
State of California—The Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the
Clay Pit State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan

AND

Announcement of Public Scoping Meeting

- Date:** September 1, 2010
- To:** State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Individuals and Organizations
- Subject:** Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Clay Pit State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan
- Lead Agency:** California Department of Parks and Recreation
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division
Twin Cities District
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The California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is the lead agency for the preparation of a General Plan (GP) and associated environmental impact report (EIR) for the Clay Pit State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA). DPR has prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) pursuant to Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. This NOP informs agencies and the public that an EIR is being prepared to address potential impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed *Clay Pit State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan*. Agencies should comment on the elements of potential environmental effects that are relevant to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

RESPONSES TO THIS NOP

Due to the time limits mandated by state law, responses to the NOP must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 days after this notice is filed with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research/State Clearinghouse (September 1, 2010). Please send your written responses, including the name of a contact person, to:

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PROJECT TITLE

Clay Pit State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan

PROJECT LOCATION

The regional location of the Clay Pit SVRA is shown in Figure 1. The Clay Pit SVRA is a 220 acre off-highway vehicle (OHV) park operated by the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division of DPR. Clay Pit SVRA is located within unincorporated Butte County, approximately 2 miles southwest of the City of Oroville (Figure 2). Clay Pit SVRA is located 2 miles south of State Route (SR) 162 on Larkin Road, between SR 70 and SR 99. To the north and northwest is the Oroville Municipal Airport. A light industrial area and scattered residences are located between Clay Pit SVRA and the airport. The California Department of Fish and Game's Oroville Wildlife Management Area (WMA) borders Clay Pit SVRA to the east and south. A shooting range associated with the WMA is located along the southern border. Clay Pit SVRA is located on a large shallow depression (pit), which was formed when clay was mined and used to construct the Oroville Dam. After the dam was completed, site ownership was retained by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) while management of the site was transferred to DPR in 1981.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A General Plan is the primary management document for each park unit within the California State Park System, including SVRAs. The General Plan establishes the primary purpose and management direction for the park unit. An approved General Plan is typically required before DPR can move forward with site-specific improvements that are beyond minor capital outlay projects. The OHMVR Division has initiated the process of preparing a General Plan and associated EIR for Clay Pit SVRA to develop a long term management framework and to establish the foundation for future park improvements.

Preparation of the General Plan is in its early stages, so ultimate land use and resource management provisions have not yet been determined. Initial General Plan research and analysis efforts include researching existing conditions, conducting visitor surveys and stakeholder interviews, and identifying potential issues and opportunities to be addressed during the planning process. Based on the results of these efforts, planning alternatives will be developed to illustrate scenarios for how the management and visitor services at Clay Pit SVRA may be improved over the long term. A draft conceptual diagram showing some of the different uses that could be accommodated at Clay Pit SVRA has been prepared (Figure 3); however, it is important to note that the diagram is conceptual at this time and does not represent a final plan. A preferred alternative will be generated based on public input and an evaluation of the planning alternatives developed for the project. The preferred alternative will be a land use plan that will be used to prepare the General Plan.

Use areas will be designated in the General Plan. Use areas will be based on geographic relationships, resource values, management issues and goals, and visitor use and experiences. The General Plan will also contain goals and guidelines that guide Clay Pit SVRA management and provide long-term direction for development of future facilities. Such facilities may include new parking areas or access points, park maintenance facilities, interpretive kiosks, restrooms, picnic areas, and OHV tracks for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), dirt bikes, and four-wheel drive vehicles. Preliminary use areas are described below.

Use Area 1 (Developed Area)

The developed use area would be most appropriate for built facilities like tracks, parking lots, staging areas, and obstacle courses because it contains desirable topographic features and fewer natural resources. The OHMVR Division also is planning to construct a building for on-site rangers and maintenance facilities within this use area.

Use Area 2 (Riding Area)

This area has fewer desirable topographic features and a higher density of natural resources, which may preclude or limit placement of developed facilities. This area may be left in its current state and may continue to be used for multi-purpose OHV use.

Use Area 3 (Conservation Area)

Denser, or more sensitive, natural resources in this area may provide opportunities for on-site conservation, mitigation, and resource management.

