ADDENDUM

KERN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Board of Supervisors

STAFF REPORT

Date: September 9, 2003

FILE: GPA #121, Map #500
S.D.: #1 and #3 - McQuiston and Patrick

TITLE: General Plan Amendment Case No. 121, Map No. 500

PROPOSAL: Adoption of the Specific Trails Plan implementing the Kern River Element of the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan which requires that a Specific Trails Plan be formulated to further define bicycle paths, pedestrian ways, equestrian trails, and public parking in regard to the Kern River area

APPLICANT: Kern County Planning Department (PP0104A)

PROJECT SIZE: Approximately 15 miles along the Kern River

LOCATION: Approximately 15 miles of public multi-use trails along the Kern River, starting from Manor Street, continuing to the easternmost edge of the Kern River Golf Course, and connecting to the City of Bakersfield trails system

PROJECT ANALYSIS: Recently, the Kern County Parks and Recreation Department, Roads Department, and the City of Bakersfield have received a grant for funding the development of a segment of the Specific Trails Plan. The coordinated efforts will develop a bike path from the east side of the Kern County Golf Course to the California Living Museum (CALM). Site specific engineering, environmental, and safety issues have arisen which may cause an alteration to the alignment and/or placement of the trail. This equestrian/pedestrian/bicycle alignment may need to be moved to an area designated for an equestrian/pedestrian multi-use trail. A cross section is available in the Specific Trails Plan to adequately allow all three uses. The following implementation measure is proposed and will be placed in Chapter 9 (Implementation and Mitigation Measures) to allow for such occurrences in the future:

- The trails types shown in this plan are intended to establish a basic trail network. Should the County determine that additional types may be practically included within a delineated alignment, such facilities may be added and constructed without amendment to this plan.

The Specific Trails Plan currently recommends the use of The National Recreation and Park Association Best Practices Guidelines, which is an advisory document for recreational facility development. Kern County has standards for which all recreational facilities must be developed. Staff recommends a change to the plan to develop the trails according to the Kern County Park Standards. The Kern County Parks Standards, which are in compliance with State and National Standards, are consistent with the Specific Trails Plan.

CEQA ACTION: Program Environmental Impact Report
PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: Certify the Environmental Impact Report and adopt Section 15091 Findings; adopt resolution approving the Kern River Specific Trails Plan as amended

DBR: AJZ: ma

Attachments
KERN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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APPLICANT: Kern County Planning Department (PP01014A)

PROJECT SIZE: Approximately 15 miles along the Kern River

LOCATION: Approximately 15 miles of public multi-use trails along the Kern River, starting from Manor Street, continuing to the easternmost edge of the Kern River Golf Course, and connecting to the City of Bakersfield trails system.

PROJECT ANALYSIS:

KERN RIVER PLANNING HISTORY:

The Kern River Corridor has historically been recognized as an invaluable resource to the Bakersfield metropolitan area and Kern County. The County has expressed concerns over the loss of open space to urbanization in a number of planning documents. In 1961, Kern County and the City of Bakersfield adopted the Bakersfield Metropolitan Area General Plan which identified a Metropolitan Recreation Area along the Kern River east from Lake Ming to Buena Vista Road. The 1961 plan states:

"It is proposed in the General Plan that the Kern River basin adjacent to Bakersfield be preserved as an open recreational and scenic area. The basic idea is to prohibit urban-type construction, not to close the area to agriculture or commercial recreation. Many facilities are already developed along the river, including two artificial lakes, a golf course, swimming pool, parks and picnic areas, a shooting range, riding and hiking trails, and a ball park."

This concept has been carried forward in other planning documents such as the jointly adopted Kern River Plan Element in 1985 and the incorporation of that document into the Metropolitan Bakersfield 2010 General Plan (1990) and the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan (2002). The Kern River Plan Element states:

"The bicycle paths, pedestrian ways, equestrian trails and public parking shown on the plan map shall be further defined by a 'Specific Trails Plan.' That plan will contain the exact
alignment of trails, support facilities, the standards to which they will be developed and a funding program for acquisition, development and maintenance."

