impacts.

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 WCS Master Plan should be directed to the City's public works director at the following address by **5:00 PM on August 7th, 2018**.

Ken Elwin, PE, City of Merced Public Works Director
678 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340
E-mail: elwink@cityofmerced.org

All comments should please include the name, email address, phone number, and mailing address of the contact person submitting the written response. In the event no response or request for additional time is received by any responsible agency or trustee agency by the end of the review period on **August 7th, 2018**, the City may presume that the responsible agency or trustee agency has no response.

SCOPING MEETING

A public scoping meeting will be held to receive comments on environmental issues that should be addressed in the Draft EIR as well as the range of practicable alternatives to be evaluated in the Draft EIR. The address, date, and time of this meeting are as follows:

Date: **Tuesday, July 24, 2018**
Time: **5:30 –7:30 pm**
Place: Merced Civic Center, Sam Pipes Room
678 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340