



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

DWR Perris Dam Emergency Release Facility Project EIR

To: Calif. Office of Planning and Research
Responsible and Trustee Agencies
Other Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Preparation of Environmental Impact Report

Project: Perris Dam Emergency Release Facility

Lead Agency: Department of Water Resources

Date: September 9, 2013

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared to notify agencies and interested parties that the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as the Lead Agency is beginning preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the proposed Perris Dam Emergency Release Facility Project (proposed project). The proposed project is located 15 miles south of the City of Riverside. A portion of the project is located in unincorporated Riverside County and a portion of the project is located in the City of Perris. The proposed project includes construction improvements that would allow DWR to safely convey water released from Lake Perris in the event of an emergency by diverting the flow path away from residential and commercial development and towards the Perris Valley Channel.

DWR is soliciting the input from interested persons and agencies to assist in the development of the scope and content of the environmental information to be studied in the EIR. In accordance with CEQA, agencies are requested to review the project description provided in this NOP and provide comments on environmental issues related to the statutory responsibilities of the agency. The EIR will be used by DWR when considering approval of the proposed project.

In accordance with CEQA, comments to the NOP must be received by DWR no later than 30 days after publication of this notice. We request that comments to this NOP be received no later than October 9, 2013.

Please include a return address and contact name with your comments and send them via mail or email to the address shown below:

California Department of Water Resources
c/o Tom Barnes, ESA
626 Wilshire Boulevard, Ste. 1100
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Email: tbarnes@esassoc.com
Telephone: 213-599-4300

A public scoping meeting will be held to receive public comments and suggestions on the project. It will include a brief presentation providing an overview of the proposed project. After the presentation, oral comments will be accepted. Written comment forms will be made available for those who wish to submit comments in writing at the scoping meeting. The scoping meeting will be open to the public and held at the following location:

**Harrison Hall
Lake Perris Fairgrounds
18700 Lake Perris Dr.
Perris, CA 92571**

At 6:00 pm on Thursday, September 19, 2013

PROJECT LOCATION

DWR operates the State Water Project (SWP), which supplies water to 29 contracting agencies across the State. The SWP includes an extensive system of aqueducts and pipelines that convey water from the Feather River and Sacramento River watersheds through the Central Valley into its terminus at Lake Perris in Riverside County (**Figure 1**). The proposed project is approximately 15 miles south of the City of Riverside. The proposed project is located in unincorporated western Riverside County and the City of Perris. A majority of the proposed project is located within the boundaries of the Lake Perris State Recreation Area (SRA).

PROJECT BACKGROUND

When Perris Dam was initially constructed, there was little development between the dam and the Perris Valley Channel. The dam's emergency release facility was designed and constructed to release up to 3,800 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water downstream of the dam, allowing the water to form its own overland channel, resulting in a maximum inundation area of 2,700 acres. Over time, the areas downstream of the dam were developed with residential land uses that could be affected should an emergency release be needed. The existing emergency outlet structure consists of a rectangular pipe (12 feet by 6 feet), slide gate, and bulkhead, capable of releasing a maximum of 3,800 cfs of water in case of dam failure requiring an emergency release. The new Emergency Release Facility (ERF) would be sized to accommodate up to 3,800 cfs which is the current emergency drawdown capacity requirement set by the California Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) for Lake Perris. The potential for dam failure is extremely remote, however, as currently designed, water released from the dam in an emergency could flood downstream residents because there is no conveyance structure to contain or direct the emergency flows.

DWR certified the Perris Dam Remediation Program Final EIR in November 2011 that covered three components: the dam remediation, the outlet tower replacement, and an emergency outlet extension. The emergency outlet extension component provided a similar function to the proposed ERF. Due to public comments received during the scoping period, and because a new emergency outlet was not required to address the independent concerns of seismic safety that gave rise to the Dam Remediation Program, DWR did not certify the emergency outlet extension component of the EIR and committed to evaluate the outlet in a subsequent CEQA analysis. The proposed project is the revised alternative.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

DWR is proposing to modify the existing valve and control system, and to construct an emergency release facility that would convey up to 3,800 cfs of water from the Perris Dam over State-owned land to the Perris Valley Channel, if failure was imminent or if there were a significant threat of failure.

The proposed project would upgrade the existing outlet structure and develop three levees, a weir, a concrete chute or unlined trapezoidal channel and an earthen channel that would be capable of conveying emergency releases to the Perris Valley Channel. The proposed project components encompass approximately 40 acres of temporary and permanent impacts. **Figure 2** identifies the proposed project site and project components.