To that end, the Kern River Specific Trails Plan (Specific Trails Plan) has been developed.

**KERN RIVER SPECIFIC TRAILS PLAN DEVELOPMENT:**

**Workshops**

Prior to the writing and design of the Specific Trails Plan and the Environmental Impact Report, Kern County Planning Staff and the trail design consultant held a series of three community workshops with local residents, agencies, and special interest groups of Kern County and the City of Bakersfield. The workshops were held in September 2001, November 2001, and February 2002. The purpose of these workshops was to inform participants of the County's trail planning efforts, solicit community involvement and support, and to identify the participants' needs and concerns. Participants were supportive of the project and provided valuable comments such as the desire for hiking trails and trail amenities including restrooms, signage, shade trees, and kiosks. A general survey was given to all who attended so as to better understand the types of users and their specific concerns. The results of that survey are included in the Specific Trails Plan. A summary of each workshop is included as an appendix in the Specific Trails Plan. All of the comments and concerns were taken into consideration when writing and designing the Specific Trails Plan.

**Features of the Kern River Specific Trails Plan**

The Specific Trails Plan provides a comprehensive text and a detailed graphic representation of the proposed trail layout (by trail type) and the placement of associated facilities. Prior to the development of the Specific Trails Plan, the workshop participants expressed a desire to keep the equestrian users separate from other users of the trails. Several reasons were provided for this separation, such as the possibility of collisions between the high speed bicycles and the horses and the difference in trail surface needed for each user type (i.e., equestrian users prefer bare ground while bicyclists prefer pavement). In response, seven types of trails were developed so as to allow for that separation. Due to issues such as topography, land availability, or physical obstructions, complete equestrian only trails continuity along the entire project site was determined impossible. However, some trails used exclusively for equestrians have been incorporated into the trail system where opportunities were available. Some pedestrian users preferred portions of the trail system to be solely designated for walking and hiking. Careful design has provided areas where hiking is possible in harmony with other trail users.

All trails will be constructed to minimize loss of large trees and disturbance to the surrounding landscape. Equestrian and bicycle users will not be permitted on the pedestrian trails where steep slopes, erosive soils, vegetation, wildlife habitat, and other environmentally sensitive site conditions may be adversely impacted by such activities. Bicycle users presented concerns about management and maintenance of the trails for such things as potholes and hazardous debris. A Trail Management and Maintenance Plan is required as part of implementation of this plan. The widths of the trails are considered ideal. Property availability will dictate the actual width of the trails.

The seven types of trails provided for in the Specific Trails Plan are as follows:
• **Multi-Use Trail (Class II Bike, Equestrian, Pedestrian)** - Where space is available, the trail width will be a minimum of five feet wide for pedestrians, ten feet wide for bicyclists, and 12 feet wide for equestrians. The equestrian users may be separated from the bicyclists and pedestrians through use of a fence and also have at a minimum ten-foot vertical clearance. The bicycle and pedestrian portions of the trail will be paved.

• **Paved Multi-Use Trail (Bike, Pedestrian)** - Where space is available, the trail width will be a minimum of five feet for pedestrians and ten feet for the bicyclists. This trail will be paved.

• **Unpaved Equestrian Trail** - Where space is available, the equestrian trail will be 12 feet wide. This trail will have a ten-foot vertical clearance and will not be paved.

• **Unpaved Multi-Use Trail (Equestrian, Pedestrian)** - Where space is available, the equestrian portion of the trail will be 12 feet wide, and the pedestrian portion will be five feet wide. The equestrian users may be separated from the pedestrians through use of a fence. This trail will not be paved.

• **Class I Bike Path** - A Class I Bike Path is defined as a paved trail which is completely detached from a vehicular roadway. This type of bike trail is completely upgraded with proper signage, distance markers, periodic drinking fountains, parking areas, and other such amenities.

• **Class II Bike Lane** - A Class II Bike Lane is defined as a paved trail which is attached to a vehicular roadway and is delineated from the roadway by a white line and a proper signage. The vehicular roadway has been designed to accommodate the a designated bike lane.

