

**STAFF REPORT
27**

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Lease 6850.1
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J. Holt

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**GENERAL LEASE – RECREATIONAL
AND PROTECTIVE STRUCTURE USE**

APPLICANT:

John W. Knickerbocker, Trustee of the John W. Knickerbocker Trust dated December 8, 2014

PROPOSED LEASE:

AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign land in Steamboat Slough, adjacent to 14153 Grand Island Road, near Walnut Grove, Sacramento County.

AUTHORIZED USE:

Use and maintenance of an existing boat dock, two pilings, ramp, and bank protection.

LEASE TERM:

10 years, beginning May 8, 2020.

CONSIDERATION:

Boat dock, two pilings, and ramp: \$140 per year, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment.

Bank protection: The public use and benefit, with the State reserving the right at any time to set a monetary rent if the Commission finds such action to be in the State's best interests.

SPECIFIC LEASE PROVISIONS:

- Liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.
- Lessee agrees and acknowledges hazards associated with sea-level rise may require additional maintenance or protection strategies regarding the improvements on the Lease Premises.

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STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

Authority:

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6321, 6321.2, 6501.1, 6503, and 6503.5; California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

Public Trust and State's Best Interests Analysis:

On October 29, 2010, the Commission authorized a 10-year General Lease – Recreational and Protective Structure Use to John W. Knickerbocker and Alison F. Knickerbocker, as Co-Trustees of the John W. Knickerbocker and Alison F. Knickerbocker Family Trust dated December 20, 1999 ([Item C14, October 29, 2010](#)). That lease expired on May 7, 2020. On November 12, 2015, John W. Knickerbocker became the sole trustee and owner of the upland parcel. The Applicant is now applying for a General Lease – Recreational and Protective Structure Use, for the use and maintenance of an existing boat dock, two pilings, ramp, and bank protection in Steamboat Slough.

The proposed lease area contains the same facilities as included in the prior lease. The boat dock and appurtenant facilities are designed for recreational boating and fishing purposes. Recreational boating and fishing are water-dependent activities and are generally consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine. The California Legislature has identified private recreational boating facilities as an authorized use of Public Trust lands (Pub. Resources Code, § 6503.5). The bank protection enhances the integrity of the river channel for future navigation by the public.

The proposed lease does not alienate the State's fee simple interest or permanently impair public rights. The lease is limited to a 10-year term, does not grant the lessee exclusive rights to the lease premises, and reserves an easement to the public for Public Trust-consistent uses. Upon termination of the lease, the lessee may be required to remove the improvements from State land.

The proposed lease requires the lessee to insure the lease premises and indemnify the State for any liability incurred as a result of the lessee's activities thereon. The lease also requires the payment of annual rent to compensate the people of the State for the occupation of the public land involved.

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Climate Change:

Climate change impacts, including sea-level rise, more frequent and intense storm events, and increased flooding and erosion affect both open coastal areas and inland waterways in California. The subject facilities are located on Steamboat Slough, in a tidally influenced site vulnerable to flooding at current sea levels, and at a higher risk of flood exposure given projected scenarios of sea-level rise.

The California Ocean Protection Council updated the State of California Sea-Level Rise Guidance in 2018 to provide a synthesis of the best available science on sea-level rise projections and rates. Commission staff evaluated the “high emissions,” “medium-high risk aversion” scenario to apply a conservative approach based on both current emission trajectories and the lease location and structures. The San Francisco tide gauge was used for the projected sea-level rise scenario for the region as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Projected Sea-Level Rise for San Francisco¹

Year	Projection (feet)
2030	0.8
2040	1.3
2050	1.9
2100	6.9

Source: Table 13, State of California Sea-Level Rise Guidance: 2018 Update

Note: ¹ Projections are with respect to a 1991 to 2009 baseline.

Rising sea levels can lead to more frequent flood inundation in low-lying areas and larger tidal events and could increase Steamboat Slough’s inundation levels within the lease area over the term of the lease. In addition, as stated in *Safeguarding California Plan: 2018 Update* (California Natural Resources Agency 2018), climate change is projected to increase the frequency and severity of natural disasters related to flooding and storms (especially when coupled with sea-level rise). In rivers and tidally influenced waterways, more frequent and powerful storms can result in increased flooding conditions and damage from storm-created debris as well as decreased bank stability and structure. Conversely, climate-change induced droughts could decrease river levels and flow for extended periods of time. Climate change and sea-level rise will further influence riverine areas by changing erosion and sedimentation rates. Flooding and storm flow, as well as runoff, will likely increase scour and decrease bank stability at a faster rate.