DISCUSSION OF IMPACTS

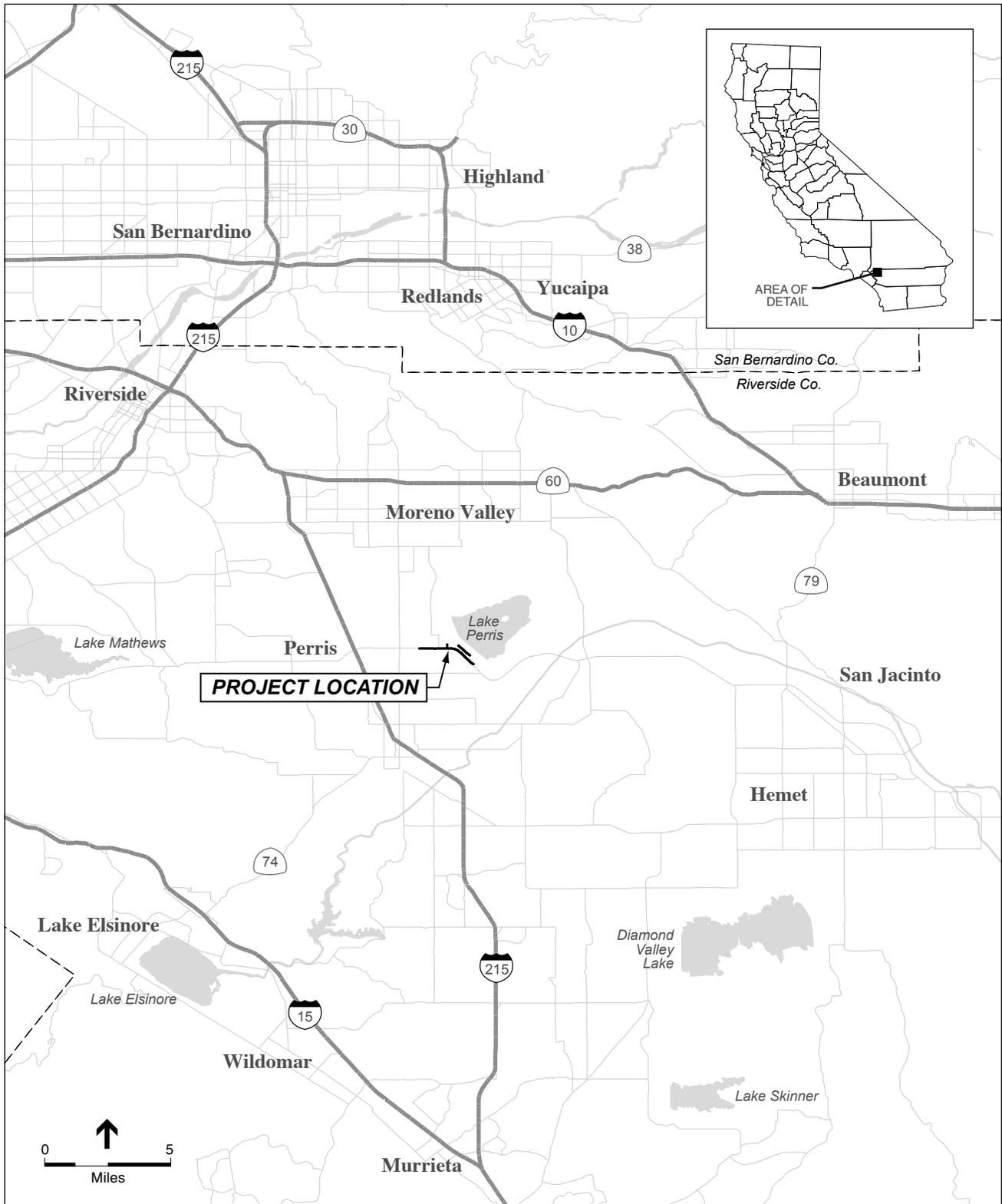
The EIR will assess the physical changes to the environment that would likely result from construction of the Perris Dam Emergency Release Facility, including direct, indirect and cumulative impacts. Potential impacts of the proposed project are summarized below. The EIR will identify mitigation measures if necessary to minimize potentially significant impacts of the proposed project.