• **Class III Bike Route** - A Class III Bike Route is defined as a paved trail which is attached to a vehicular roadway, but is delineated from the roadway by only signage. The roadway is not wide enough to accommodate a designated bike trial.

The plan was developed under a set of the objectives which include ensuring compatibility between existing and proposed trail systems, increase overall safety (bridges, signage, trail width), creating staging areas and opportunities to access the trail at appropriate points of interest, outlining the management and maintenance of the trail, consistency with the Kern River Plan Element, and increasing the amenities along the river (shading, aesthetics, parking, and scenic viewpoints). All of the goals and objectives of the Kern River Plan Element have been satisfied by the Specific Trails Plan.

**Trail Alignment and Acquisition**

Currently, the project area is criss-crossed with many paths developed from the public use of the area. The Kern River Specific Trails Plan has utilized the many pre-existing paths so as to reduce the environmental disturbance to the area. These existing paths are within road rights-of-way, public access easements, or are privately owned. Privately owned land shall be acquired through the purchasing, donation of the land, or dedication of land through discretionary action such as a subdivision, conditional use permit, or precise development plan. The trail alignment shall be
adopted by map and provide access to the Kern River as provided by Sections 66478.1 through 66478.8 of the Subdivision Map Act.

The Equestrian Campsite/Staging Area

A number of equestrian users will be traveling from other parts of Bakersfield and Kern County. The transportation of horses requires trucks and horse trailers. These vehicles are not well suited for normal automobile parking lots and campsites. The Specific Trails Plan provides a campsite and a staging area which will cater to the unique requirements of the equestrian users.

The Equestrian Campsite will be located on the eastern edge of the California Living Museum (CALM) between the Alfred Harrell Frontage Road and the Kern River. The campground site is adjacent to the existing Lake Ming campground. The campsite will have corrals for overnight containment of the horses along with parking areas and other equestrian camping facilities. A plot plan for the campsite is included with the Specific Trails Plan.

The Equestrian Staging Area will be located on the north side of Kern River and east of Manor Street along East Roberts Lane Extension. The staging area will have picnic tables, parking area for vehicles and trailers, drinking fountain, and restrooms. A plot plan for the staging area is included with the Specific Trails Plan.

River Crossings

The Specific Trails Plan will cross the Kern River once at the Rocky Point Weir, which is located approximately 3/4 mile west of China Grade Loop. The County prefers a bridge crossing versus a geo-grid crossing (a semi-impervious nonwoven fabric which would be placed on the riverbed). Though geo-grid costs less than the bridge crossing option, the bridge crossing is thought to be a safe, effective, and aesthetically pleasing way to cross.

Development Plan

The Kern River Plan Element requires a Development Plan for any new nonopen space development. The trail system is an open space development, while the accessory facilities (i.e., equestrian camp, restroom facilities, the equestrian river crossing, staging areas) are considered nonopen space development. A Development Plan is required for all nonopen space development and shall contain the following:

(a) Elevation drawings of all proposed structures and signs.

(b) Landscaping plan which provides for screening of obnoxious uses and respects existing views of the Kern River channel.

(c) Grading and revegetation plan.

(d) Plot plan or recent aerial photograph depicting existing uses and natural vegetation cover.

(e) A biota survey and analysis of effects which development would impose on any significant identified biota.
(f) A certified delineation of the primary and secondary floodways, if applicable, to the site, depicting both predevelopment conditions and future development conditions.

(g) Other standard Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance requirements in force at the time of application.

No nonopen space development shall occur until a Development Plan is approved by Kern County.

Trail Management and Maintenance

During the site-specific development of any portion of the trail system, a Trail Management and Maintenance Plan will be created by the County or under County supervision. The Trail Management and Maintenance Plan shall address public safety, crime prevention and policing, fire protection, emergency access, natural resource protection, litter control, vandalism, and a general trail maintenance schedule (i.e., horse excrement pickup, clearing debris from trails, etc). If a Development Plan is required, the Trail Management and Maintenance Plan will be incorporated into that plan.