GENERAL PLAN TOPICS

Topics that are being considered as part of the General Plan process include the following:

- physical, biological, aesthetic, and cultural resources;
- land use and facilities;
- visitor use and experiences;
- operation and maintenance functions;
- planning influences, such as regional population projections and public input;
- recreational trends, opportunities, and constraints;
- access and circulation;
- law enforcement and public safety; and
- education and interpretation opportunities.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Although the ultimate use areas and associated goals and guidelines have not yet been determined, from studying the resource characteristics and generally anticipated recreational uses of the project area the planning team has identified the types of environmental impacts that may result from implementation of the General Plan and from continued recreational use of the property. The potential environmental effects that are anticipated to be addressed in the EIR include impacts on the following resource areas:

- air quality;
- biological resources;
- circulation;
- cultural resources;
- climate change;
- geology, soils and mineral resources;
- hydrology and water quality;
- land use and management;
- noise; and
- public services and utilities.

SCOPING MEETING

A planning workshop/EIR scoping meeting has been scheduled to provide additional information about the General Plan process, review alternatives, and give interested parties an opportunity to comment on the scope and potential environmental effects of the project. The scoping meeting will be held at the following time and location:

Tuesday, September 14, 2010
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Eagles Hall
2010 Montgomery Street
Oroville, CA 95965

Additional information about the planning process can be found on the following website:

http://ohv.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=26300

INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

DPR will use the EIR to consider environmental effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives when reviewing the proposed General Plan. The OHMVR Commission will use the EIR to support decisions made related to its respective administration jurisdictions. The EIR will serve as the CEQA compliance document for adoption of the General Plan and implementation of a first initial project. It will also serve as the programmatic environmental document that may be referenced in implementing future actions included in the General Plan. Subsequent project-level activities identified in the General Plan will be examined in light of the program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared before project approval and implementation (State CEQA Guidelines 15168[c]).

By: Jennifer Buckingham Garcia

Signature: _____

Title: District Services Manager

Date: **September 1, 2010**

Attachments: Figure 1: Regional Location Map
Figure 2: Vicinity Map
Figure 3: Draft Conceptual Diagram

