

Staff Report 38

APPLICANT:

Roberta F. Sylte, Trustee of The Roberta F. Sylte Revocable Trust Dated July 9, 2015

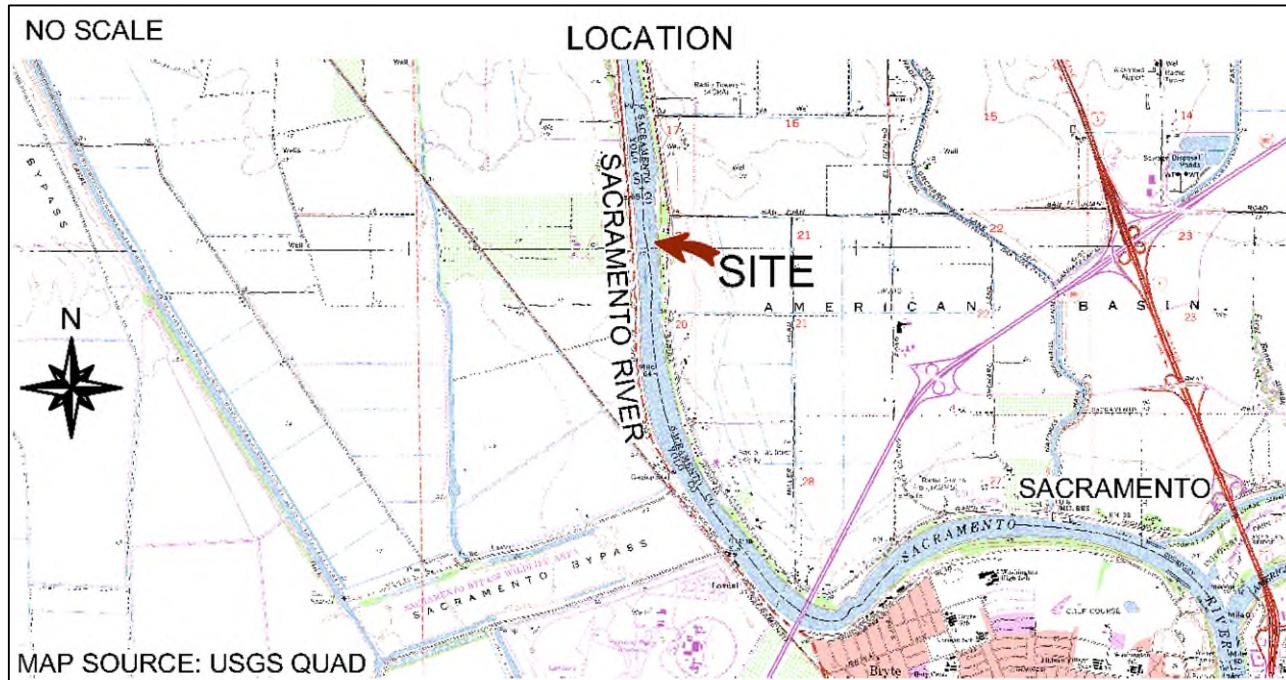
PROPOSED ACTION:

Issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use.

AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign land located in the Sacramento River, adjacent to 3103 Garden Highway, near Sacramento, Sacramento County (as shown in Figure 1).