Landscaping Plan

The Kern River Plan Element (KRPE) requires a Landscaping Plan for all residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, water recharge, channel improvement, and resource recovery projects within the KRPE boundaries. Prior to the development of specific trail segments, a Landscaping Plan will be submitted to Kern County Planning Department for approval. This plan will contain specific native plant species which will be used along the trails during and after trail construction and an approved vegetation maintenance schedule (i.e., trimming of vegetation, watering schedule, etc).

The Trail's Alignment and the Oil Field Interface

Public safety concerns were presented during the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) review period by the oil and gas production operator and the Department of Conservation/Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR). These issues were fully addressed through the addition of text in both the Specific Trails Plan and the EIR:

Although most of the proposed trails will follow the existing informal trail system, some new trails will travel through oil fields. The equestrian/pedestrian trail which begins at the intersection of Fairfax Road and Alfred Harrell Frontage Road, traveling north then eastward, and ending on Alfred Harrell Highway will be fenced on both sides. As stated in the Specific Trails Plan, all trails will be at least 50 feet from any active or abandoned oil well and all associated oil field equipment in consultation with the State of California, Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources. Other than the section stated above, active or abandoned oil wells and all associated oil field equipment, which are within 100 feet of the trails, shall have a chain link fence placed around them in consultation with the owner/lessee of the equipment. The County shall be responsible for providing the fencing. At no times will pedestrians or equestrians be allowed on oil field maintenance roads. All trail development Plans in and around oil fields will consult the oil and gas production operator for advisement.
The County has recently been informed by ChevronTexaco that, within approximately ten years, it will cease oilfield operations on properties east of China Grade Loop. Oil wells will be abandoned, and associated oilfield equipment will be removed. For public safety, development of a trail system through this area may be deferred until such time as oilfield operations have ceased.

The Trail’s Alignment and Goodmanville Road

The property owners along Goodmanville Access Road have written various comment letters during the EIR public review period. The property owners expressed concerns with having the trail in the road easement along the front of their properties. One concern was due to the graphics within the Kern River Specific Trails Plan. The graphics lead the owners to believe that a fence will be erected in front of their properties. Obstructions cannot be placed in the road right-of-way (30 feet from the centerline of the road) according to the Kern County Roads Department, therefore, a fence would not be allowed. A note has been placed on the related graphics stating that no obstructions may be in the road right-of-way. The property owners then made a request to transfer the trail from the western side of Goodmanville Access Road to the eastern side. After extensive investigation from the Kern County Roads Department, only the equestrian portion of the trail may be allowed on the eastern side of the road. The slope of the shoulder is too narrow and steep to locate both the equestrian and pedestrian trail on the eastern side of the road. This shoulder provides adequate drainage for Alfred Harrell Highway and, therefore, is not allowed to be graded. The road right-of-way for Goodmanville Road will be used to allow the trail on both sides of the road, thereby providing a choice for the equestrian users. This alignment is needed to connect existing trails along Alfred Harrell Highway and the easements dedicated with the Uplands of the Kern subdivision and thus providing access to Hart Park.

Specific Plan Changes after the EIR Review Period

During the Environmental Impact Report review period, several implementation questions were raised from various County agencies. The primary questions which were raised include: how will the mitigation measures be implemented for the Kern River Specific Trails Plan and how are the Kern River Plan Element’s (KRPE) policies being incorporated? After careful thought for the implementation of the Specific Trails Plan, a Chapter 9 (Implementation and Mitigation Measures) was written to incorporate into the plan all of the mitigation measures and the KRPE’s policies.

Public Inquiry or Correspondence

Letters were received from Helt Engineering, Inc. (January 20, 2003); Beverly and Thomas Banks (January 24, 2003); Andrew and Kathy Beeghly (January 25, 2002); Kern County Roads Department (February 19, 2003); City of Bakersfield (February 20, 2003); ChevronTexaco (May 19, 2003); State of California Fish and Game; and the Kern County Parks and Recreation District (June 25, 2003) after the close of the comment period for the EIR. They are attached for reference.