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The combination of these projected conditions could increase the likelihood of damage and affect access to structures within the lease premises during the term of the lease. For example, the potential for more frequent and stronger storm events may expose the lease area structures to higher flood risks and cause facilities to be damaged or dislodged, presenting hazards to public safety as well as dangers for navigation within the channel. Conversely, prolonged drought conditions could lower water levels, exposing previously submerged structures to the elements and potentially leading to increased wear-and-tear on the pilings and dock. Lowered water levels could also reduce navigability of the channel, thereby increasing hazards and impacting the function and utility of the lease area structures.

The dock and ramp are adaptable to variable water levels, allowing them to rise and fall with storms and droughts, and increasing their resiliency to some climate change impacts, but may require more frequent maintenance to ensure continued functionality during and after storm seasons and to avoid dislodgement. The fixed pilings and bank protection may need reinforcement to withstand higher levels of flood exposure.

Pursuant to the proposed lease, the Applicant acknowledges that the lease premises and adjacent upland (not within the lease area) are located in an area that may be subject to effects of climate change, including sea-level rise.

Conclusion:

For all the reasons above, staff believes the issuance of this lease will not substantially impair the public rights to navigation and fishing or substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the foreseeable term of the lease; is consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine; and is in the best interests of the State.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. Approval or denial of the application is a discretionary action by the Commission. Each time the Commission approves or rejects a use of sovereign land, it exercises legislatively delegated authority and responsibility as trustee of the State's Public Trust lands as authorized by law. If the Commission denies the application, the Applicant/prior lessee may be required to remove the existing boat dock, two pilings, ramp, and bank protection and restore the premises to their original condition. Upon expiration or prior termination of the lease, the lessee also has no right to a new lease or to renewal of any previous lease.

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2. This action is consistent with Strategy 1.1 of the Commission's Strategic Plan to deliver the highest levels of public health and safety in the protection, preservation, and responsible economic use of the lands and resources under the Commission's jurisdiction.
3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subsection (a)(2).

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15300 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905.

EXHIBITS:

- A. Land Description
- B. Site and Location Map

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is recommended that the Commission:

CEQA FINDING:

Find that the activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 as a categorically exempt project, Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:

Find that the issuance of the proposed lease will not substantially impair the public rights to navigation and fishing or substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the foreseeable term of the lease; is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine; and is in the best interests of the State.

AUTHORIZATION:

Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Recreational and Protective Structure Use to the Applicant beginning May 8, 2020, for a term of 10 years, for the use and maintenance of an existing boat dock, two pilings, ramp, and bank protection; as described in Exhibit A and shown on Exhibit B (for reference purposes only) attached and by this reference made a part hereof; consideration for the boat dock, two pilings, and ramp: \$140 per year, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment; consideration

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for the bank protection: the public use and benefit; with the State reserving the right at any time to set a monetary rent if the Commission finds such action to be in the State's best interests; and liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.

EXHIBIT A

LEASE 6850.1

LAND DESCRIPTION

A parcel of tide and submerged land situated in the bed of the Steamboat Slough, lying adjacent to Swamp and Overflow Lands Survey 494, patented February 28, 1871, County of Sacramento, State of California, more particularly described as follows:

All those lands underlying an existing boat dock, ramp, and two pilings lying adjacent to that parcel described in Interspousal Transfer Deed recorded November 12, 2015, as Document Number 20151112 at Page 1816 in Official Records of Sacramento County.

TOGETHER WITH any applicable impact area.

ALSO TOGETHER WITH that land lying immediately beneath any bank protection structure lying adjacent to said deed.

EXCEPTING THEREFROM any portion lying landward of the ordinary high water mark of the left bank of Steamboat Slough.

Accompanying plat is hereby made part of this description.

END OF DESCRIPTION

Prepared 04/10/2020 by the California State Lands Commission Boundary Unit.