Aesthetics

The project area is surrounded by both urban built up land to the south, open space areas to the north and east, as well as some agricultural areas to the north and west. A portion of the project is located in the Lake Perris SRA. Visual resources in the project vicinity may be temporarily impacted during construction, specifically views from hiking, bicycle, and horse trails along the foot of Perris Dam. Views of Perris Dam, the Perris Fairgrounds and open space areas adjacent to the Perris Fairgrounds from Ramona Expressway would also be permanently impacted. The EIR will evaluate the proposed project for impacts related to visual resources, including consistency of the project with the Riverside County General Plan, the City of Perris General Plan, local ordinances and state and federal regulations. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to aesthetic resources, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Air Quality

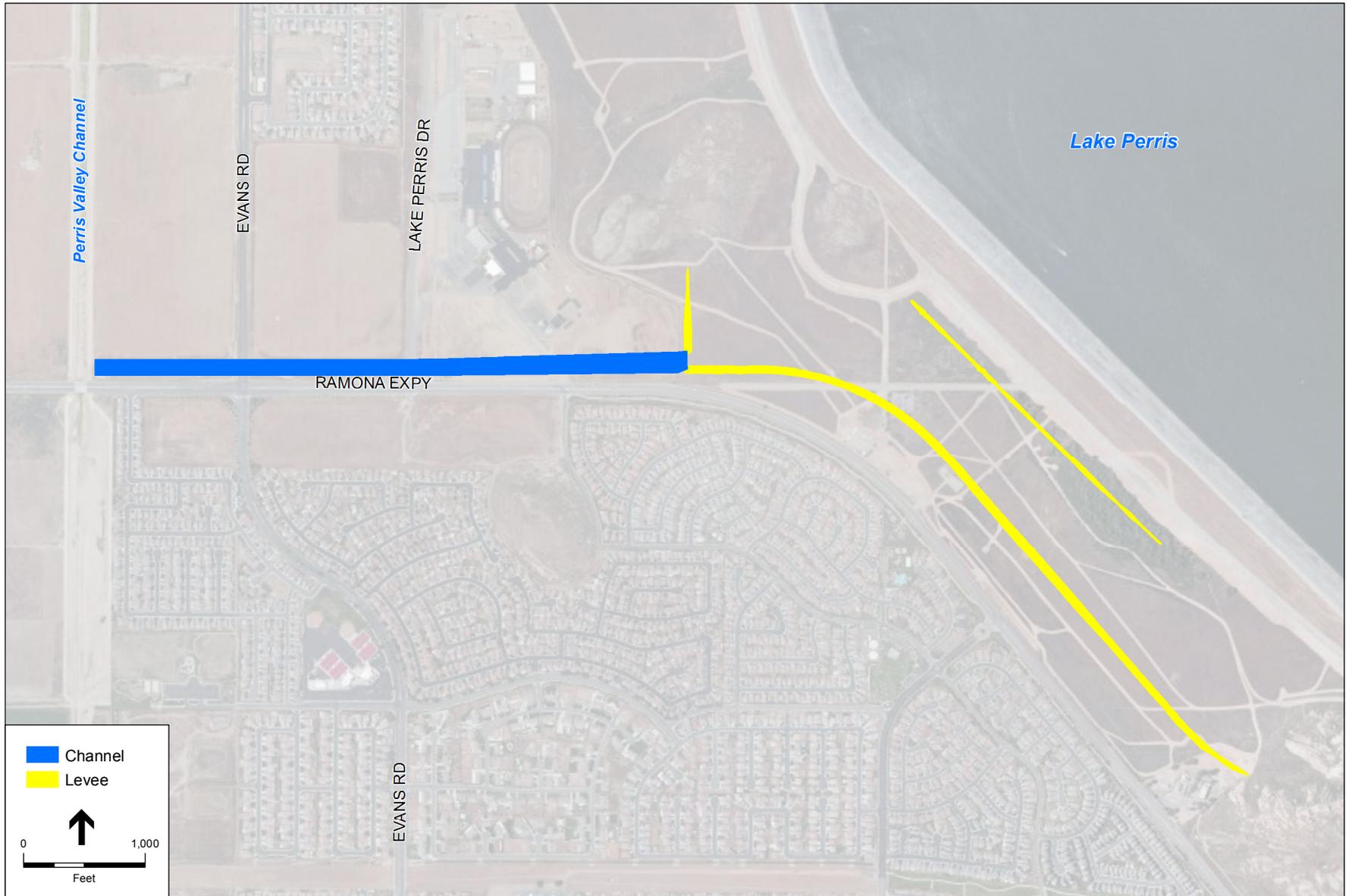
The proposed project is located within the South Coast Air Basin. Construction of the proposed project would generate emissions from construction equipment exhaust, earth movement, construction workers' commute, and material hauling. The EIR will evaluate the effects of construction activities on air quality. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to air quality, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.