The first letter, authored by Gerald Helt, requested the transfer of the equestrian and pedestrian trail on Goodmanville Access Road from the western side to the eastern side of the road. This request is addressed in the February 19, 2003, Kern County Roads Department comment letter. Mr. Helt expresses concerns regarding the status of several fences, walls, and similar structures which may
be in the road right-of-way. The County does not intend to demolish any structures during trail construction that may be placed in the road right-of-way.

The second letter, authored by Beverly and Thomas Banks, commented on the lack of detail in the map sent out with the Notice of Availability. This map was not meant to show detail, but to provide a general idea of the location of the planning area for the Specific Trails Plan. A request was made for the County to be thoughtful during construction, placement, and maintenance of the trail system through the Goodmanville Access Road area and to not include a parking area near the Goodmanville Road neighborhood. The County does not intend to have a staging area near this section of the Specific Trails Plan.

The third letter, authored by Andy Beeghly, addresses the concern that the trail system will be located between the river and the residents along Goodmanville Road and Shadow Hills Road. The trail system will not be running along the Kern River in this segment of the Specific Trails Plan, but along the Goodmanville Road right-of-way.

The February 19, 2003, memorandum from the Kern County Roads Department provides an explanation of why both the equestrian and pedestrian trail cannot both be transferred from the east side of Goodmanville Road to the west side.

The letter from the City of Bakersfield addresses several discrepancies between the Metropolitan Bakersfield Bikeway Master Plan (Bikeway Master Plan) and the Specific Trails Plan’s site analysis maps. These changes have been corrected on the Specific Trails Plan maps. The City also pointed out that the Bikeway Master Plan of the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan was not incorporated into the proposed Specific Trails Plan maps (Sheets 1 through 20). The staff believes that incorporating the Bikeway Master Plan will take away from the focus of the Specific Trails Plan for a multi-purpose trails system. Lastly, the City commented on the segment of the Bikeway Master Plan schematic which runs a Class 1 Bike Path along the Kern River from China Grade Loop to the other side of the Goodmanville Road residences’ properties. At this time, the County does not intend to adopt this segment of trail.

The letter from Chevron Texaco is in response to the EIR’s Response to Comments. Chevron Texaco prefers Alternative 4 of the EIR.

The letter from the State of California Department of Fish and Game provided information pertaining to responsible and trustee agency authority and possible threatened and endangered species that may be in the area. If a biological study is needed, this information will be taken into account.

Comments have also been received from the Kern County Parks and Recreation District. Staff responses are provided in italics.

(1) Page 14 - Panorama Park should be listed at 28 acres and Hart Park should be listed at 570 acres and is a part of Kern River County Park. These corrections will be made to the text.
(2) Page 18 - The comment concerning "staffing and funding as resources are made available" is critical to many of the comments in the plan connecting responsibility of maintenance, fire mitigation, safety hazards, protection of natural resources, etc. Is there a funding source identified?

_The plan recognizes that funding and staffing is dependent on budgetary matters. Chapter 10, Phasing and Funding, contains a matrix of possible funding sources._

(3) General - Many of the maps depict "Kern River State Recreation Area" next to Lake Ming. This is inaccurate. Kern River County Park used to be a State park in the 1920s.

_The maps will be corrected in the final text._

(4) Sheet 15A of 20 - The proposed unpaved multi-use trail (equestrian and pedestrian) that is located on the north side of Lake Ming could potentially be a problem. The lake is closed at various times during the year due to boat races. Entry fees are required. Is there a mitigation measure that could be used to control access to the lake from the proposed trail?

Additionally, the proposed Class III Bike Trail location identified on this sheet may change slightly as the project is developed. Construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2003.

Sheet 15B of 20 - The proposed unpaved multi-use trail (equestrian and pedestrian) located on the west side of Lake Ming could have potential conflicts with the current campsites at the Lake Ming campground. Can the location of the trail be adjusted to minimize conflicts with the campsites?