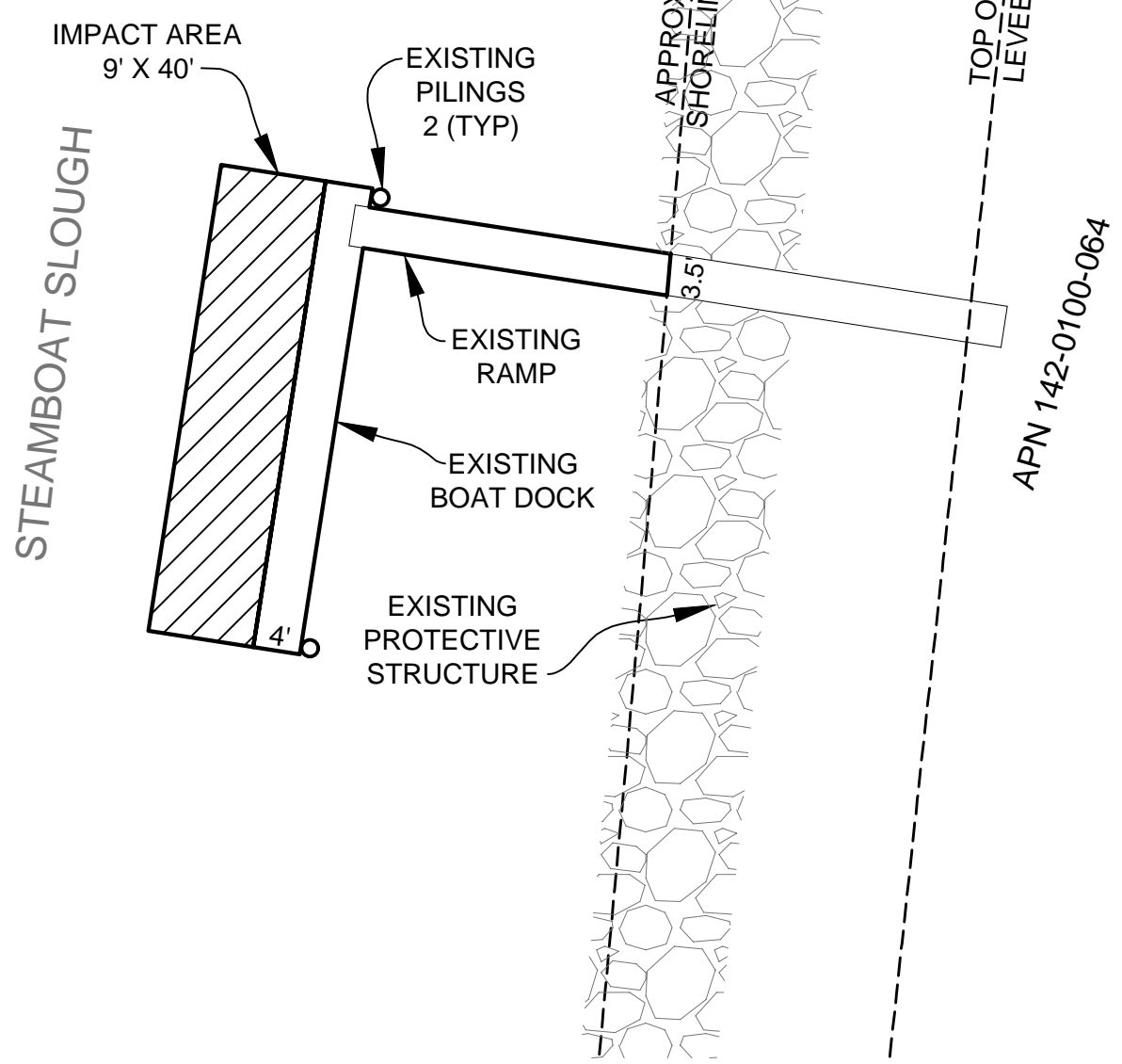
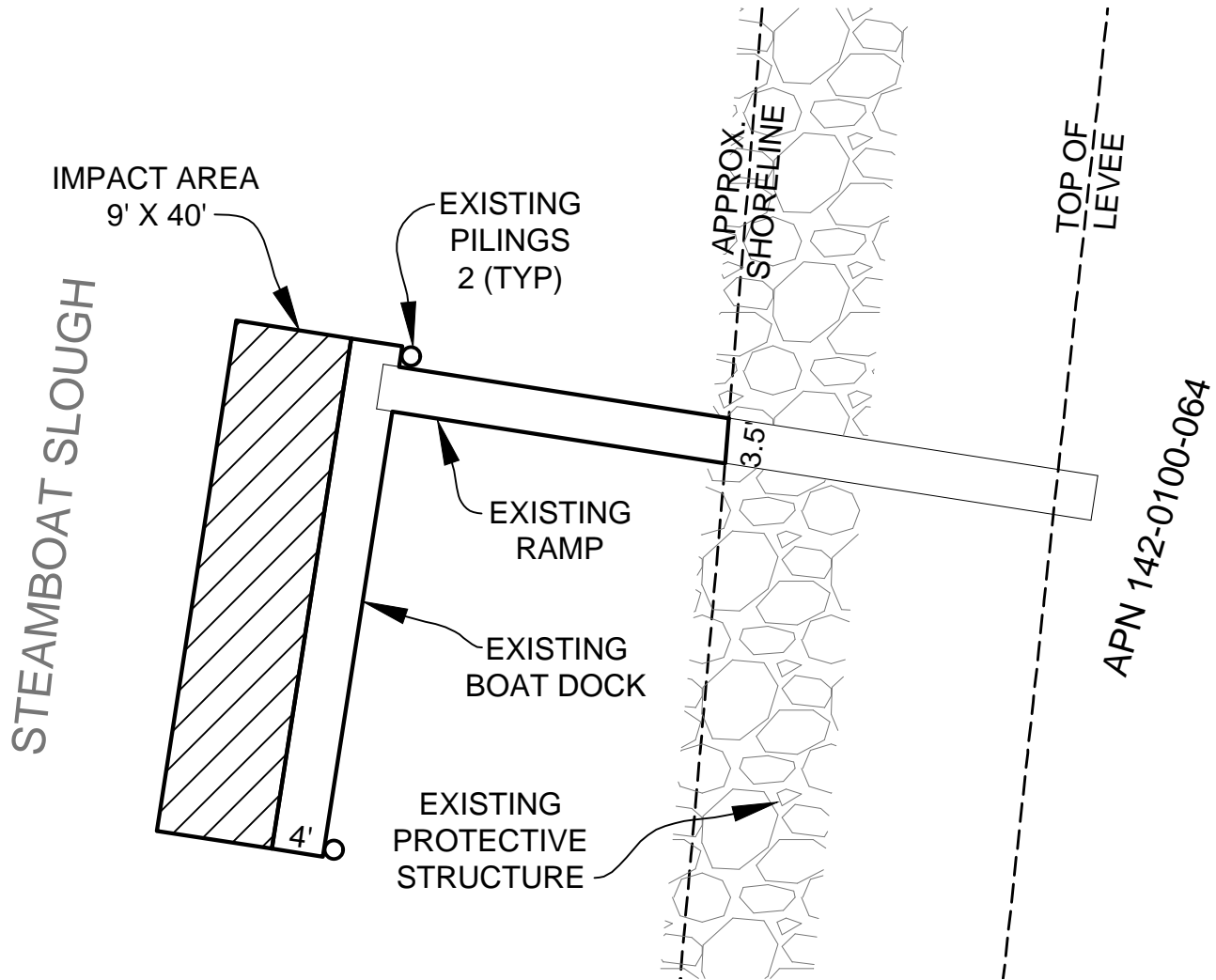


