

Staff Report 25

APPLICANT:

Todd M. Cloutier and Christine J. Cloutier, Trustees of The Cloutier Family Trust, dated September 14, 2004

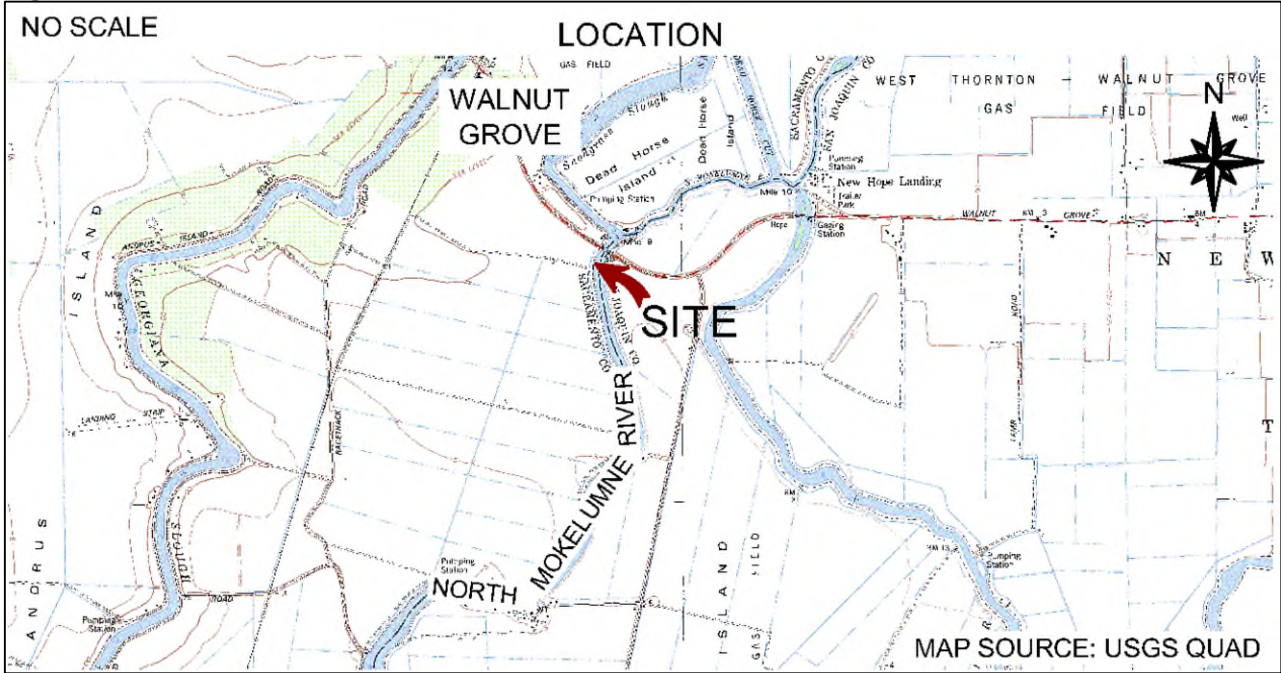
PROPOSED ACTION:

Issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use.

AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign land located in the North Fork Mokelumne River, adjacent to 14744 Walnut Grove-Thornton Road, Walnut Grove, Sacramento County (as shown in Figure 1).