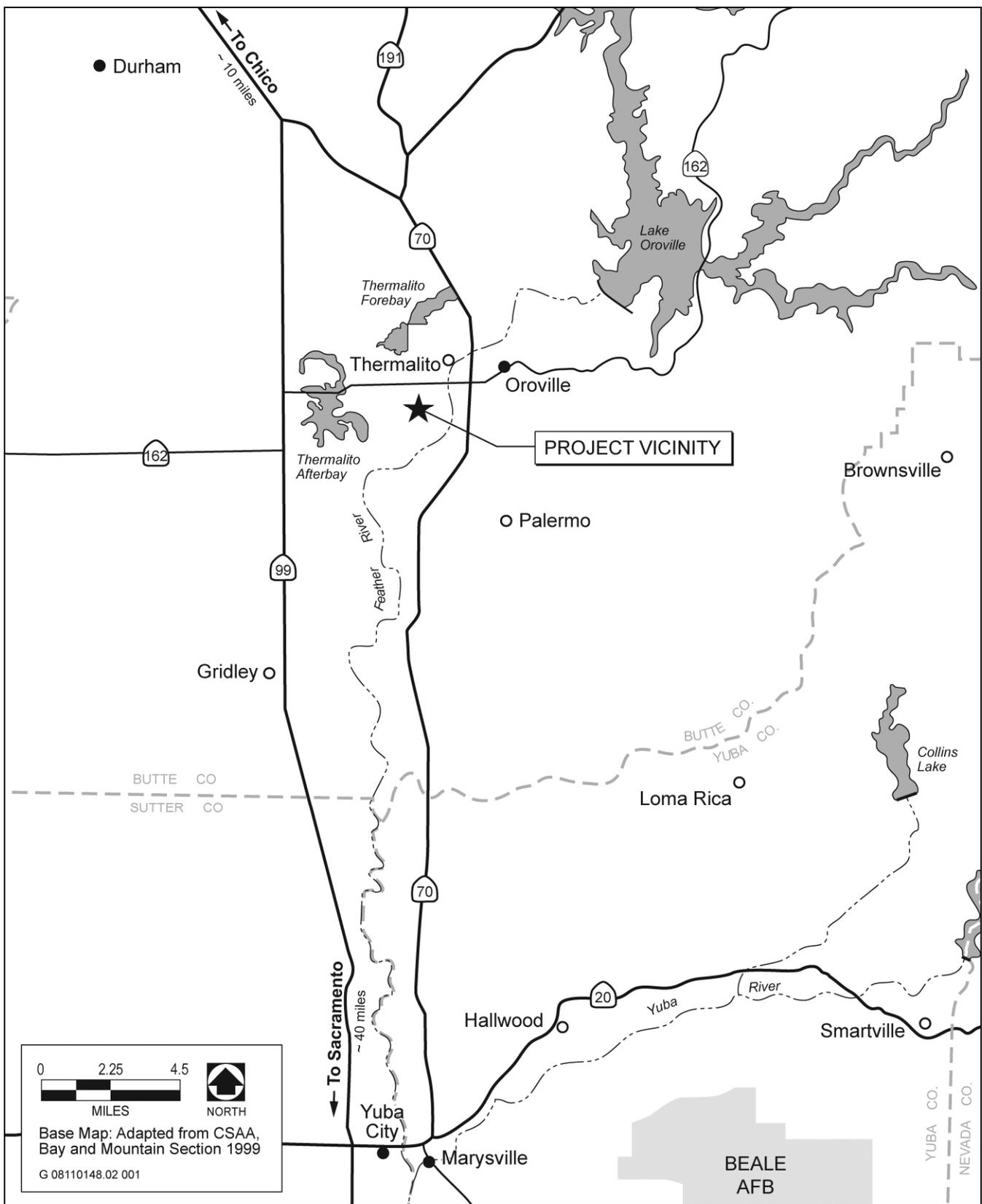


Figure 1: Regional Location Map

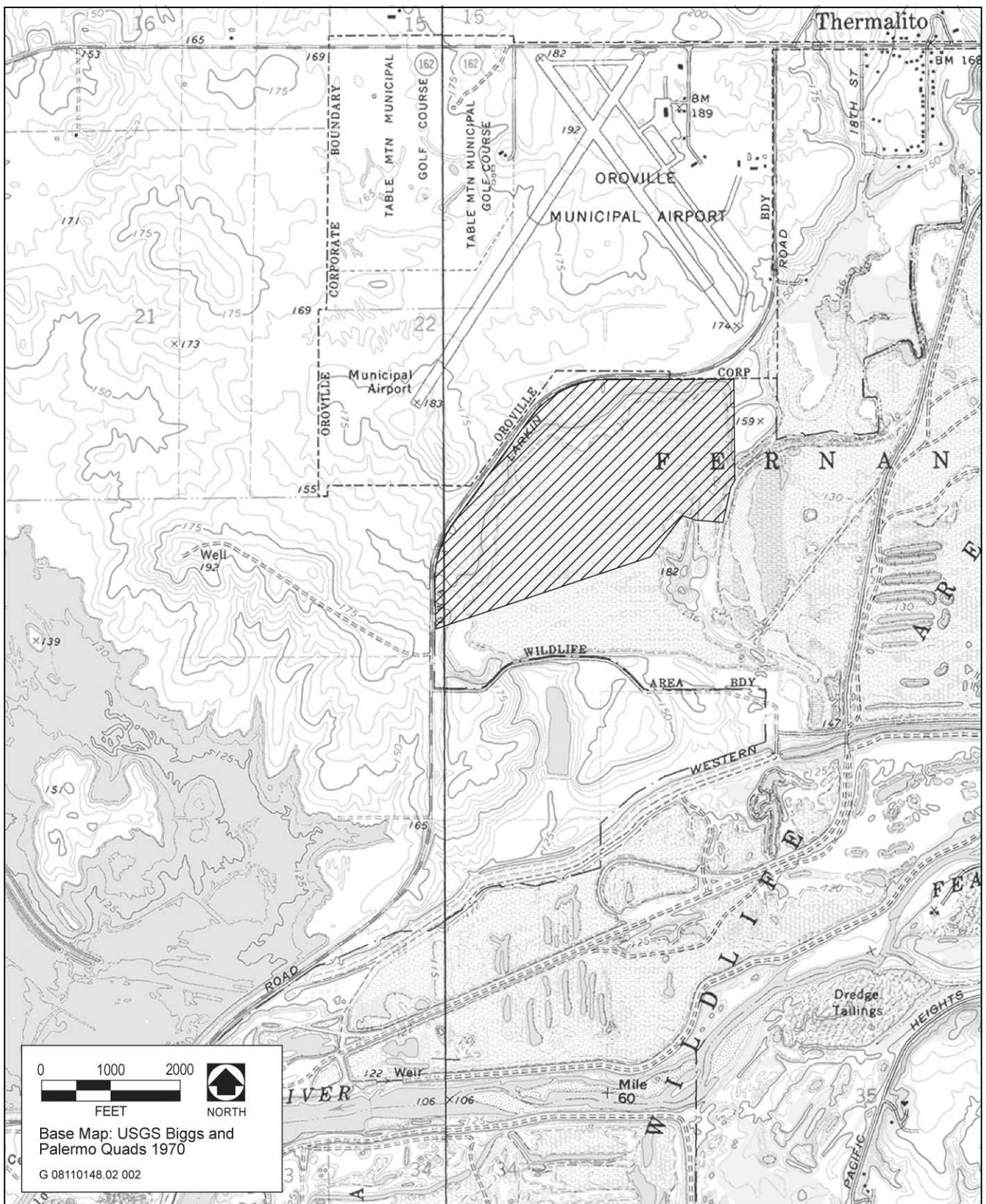


