

Staff Report 17

APPLICANT:

Pamela B. Wittpen, Trustee of the Pamela B. Wittpen Family Trust under declaration of trust dated August 9, 1995

PROPOSED ACTION:

Issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use

AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign land in the Sacramento River, adjacent to 6882 Arabella Way at Garcia Bend, near Sacramento, Sacramento County.

AUTHORIZED USE:

Continued use and maintenance of an existing boat dock, ramp, and four pilings.

TERM:

10 years, beginning March 29, 2022.

CONSIDERATION:

\$692 per year; with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment.

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.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

AUTHORITY:

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

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:

On May 10, 2007, the Commission authorized a Recreational Pier Lease to the Applicant under a different trust, for the use and maintenance of an existing boat dock, gangway, and pilings ([Item 02, May 10, 2007](#)). After Commission authorization, it came to staff's attention that the Applicant's upland property was not improved with a residence, and therefore the Applicant did not qualify for a Recreational Pier Lease under Public Resources Code section 6503.5 as it was written at the time. The lease was never executed. Public Resources Code section 6503.5 was amended, effective January 1, 2012. The applicant qualifies for a General Lease – Recreational Use under the Public Resources Code as currently in effect.

On March 29, 2012, staff recommended that the Commission rescind the authorization made by the Commission at its May 10, 2007 meeting and that a new General Lease - Recreational Use be issued to Pamela B. Wittpen, as Trustee of the Pamela B. Wittpen Family Trust dated August 29, 1995, for use and maintenance of an uncovered floating boat dock, ramp, and four pilings ([Item 14, March 29, 2012](#)). That lease is set to expire on March 28, 2022.

On June 14, 2013, ownership of the upland parcel transferred from Pamela B. Wittpen to Pamela B. Wittpen, Trustee of the Pamela B. Wittpen Family Trust under declaration of trust dated August 9, 1995. The Applicant is now applying for a General Lease – Recreational Use, for the continued use and maintenance of an existing boat dock, ramp, and four pilings.

The Applicant owns the upland adjoining the lease premises. The subject facilities are privately owned and maintained. The boat dock and appurtenant facilities are used for the docking and mooring of boats and facilitate recreational boating. Recreational boating is a water-dependent use that is 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 land (Pub. Resources Code, § 6503.5).

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 all 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 payment of annual rent to compensate the people of the State for the occupation of the public land involved.

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 the Sacramento River 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 Francisco

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: 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 Sacramento River'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, fire, drought, extreme heat, 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.

The combination of these projected conditions could also 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. 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 fixed piles may need reinforcement and possibly replacement to withstand higher levels of flood exposure and more frequent storm events. The existing boat 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 or replacement to ensure continued function during and after storm seasons and to avoid dislodgement of dock facilities.

Regular maintenance, as referenced in the lease, may reduce the likelihood of severe structural degradation or dislodgement. Pursuant to the proposed lease, the Applicant acknowledges that the lease premises and adjacent upland are located in an area that may be subject to the effects of climate change, including sea-level rise.

CONCLUSION:

For all the reasons above, staff believes the issuance of this lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs at this location, at this time, and for the foreseeable term of the proposed 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 may be required to remove the boat dock, ramp, and four pilings 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.

2. This action is consistent with the "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs" and the "Leading Climate Activism" Strategic Focus Areas of the Commission's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.
3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of the 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, subdivision (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 proposed lease will not substantially impair the public rights to navigation and fishing or substantially interfere with the Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the foreseeable term of the proposed lease; is consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine; and is in the best interests of the State.

AUTHORIZATION:

Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use to the Applicant beginning March 29, 2022, for a term of 10 years, for the continued use and maintenance of an existing boat dock, ramp, and four pilings, as described in Exhibit A and shown on Exhibit B (for reference purposes only) attached and by this reference made a part hereof; annual rent in the amount of \$692, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment; and liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.

EXHIBIT A

LEASE 8744

LAND DESCRIPTION

A parcel of tide and submerged land situate in the bed of the Sacramento River, lying adjacent to Swamp and Overflowed Land Survey 165, patented November 17, 1874, County of Sacramento, State of California and more particularly described as follows:

All those lands underlying two existing boat dock, ramp and four pilings lying adjacent to PARCEL 5 as shown on that certain Parcel Map, filed July 7, 1986 in Book 95 of Parcel Maps at Page 6 in Records Office of said County.

TOGETHER WITH any applicable Impact Area(s).

EXCEPTING THEREFROM any portion lying landward of the ordinary high water mark of the left bank of said River.

Accompanying plat is hereby made part of this description.