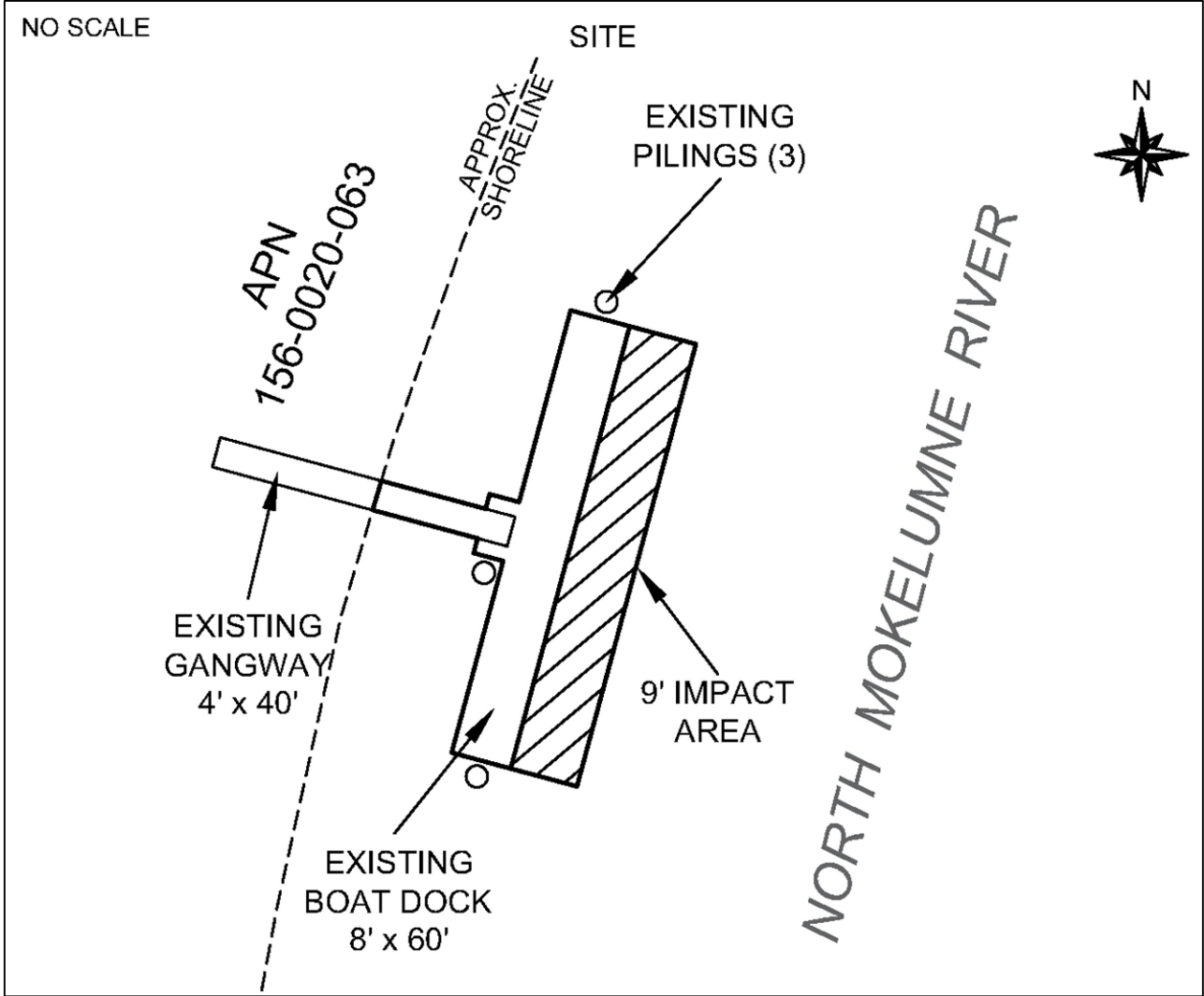
Figure 1. Location



AUTHORIZED USE:

Use of an existing boat dock and appurtenant facilities (as shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Site Map



NOTE: This depiction of the lease premises is based on unverified information provided by the Applicant or other parties and is not a waiver or limitation of any State interest in the subject or any other property.

TERM:

10 years, beginning October 1, 2024.

CONSIDERATION:

\$186 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 the provisions of Section 3, Paragraph 11 shall also extend to the period of Lessee’s unauthorized occupation of state-owned lands prior to October 1, 2024.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

AUTHORITY:

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6501.1, 6503, 6503.5, and 6505.5; California Code of regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE’S BEST INTERESTS:

On February 20, 2015, the Commission authorized issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use to Thomas J. Stokes and Sandra Marie Stokes, Trustees of the Tom and Sandra Stokes 1996 Trust, for the use and maintenance of an existing floating boat dock, three pilings, and gangway in the North Fork Mokelumne River, adjacent to 14744 Walnut Grove-Thornton Road, Walnut Grove, Sacramento County ([Item 65, February 20, 2015](#)). The lease expired September 30, 2024.

On February 26, 2024, ownership of the upland property transferred from Thomas J. Stokes and Sandra Marie Stokes, Trustees of the Tom and Sandra Stokes 1996 Trust, to Frank Loretz, as Trustee of The Frank Loretz Family Trust dated November 26, 2013. The Loretz family did not notify the Commission of the sale, nor apply for a lease.

On May 14, 2024, Frank Loretz, as Trustee of The Frank Loretz Family Trust dated November 26, 2013, deeded ownership of the upland property to Todd M. Cloutier and Christine J. Cloutier, Trustees of The Cloutier Family Trust, dated September 14, 2004. Rent for Lease 8562 has been paid through September 30, 2024. As part of staff’s recommendation to authorize the proposed lease to the Applicant, the lease provision regarding indemnity will be extended back to May 14, 2024, to coincide with the date the Applicant took ownership of the upland property.

The Applicant is now applying for a General Lease – Recreational Use for use of the existing boat dock and appurtenant facilities in the North Fork Mokelumne River, adjacent to 14744 Walnut Grove-Thornton Road, near Walnut Grove, Sacramento County. Staff recommends issuance of a new lease begin October 1, 2024, to coincide with the previous lease dates.

The subject improvements are privately owned and maintained 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 proposed lease, the lessee may be required to remove all improvements from State land and restore the lease premises to their original condition.

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.

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 facilities are located on the Mokelumne 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 lease 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.

Sea level rise could increase the Mokelumne River’s inundation levels within the lease area. In addition, as stated in the [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 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 that support the 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 floating boat dock and adjustable gangway are adaptable to higher water levels allowing them to rise and fall with storms and droughts and increasing their resiliency to some climate change impacts, but they may require more frequent maintenance or replacement to ensure continued function during and after storm seasons and to avoid dislodgement of the facilities. However, the pilings are fixed and therefore more vulnerable to sea level rise and more frequent flood events.

These structures may need more frequent repair and maintenance to ensure they do not become dislodged or degraded and to reduce risks to public safety and navigation.

The bank is heavily vegetated, which provides additional stability and will reduce the amount of erosion and scour pressure experienced during future events because of the underground root system. However, the bank remains at risk of accelerated deterioration from currents and floods and could be vulnerable to future events. In addition, the bank may suffer increased erosion from sea level rise and storm flooding. In the future, if erosion requires modifications to the bank, Commission staff suggest the lessee consider nature-based solutions to stabilize the sediment. Any future construction or activities on state land would require a separate authorization from the Commission.

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 believe approval of this lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs at this location, at this time, nor for the term of the lease; 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. If the Commission denies the application, the Applicant may be required to remove the boat dock and appurtenant facilities and restore the lease premises to their original condition. The lessee has no right to a new lease or to renewal of any previous lease.
2. This action is consistent with the "Leading Climate Activism" and "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs" 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 15061 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905.

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 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 term or the 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 October 1, 2024, for a term of 10 years, for the use of an existing boat dock and appurtenant facilities; annual rent in the amount of \$186, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment; and liability insurance in amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.