Figure 2: Vicinity Map

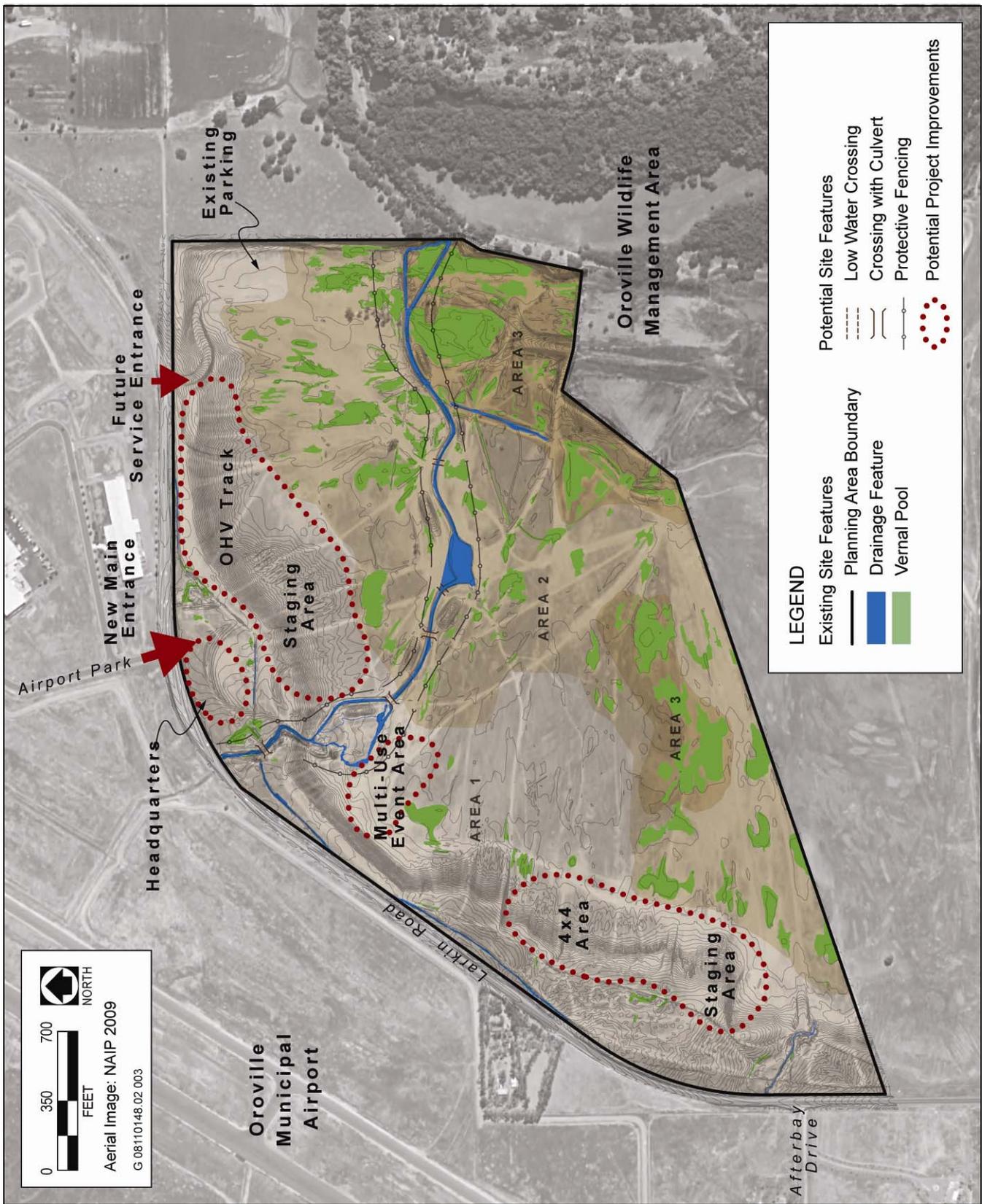


Figure 3: Draft Conceptual Diagram