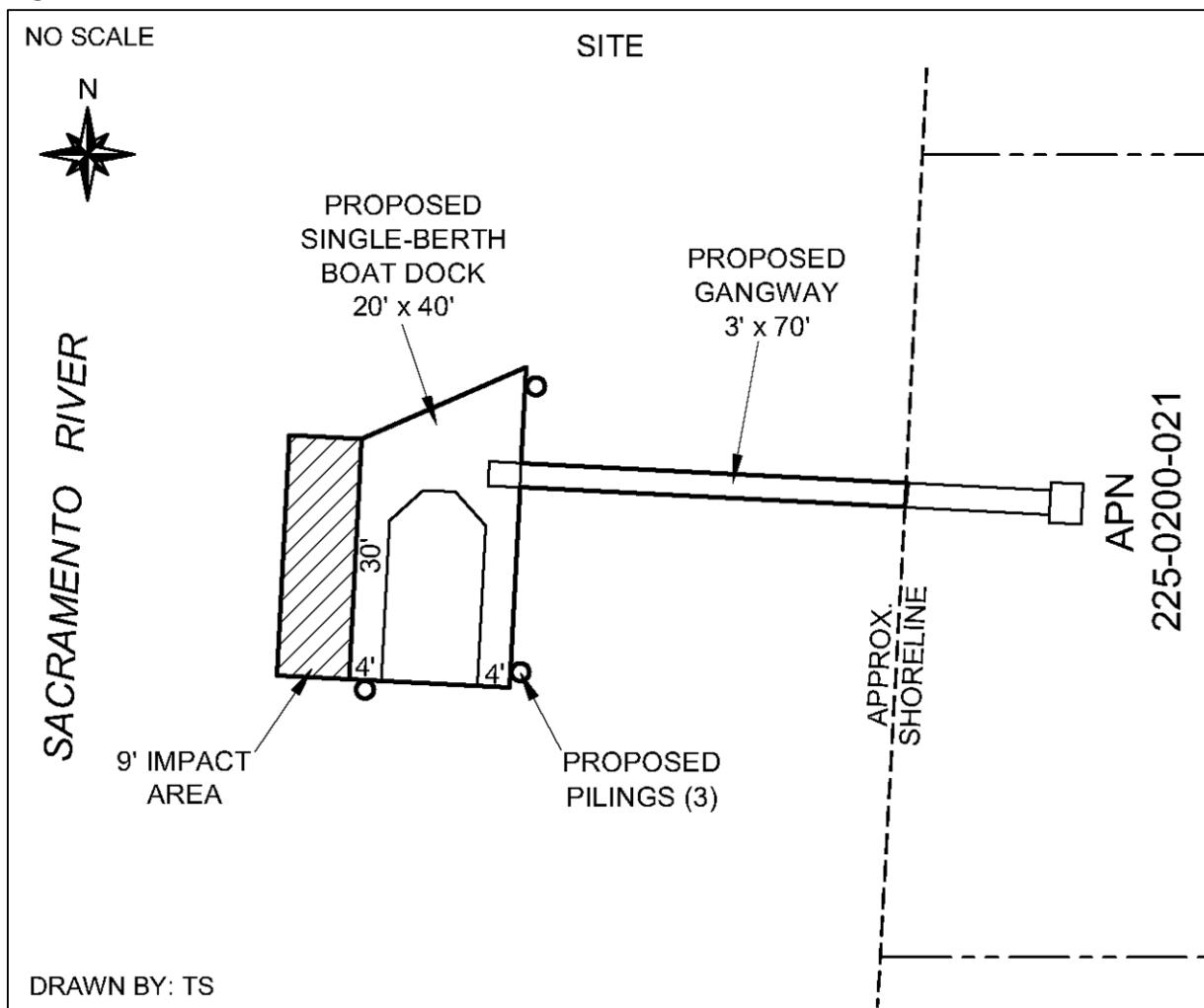
Figure 1. Location



AUTHORIZED USE:

Construction and use of a 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 August 21, 2025.

CONSIDERATION:

\$238 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.
- Within 60 days of completing the construction of authorized improvements, Lessee will provide Lessor with photographs and a set of “as-built” plans that will show where the improvements have been placed. Lessor shall then replace Exhibit A, Land Description, and Exhibit B, Site and Location Map, to the Lease as necessary to accurately reflect the final location of the authorized improvements. Once approved by the Lessor’s Executive Officer or designee, the revised Exhibits shall replace the Exhibits incorporated in the Lease at the time of Lease execution. The replaced Exhibits shall be incorporated in the Lease as though fully set forth therein.
- Construction activities will be performed pursuant to the specific terms identified in the Lease, including: the Applicant will obtain all necessary permits and authorizations prior to commencing work; requirements pertaining to construction equipment and debris; and specified documents related to the construction activities will be provided to Lessor.
- Annual consideration shall be adjusted based on the actual area of improvements as constructed should they vary from the plans submitted.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

AUTHORITY:

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6321, 6321.2, 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:

The Applicant is applying for a 10-year General Lease – Recreational Use for the construction and use of a boat dock and appurtenant facilities. These improvements are adjacent to 3103 Garden Highway, near Sacramento, Sacramento County.

The Applicant has demonstrated due diligence by submitting a project description, project plans, and a biological assessment of predicted impacts to the surrounding environment and wildlife resulting from the proposed project. The Applicant has also applied for appropriate permits to authorize the construction of the boat dock and appurtenant facilities.

The proposed project consists of the installation of a boat dock and gangway which are to be manufactured offsite, delivered to the boat ramp nearest to the lease premises, and floated to the lease premises from said boat ramp.

Additionally, the proposed project involves driving three 12-inch-diameter steel piles of approximately 40 feet in length into the bed of the Sacramento River to a depth of 25 feet or to a point of refusal using a vibratory hammer; and the installation of a concrete landing with two 4-inch galvanized steel pipes on the shore, to which the gangway will be attached.

The proposed project plan details appropriate management practices which will be used to minimize the environmental impacts of construction. These practices include driving all the steel piles in less than one day to minimize the duration of acoustic impacts, utilizing wooden curtain blocks to diminish the acoustic intensity of the drop hammer strikes, using curtains and screen barriers to mitigate impacts to water quality from disturbed sediment, and using a variety of barrier devices to capture debris, spills, or drips resulting from any construction activities.

The proposed dock will occupy an area measuring 20 feet by 40 feet and will be U-shaped, with an angled dock section for debris deflection, and two fingers measuring 4 feet by 24 feet. The dock will have a single-berth within the U-shape. It will be constructed with an aluminum frame, decked with composite materials, and will utilize encapsulated floatation for buoyancy. The dock is to be anchored to the three steel piles such that the dock can rise and fall along with the changing water levels of the river.

The dock will be accessible from the shore via the proposed gangway. The gangway will measure 3 feet by 70 feet and be constructed with an aluminum frame and aluminum decking. The gangway will be attached to the dock such that it can rise and fall along with the dock in accordance with the changing water levels of the river. The gangway will be attached to the shore via the proposed concrete landing; the gangway will specifically be attached to the two four-inch-diameter steel pipes which are to be built into the landing in such a way that the gangway can rise during flood conditions.