_Trail alignments shown in the text are subject to minor adjustment as a result of specific development projects, property divisions, and funding availability._

_Various portions of the trail system may be closed at various time for maintenance, construction, and other events._

(5) Chapter 10 (Implementation Phasing and Funding) - Granted, the description identifies possible funding strategies. However, this Department has not identified at this time where the Proposition 40 Per Capita or Roberti Z'berg Harris funding will be allocated. Additionally, the Parks Commission and the Board of Supervisors will have input of where the funding will be allocated. Therefore, this may be premature to list this source identifying the total amount of funding to this one project. Lastly, the Proposition 40 guidelines are being developed currently. Previously, the Proposition 12, Roberti Z'berg Harris funding required matching funds. This sheet shows no matching funds required.

_Chapter 10 notes that it contains a representative sample of possible funding strategies for the development of the trail system, other sources may be available. It is recognized that in the budgetary and grant application processes, certain projects will have priorities over others based on expressed desires of the public and the opinions of appointed and elected decision-makers._
Page 20 - Pedestrian Trails - Sign "pollution" may be an issue as identified in this area the requirement to have a sign for many different reasons. These decisions should be left to the department maintaining the trail.

_The cited section makes no mention of signage. Staff concurs, however, that an excess of signage is unwarranted._

Page 21 - Trailheads - Where are these locations identified in the plan? We were unable to locate. The amenities listed may be of concern due to the limited staff to maintain these facilities.

_The Glossary identifies "trailheads" as "Major entry for neighborhood residents and general public to access the trails system and where a number of support facilities can be provided for public use... Existing and future neighborhood parks, community parks, schools, park and ride transit centers, and urban plazas can also serve as trailheads...." A trailhead need only include a parking area and access to the trail. Various areas such as Hart Park, CALM, Lake Ming, the horse stable area at Manor Street, all could be trailheads._

Page 22 - Trail Access Points - Are these plotted on the maps? We were unable to locate.

_Specific trail access points have not been designated. They will be determined on a case-by-case basis._

Page 25 - Trail Surfacing - The surfacing identified (2-inch cap) may not meet the standards for fire trucks, etc.

_The two-inch trail surface is noted as a minimum. This section of the Specific Trails Plan also states: "The structural section of paved trails should be adequate to accommodate expected maintenance vehicles, fire trucks, etc."_

Page 27 - Orientation - Size of signs and frequency of signs is a concern and should be left to the decision of the department responsible for the trails. Signs for public information should not be included. This type of sign brings all types of information that would not be connected to the purpose of trails.

"Regional Trails Orientation Signage" should be amended to read: "This type of sign should be installed at all trailheads and major access points." These generic, large format signs should present a regional map that identifies the trail user's current location within the context of the existing local and regional trail system. These signs should be posted as necessary and be easily interpreted.

Page 32 - Management and Maintenance Plan - This entire section is dependent upon funding. The way it is written would be in a "perfect world" with funding not being an issue. Granted, the last bullet point states this; however, the statement should be first!

Additionally, why conform to the National Recreation and Park Association's Park Maintenance Standards? Why not use the County's Park Standards?
As noted, funding will determine the extent to which many of the programs contained in the plan are accomplished. Establishment and maintenance of a trails system will require prioritization of the expenditure of funds. This plan establishes a framework for the creation of such a system and its eventual maintenance.

Page 33 - Crime Prevention and Policing - Park Rangers are peace officers and issue citations and arrest people on a regular basis. Park Rangers are responsible for Kern River County Park, Buena Vista Aquatic Recreation Area, and the boat operations on Lake Isabella. This area needs to be updated.

There are no designated "trail maintenance staff." Park maintenance staff are responsible for park maintenance. Again, the issue of signs for various purposes needs to be evaluated due to "sign pollution." This should be the responsibility of the department maintaining the trails.

The first paragraph of this section should be changed to read "Primary law enforcement along the trails system will be the responsibility of Kern County Park Rangers." Rangers will patrol trail facilities, based on funding and available resources, by focusing on trailheads, river crossings, and responding to calls for assistance.