SOURCE: Riverside County, 2013

Perris Dam Emergency Release Facility . 120083.02

Figure 1
Regional Location Map



SOURCE: Bing Maps

Perris Dam Emergency Release Facility . 120083.02

Figure 2
Project Location

Biological Resources

The EIR will evaluate the potential impact of the proposed project on sensitive species and habitats of special concern. The Lake Perris SRA is designated as public/quasi-public land within the Western Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and is located within Core H of the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan (SKR HCP). The EIR will evaluate the consistency of the proposed project with the MSHCP, SKR HCP, Riverside County General Plan, local ordinances, and state and federal regulations.

The proposed project area is located adjacent to existing Los Angeles pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris brevinasus*) and Stephens' kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*) habitat. The EIR will evaluate the potential impact of the proposed project on sensitive species and their associated habitat. The proposed project will be designed to be consistent with the MSHCP and SKR HCP requirements. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to biological resources, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Cultural Resources

A 2007 archival search identified 22 previously recorded sites within 0.5-miles of the proposed project site. Excavation for the proposed project could uncover previously unknown archaeological or paleontological resources. Other historic resources may exist in the area. The EIR will assess the potential effects of the proposed project on cultural resources in the project vicinity. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to cultural resources, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Geology and Soils

The proposed project is located in a seismically active region. Construction associated with the ERF will be subject to potential seismic hazards including soil liquefaction associated with ground shaking. In addition, construction activities could expose soils to increased erosion. The EIR will summarize previous geologic and engineering studies that evaluated seismic and geologic hazards in the project area, and will also evaluate construction impacts to soils and unique geologic features in the region. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to due to geology or soils, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Greenhouse Gases

Construction of the proposed project would emit greenhouse gases from construction equipment exhaust, construction workers' commutes, and material hauling. The EIR will evaluate the contribution of construction activity greenhouse gas emissions to global climate change. The EIR will evaluate the proposed project's consistency with DWR's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan. If it is determined that the project will have

significant impacts to contributing to greenhouse gases, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Excavation activities could uncover contaminated soils or hazardous substances that pose a hazard to human health or the environment. The EIR will assess the potential for encountering such hazards. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts related to hazards, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Hydrology, Groundwater and Water Quality

The EIR will evaluate the impact of the proposed project on surface hydrology, groundwater hydrology, and water quality. In addition, potential impacts to the Perris Valley Channel will also be analyzed. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts related to hydrology, groundwater or water quality, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Land Use

Construction and implementation of the proposed project would result in the removal of a portion of the existing motocross facility and existing overflow parking area at the Perris Fairgrounds. Additionally, construction activities associated with the proposed project could result in short-term disturbances to other adjacent land uses. The EIR will evaluate the project's consistency with the General Plans for the City of Perris and the County of Riverside. The EIR will evaluate the proposed project's compatibility with neighboring land uses (i.e., residential, commercial, open space etc.). If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to related to land use compatibility, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Noise

Construction of the proposed project would generate noise and vibration that could potentially affect nearby sensitive receptors. The EIR will evaluate the proximity of sensitive receptors to the project site and if necessary. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to related to noise, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Recreation

Construction and implementation of the proposed project would result in the disruption of recreational activities at the Perris Fairgrounds, including removal of a portion of the existing motocross facility and overflow parking area. In addition, impacts to the frequency of recreational users at the Lake Perris SRA will be analyzed. The EIR will evaluate the effects of the proposed project on the Perris Fairgrounds, Lake Perris SRA, and surrounding areas. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to

recreational opportunities, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Traffic and Transportation

Construction of the proposed project is estimated to take two years, and could temporarily increase traffic, due to lane closures, worker commute and material deliveries. Development of the proposed project would be required to cross three roadways to the north of Ramona Expressway: Evans Road, Lake Perris Drive, and Avalon Parkway, and could include full or partial road closures. In addition, an entrance to the Fairgrounds off Ramona Expressway would also be impacted temporarily by the proposed project. The EIR will evaluate the impact of the proposed project on traffic and circulation at the project site and potential hazardous design features. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to traffic and transportation, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.

Utilities and Service Systems

The proposed project will result in new water conveyance system which may impact existing storm water drainage facilities. The proposed project may also have temporary impacts to local utility distribution systems. The EIR will assess impacts to local utilities and service systems. If it is determined that the project will have significant impacts to utilities and service systems, mitigation measures will be identified to reduce the impacts to less than significant where feasible.