The proposed project will commence once all necessary approvals, authorizations, and permits are obtained. There is currently no scheduled project date. All construction activities must comply with the codes and methods established by agencies exercising pertinent jurisdiction within the lease area.

The proposed improvements shall be privately owned and maintained by the Applicant. The boat dock and appurtenant facilities serve to 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 subject facilities will be located directly waterward of the upland property and occupy a relatively small area of the river. The proposed lease will not interfere with navigation nor substantially interfere with any Public Trust needs at this time or for the term of the lease.

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 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:

INTRODUCTION:

The climate crisis and rising sea levels are impacting California's coastal and inland waterways now. Likely impacts to the lease premises include, but are not limited to, sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, prolonged drought, extreme heat, and changes to the intensity and timing of precipitation events. These impacts can exacerbate natural hydrological processes such as erosion, scour, and sedimentation. These impacts may affect a new floating dock with two fingers on an aluminum frame, held by three pilings, a gangway, and an abutment subject to the proposed lease, that will be installed on the Sacramento River.

DATA & PROJECTIONS:

Water levels in tidally-influenced rivers will rise as sea levels rise. The California Ocean Protection Council updated the [State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance](#) in 2024 to provide a synthesis of the best available science on sea level rise projections and rates for multiple emissions scenarios. Commission staff evaluated the "intermediate-high" and "high" scenarios due to the vulnerability and exposure

of the lease location and the continued global reliance on fossil fuels. 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	Intermediate-High (feet)	High (feet)
2040	0.7	0.8
2050	1.0	1.3
2070	2.2	2.9
2100	4.8	6.5

Source: Table 6, [State of California Sea-Level Rise Guidance: 2024 Update](#)

Note: Projections are with respect to a 2000 baseline.

In addition to rising seas, warmer temperatures have led California and the Southwest region to experience a megadrought from 2000 to 2022, measured as the driest 22 years in the past 1200 years, and more megadroughts are projected through the end of the century ([U.S. Global Change Research Program, Ch. 28. Southwest. In: Fifth National Climate Assessment 2023.](#)). Hotter and drier conditions have led to declines in snowpack volumes, higher-elevation snow lines, earlier snowmelt, and reduced overall runoff. Streamflow and river volumes are lower and will be drawn down farther as temperatures continue to rise and demand for water increases withdrawals. Despite the region's increasing aridity, flooding from extreme precipitation events is projected to increase, attributed to earlier snowmelt, sea level rise, and more intense and frequent atmospheric rivers. Minor and moderate flooding (flooding events defined as disruptive to damaging), attributed to higher water levels, is expected to increase five to ten orders of magnitude by 2100, according to [NOAA's 2022 Sea Level Rise Technical Report](#).

ANALYSIS:

The lease premises are likely to experience more extreme conditions over the lease term than in the past, due to climate change. Changes to the timing and amount of runoff from the higher elevations of the watershed, stronger storm surge, and higher water levels will result in higher flood risks. Bank stability may be compromised due to increased channel erosion and undercutting from more intense precipitation and floods. Structures on the lease premises may be exposed to saltier water and corrode faster than before. Conversely, drought could lower water levels for longer portions of the year and expose structures that were historically designed to be submerged to air, wind, and heat. They could cease to function as intended, as water-related, water-dependent infrastructure (e.g. fixed

docks could become disconnected from the water). Floating structures may be more adaptable to changing water levels than those that are fixed, but all structures may be at increased risk for damage from exposure to extreme heat and floods.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To reduce the likelihood of adverse impacts to the lease premises and improvements, the lessee should consider the following adaptation strategies to improve resiliency to climate change: 1) reduce erosion along the riverbank by enhancing the bank protection structure(s) by planting or restoring native vegetation (shrubs, trees); 2) inspect fixed structures frequently and monitor for degradation, replacing damaged parts when necessary and elevating or relocating structures when exposure to flooding compromises structural function and integrity; and 3) monitor floating structures for corrosion and degradation, especially joints, brackets, hinges, and piling hoops, and replace as necessary. Any future construction or activities on State land would require a separate authorization from the Commission. For more information regarding nature-based strategies, please refer to the [2023 Shoreline Adaptation and the Public Trust](#) report.

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 the issuance of this lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs at this location, at this time, and for the 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 the 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 not construct the boat dock and appurtenant facilities. 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 3, New Construction of Small Structures; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (c)(1).

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905.

APPROVALS REQUIRED:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Central Valley Flood Protection Board
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Reclamation District 1000

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 3, New Construction of Small Structures; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (c)(1).

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 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.

AUTHORIZATION:

1. Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use to the Applicant beginning August 21, 2025, for a term of 10 years, for the construction and use of a boat dock and appurtenant facilities; annual rent in the amount of \$238, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment; and liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.
2. Authorize the Executive Officer or designee to replace Exhibits in the lease upon submission, review, and approval of as-built plans detailing the final location of the improvements following construction.