Page 34 - Litter and Vandalism Control and Vegetation Management - The work identified will be dependent upon funding. Again, what funding sources has been identified for ongoing maintenance?

As trails are incorporated into the County parks system, maintenance, including vandalism control and vegetation management, will become part of the Kern County Parks and Recreation District's ongoing operational budget.

Page 34 - Volunteer Participation Program - The wording needs to be changed to the Kern County Parks and Recreation District will welcome involvement from residents and community service groups interested....

Staff concurs with this change in wording.

Page 38 - No. 6 - Collection of horse waste will be done as needed. Wording needs changing.

The fourth bullet point on page 38 should be changed to read:

- Collection of horse wastes on trail segments located along the river shall be made as needed upon formation of the Trails Management and Maintenance Plan.

Implementation Phasing and Funding

Site-specific construction of the trail system will occur as public and/or private funding is available. A matrix has been incorporated into the Kern River Specific Trails Plan which provides possible grant funding sources. With the adoption of the Specific Trails Plan, the County will be eligible to pursue various public grants and private funding.
The mitigation measures from the Specific Trails Plan EIR have been incorporated into the Specific Trails Plan as implementation which can be found in Chapter 10.

PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT:

A Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared in accordance with the State of California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines. All of the mitigation from the Program EIR will be placed into the Kern River Specific Trails Plan as implementation.

Due to the physical extent of this project, supplemental environmental documentation may be needed to address site-specific issues. All of the issues identified in this Program EIR were mitigated to less than significant. The following is a brief summary of those issues which were mitigated.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The implementation of the Kern River Specific Trails Plan may impact the hydrology and water quality of the Kern River. The trails which are paved would provide an impermeable surface and may incrementally increase the stormwater runoff during the winter months. Also, during construction which is located close to the Kern River, grading activities may result in unwanted erosion. These impacts were mitigated to less than significant by requiring temporary soil stabilization during construction and a permanent native landscaping plan on both sides of the paved and unpaved trail(s). The careful placement of the trails avoids unstable slopes and shall be engineered so as to direct runoff to the edges of the trail in a safe manor. At the time of issuance of the grading permit, a site plan shall be provided detailing appropriate erosion control measures through the Development Plan.

Equestrian users currently use unofficial spur trails within the project area. Upon the adoption of the Kern River Specific Trails Plan, equestrian use is expected to increase and become concentrated onto one officially established trail, thereby increasing the horse excrement on that trail which may impact the water quality of the Kern River. The impacts from horse excrement are significant when the waste is concentrated in one area. The length of the trail will naturally dilute the waste concentration; however, during the rainy season, horse waste will more quickly enter into the Kern River. Prior to and during the rainy season, there will be regular collection of horse wastes on the trail which will be detailed in the Trail Management and Maintenance Plan. Horse excrement in the proposed equestrian campsite will be required to be placed in a central disposal location so as to ensure that the waste will not enter into the Kern River. The location of the equestrian camp will not be within the primary or secondary floodplain. This impact has been mitigated to less than significant.

Biological Resources

Development of the Specific Trails Plan may lead to the disturbance of existing vegetation and animal habitats along the Kern River and on individual trail and facility sites. All areas developed outside the primary floodway will be covered by the Metropolitan Bakersfield Habitat Conservation Plan. If any of the trail facilities are located within the primary floodway, biological assessments will be performed as part of site-specific projects under the Specific Trails Plan. These biological assessments will determine the presence of sensitive plants and animals and develop appropriate
measures to protect, preserve, or replant the sensitive species. This impact has been mitigated to less than significant.

Archeological Resources

While no archaeological sites have been specifically found within the project area, the Kern River and the surrounding area has a rich cultural history making this area highly sensitive for archaeological and paleontological resources. The grading and excavation associated with the trail system and public facilities may uncover unknown archaeological and paleontological resources. Prior to grading of any portion of the proposed trail system and associated facilities, an archaeological survey shall be required if the proposed work will occur in a previously unsurveyed area. This impact has been mitigated to less than significant.