EXHIBIT A



NO SCALE

SITE



14153 GRAND ISLAND ROAD, NEAR WALNUT GROVE

NO SCALE

LOCATION

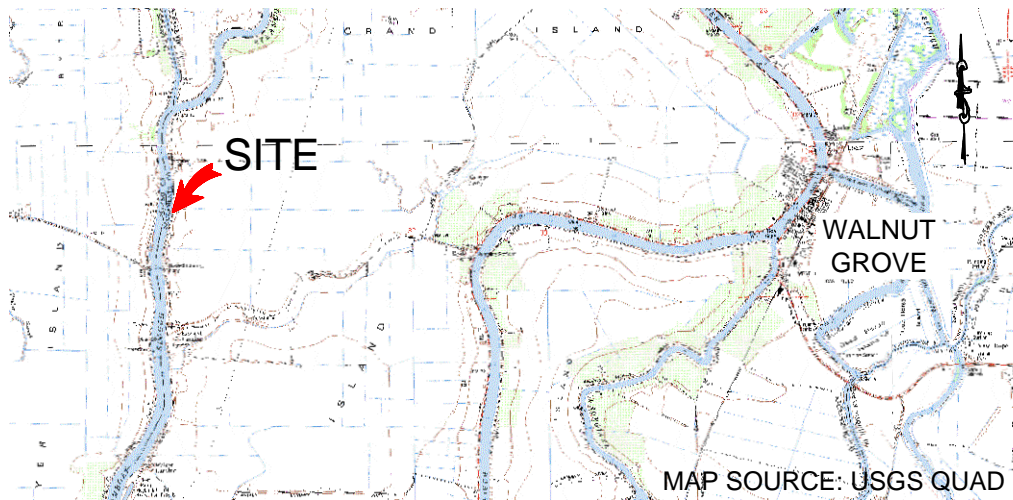


EXHIBIT B

LEASE 6850.1
 KNICKERBOCKER TRUST
 APN 142-0100-064
 GENERAL LEASE -
 RECREATIONAL &
 PROTECTIVE STRUCTURE USE
 SACRAMENTO COUNTY



THIS EXHIBIT IS SOLELY FOR PURPOSES OF GENERALLY DEFINING THE LEASE PREMISES, IS BASED ON UNVERIFIED INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE LESSEE OR OTHER PARTIES AND IS NOT INTENDED TO BE, NOR SHALL IT BE CONSTRUED AS, A WAIVER OR LIMITATION OF ANY STATE INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT OR ANY OTHER PROPERTY.

RGB 4/10/20