



sacramentosierraclub@gmail.com

May 23, 2022

Reclamation District 1000

1633 Garden Highway

Sacramento, CA 95833-9706

Sent by email to (addresses below)

General Manager King and Board Members,

The Sierra Club, Sacramento Group, is concerned about the environmental impact of the Reclamation District's plan to remove vegetation from the riparian area between the Sacramento River and the Garden Highway. The group is also concerned about the reported lack of investigation by the Reclamation District to ensure the protection of critical habitat for endangered and protected species. The project proposes to remove vegetation that is a visual barrier between the highway and the levees. The district says it must have clear views of the levees, even though the levees have been improved to meet federal requirements.

According to the Garden Highway Community Association, which represents 280 property owners affected by the project, the vegetation removal would impact owls, foxes, and many other animals. It would also disturb nesting sites for the Swainson's Hawk, which is considered a threatened species by the State of California. A Sierra Club, Sacramento Group, representative, driving along the project area recently saw Swainson's and Red-tailed Hawks, Osprey and many other birds. He also found an active Red-tailed Hawk nest in the project area, a photograph of which is at the end of this letter.

Riparian areas on the Sacramento River have been called one of "the most threatened wildlife habitats in California." We are concerned that the Reclamation District has not done enough to preserve such habitat and with the level of compliance with environmental regulations in developing the proposed vegetation removal. The local Sierra Club executive committee reviewed the documentation for the project on the Reclamation District's website ([Seeing Levees Saves Lives - Reclamation District 1000 \(rd1000.org\)](http://SeeingLeveesSavesLives-ReclamationDistrict1000.org)) Little is said about potential environmental impacts, and what is said is troubling. For instance, in the System-Wide Improvement Framework, the district states:

The Central Valley is home to hundreds of species of wildlife and plant life, including several State and federally threatened and endangered species. Removal or modification of encroachments may impact one or more of these species, although formal consultations with the applicable environmental regulatory agencies are not expected.

Why does the district assume that it will not have to work with regulatory agencies about impacts to protected species? What sort of environmental reviews have been done to reach such a conclusion? As mentioned, it appears that the Reclamation District has not done a formal environmental review, which should be required at the start of any project like this.

Also troubling was a remark at a February 2022 Reclamation District meeting, recorded and posted on the district's website. A Reclamation District representative said that environmental laws created in the 1960s and 70s prevented districts from vegetation removal around levees. But that changed with new regulations, the representative stated. Is this the correct legal interpretation? What legal review has the Reclamation District performed to conclude that regulations about vegetation removal take legal precedence over laws governing environmental protection? We understand that the Garden Highway Community Association believes the Reclamation District is misinterpreting the regulations.

We respectfully request that the Reclamation District not remove any native vegetation, unless permitted by CDFW and necessary for fire prevention, between the Sacramento River and the Garden Highway at this time. We respectfully request written response to questions within this letter and source documents relied upon by the Reclamation District to justify such removal. We also request written confirmation and records noting that regulatory agencies have been consulted and that environmental review occurred to ensure no violation of any city, county, state and federal rules, regulations, laws and that due process was accorded to the public.

Thank you,



Barbara Leary

Chair, Executive Committee

Sierra Club, Sacramento Group

Sent via email to:

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Red-tailed Hawk nest on the Sacramento River side of Garden Highway, across from Teal Bend Golf Club.
Photo by Brad Branan April 21, 2022.