END OF DESCRIPTION

Prepared 08/10/2021 by the California State Lands Commission Boundary Unit



NO SCALE

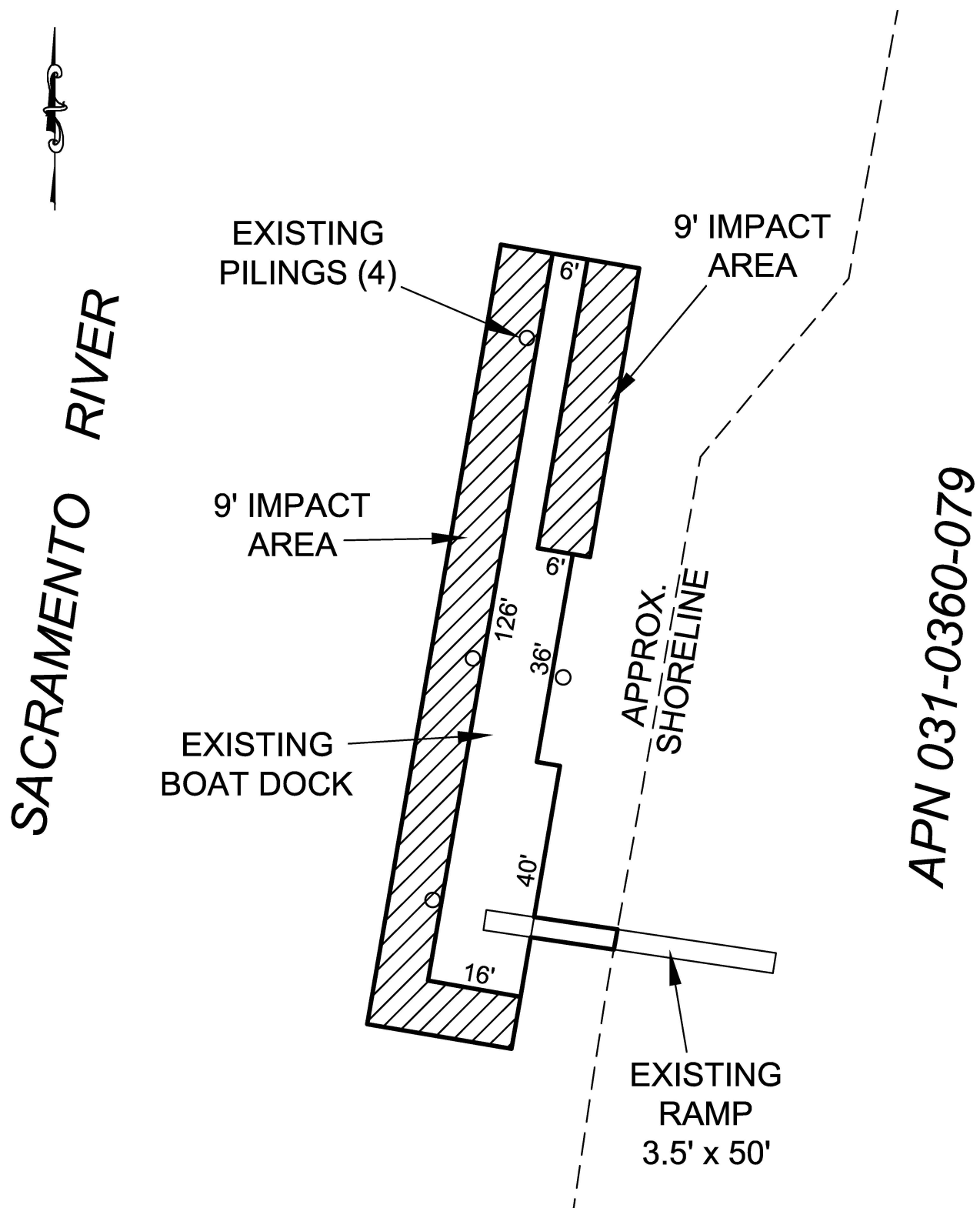


EXHIBIT A

Page 2 of 2

TS 08/10/2021

LAND DESCRIPTION PLAT
LEASE 8744, WITPEN FAMILY TRUST
SACRAMENTO COUNTY

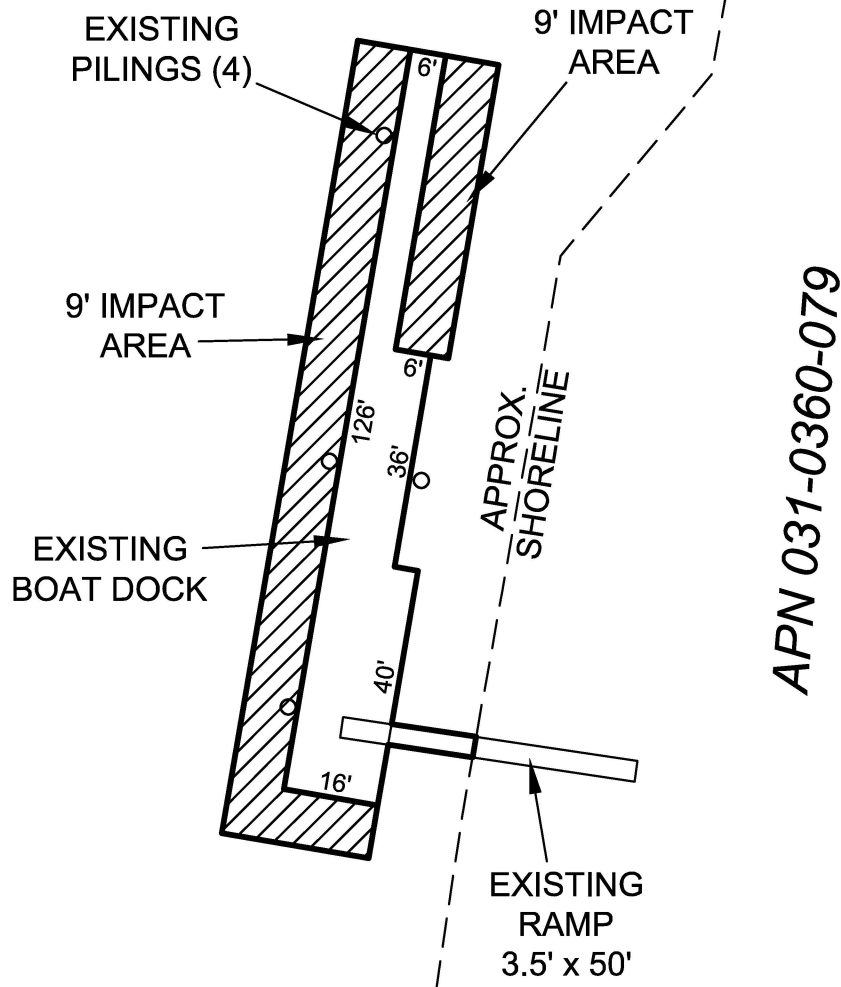
CALIFORNIA STATE
LANDS COMMISSION