CONCLUSION:

As the County receives funding for the development of the trail system and facilities, biological and archaeological resources will be analyzed on a section-by-section basis. Supplemental environmental documents may be needed to mitigate the issues that arise from these analyses. Much of the land being utilized by this Specific Trails Plan is County-owned road rights-of-way and existing public access easements. If the portions of private land utilized by this plan are no longer available at the time of development, possible alternative routes may be designed and environmentally analyzed at that time. It is Staff’s opinion that approval of this project is consistent with the policies and provisions in the Kern River Plan Element of the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan. The mitigation measures are included in the text as implementation of the Kern River Specific Trails Plan.

PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING

The Specific Plan was heard by the Planning Commission on July 24, 2003. Four speakers expressed their support of the project. One commenter, who supported the plan, also felt that normal bicycle riders may be more encouraged to commute to work if the paved bike trail along Alfred Harrell Highway was realigned to cut across on the bluff located above Shadow Hills Road and did not travel up the tough hill on Alfred Harrell Highway towards China Grade Loop.

After considering the evidence and testimony, the Commission voted to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the project with Staff recommended changes as noted previously in this report.

PUBLIC INQUIRY OR CORRESPONDENCE: Helt Engineering, Inc.; Beverly and Thomas Banks; Andrew and Kathy Beeghly; Kern County Roads Department; City of Bakersfield; ChevronTexaco; State of California Fish and Game; Kern County Parks and Recreation District

CEQA ACTION: Program Environmental Impact Report

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: Certify the Environmental Impact Report and adopt Section 15091 Findings; adopt resolution approving the Kern River Specific Trails Plan
BASIS FOR APPROVAL AND RECOMMENDED FINDINGS:

(1) The applicable provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Kern County Guidelines have been duly observed in conjunction with said hearing in the consideration of this matter and all of the previous proceedings relating thereto.

(2) This project is recommended for approval despite the existence of certain significant environmental effects identified in said Environmental Impact Report, and this Commission recommends the Board of Supervisors make and adopt the findings with respect to each thereof set forth in Exhibit A, appended hereto and made a part hereof by reference, pursuant to Section 15091 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, Administrative Code) and Section 21081 of the Public Resources Code and declares that it considered the evidence described in connection with each such finding in Exhibit A and that such evidence is substantial and supports such finding.

Said Environmental Impact Report is complete and adequate in scope and has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and with the State CEQA Guidelines and the Kern County Guidelines for implementation thereof.

(3) The effect upon the environment of such project and the activities and improvements which may be carried out thereunder will not be substantial and will not interfere with maintenance of a high-quality environment now or in the future. Mitigation measures have been incorporated from the Environmental Impact Report as implementation policies of the Kern River Trails Specific Plan.

(4) The Kern River Specific Trails Plan is consistent and will implement the goals and policies of the Kern River Plan Element.

(5) Adoption of the Kern River Specific Trails Plan will increase the recreational, exercise, wildlife viewing, and environmental education opportunities for the residents of Kern County.

(6) Adoption of the Kern River Specific Trails Plan will link to the City of Bakersfield’s Kern River Parkway Plan, thereby extending the potential trail system.

(7) Adoption of the Kern River Specific Trails Plan will provide an aesthetically pleasing environment and recreational use for the residents of Kern County.

(8) Adoption of the Kern River Specific Trails Plan will allow the County to seek many alternative funding sources for the development of a trail system along the Kern River.

(9) Said Environmental Impact Report is complete and adequate in scope and has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and with the State CEQA Guidelines and the Kern County Guidelines for implementation thereof.

(10) This project is recommended for approval despite the existence of certain environmental effects identified in said Environmental Impact Report, and the Planning Commission
recommends that the Board of Supervisors make and adopt the findings pursuant to Section 15091 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, Administrative Code) and Section 21081 of the Public Resources Code.

DBR:AJZ:pd:je

Attachments