NO SCALE

SITE

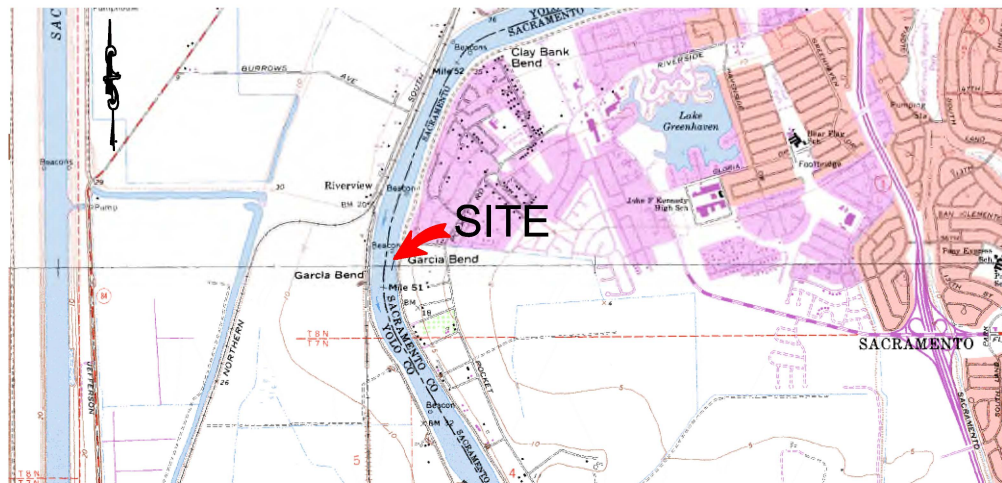
SACRAMENTO RIVER



6882 ARABELLA WAY, SACRAMENTO

NO SCALE

LOCATION



MAP SOURCE: USGS QUAD

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.

Exhibit B

LEASE 8744
WITPEN FAMILY TRUST
APN 031-0360-079
GENERAL LEASE -
RECREATIONAL USE
SACRAMENTO COUNTY



TS 08/10/2021