

Pala Gateway Project Environmental Assessment

Prepared for:

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SECTION 1.0

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to address the environmental effects of the Pala Band of Mission Indians (Tribe) proposal to bring 90.53± acres of land into federal trust. The BIA is the Federal Agency charged with reviewing and deciding on fee-to-trust applications as mandated under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). A portion of this land, if approved by the BIA, would eventually be developed with a cultural center, traditional village site (for interpretive purposes) and associated features (trail, paved parking lot, utility connections, etc.). Collectively, these uses are referred to as the “Gateway Project”. A portion of the site would remain undeveloped or continued to be used as an orchard.

This EA has been completed in accordance with the requirements set out in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508), and the BIA’s NEPA Procedures. This document provides a detailed description of the Proposed Action and an analysis of the potential environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action. This document also includes a discussion of alternatives, along with actions to avoid and mitigate potential effects.

NEPA requires Federal agencies to review and analyze the environmental consequences associated with Proposed Actions. Here, the federal action involves approving the fee-to-trust action, which would allow for the development of the Gateway Project. The BIA will consider the environmental effects of the Gateway Project as disclosed within this EA and then determine whether a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is appropriate, or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required. If a FONSI is appropriate, a FONSI will be prepared and a decision on the fee-to-trust project will be made shortly thereafter. If an EIS is required, the BIA will begin that process by issuing a Scoping notice and holding a scoping meeting to acquire public input that will be useful in the preparation of the EIS.

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The Pala Gateway project site is located within the unincorporated Fallbrook community of San Diego County, California immediately east of Interstate 15 and south of State Route 76 (SR76)

(**Figure 1-1**). Regional access to the site is provided via Interstate 15 and SR76, while local access is provided by Pankey Road, which terminates at the northeastern boundary of the project site (**Figure 1-2**). The three parcel site (Assessor's Parcel Nos. 125-063-02, 125-063-09 and 125-100-10) is located within unsectioned portions of Rancho Monserate in Township 10S, Range 3W of the 1975 Bonsall USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle (San Bernardino Base and Meridian). **Table 1-1** below provides site information:

TABLE 1-1
PALA GATEWAY ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBERS AND ACREAGE

Parcel	APN	Acreage
1	125-063-02	0.85
2	125-063-09	62.47
3	125-100-10	27.21
Total Acreage		90.53

Source: Pala Band of Mission Indians, 2009; EDS, 2009

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Tribe is requesting BIA approval of a fee-to-trust action pursuant to 25 C.F.R. Part 151 that would result in the subsequent development and operation of the Gateway Project on approximately 25+/- acres of the fee-to-trust property. The Tribe's purpose for requesting the approval of the fee-to-trust acquisition is to facilitate the Tribe's need for cultural and social preservation, expression and identity, and political self-determination. The Tribe reacquired these aboriginal lands inhabited by its ancestors and treasures these lands as cultural resources. Therefore, the immediate need for the Proposed Action is emphasized by the documented fact that Tribal ancestors once inhabited this area. The Tribe's primary need is the preservation and reacquisition of some of its aboriginal territory, and the Project Site is considered aboriginal territory by the Tribe.

Accepting the Project Site into trust status would facilitate Tribal self-determination and allow the Tribe to exercise sovereignty over lands currently owned in fee-title. This expansion is, therefore, necessary in order to allow the Tribe to effectively preserve culturally valuable lands and manage future development initiatives (i.e., cultural center, trail and historical interpretive village site), which provides educational opportunities to Tribal members and outside visitors. Owning the subject lands in fee-title does not allow the Tribal Government to exercise its complete authority over historical aboriginal territory, because with such ownership, the Tribal Government would have oversight from external governmental bodies. Additionally, the autonomy provided to the Tribe through taking the land into Federal trust would allow for greater

self-sufficiency, particularly in the context of proposed uses, which are described in greater detail in the following sections and in **Section 2.1**.

The location of the property is key in ensuring that there is adequate visibility and ease of access. The property, currently owned by the Tribe, is strategically located at the junction of two major regional freeways (Interstate 15 and SR76) in San Diego County, which would provide visibility and encouragement for visitation. The freeway off-ramp would allow visitors to quickly exit the freeway system, visit the site and depart without significant effort. Additionally, the site would serve as a “Gateway” to the Pala Reservation, which is located northeast of the project site along SR76. The Tribe believes that it is at a critical time when surrounding lands are being developed at an ever increasing rate resulting in, what the Tribe believes, is inadequate preservation of Tribal artifacts. The Pala Tribe would like to utilize the project site to assist in the appropriate preservation, display and education of past and current Tribal artifacts and culture. The Gateway Project affords the Tribe the opportunity to participate first hand in the education of residents and visitors of what are California’s first residents.

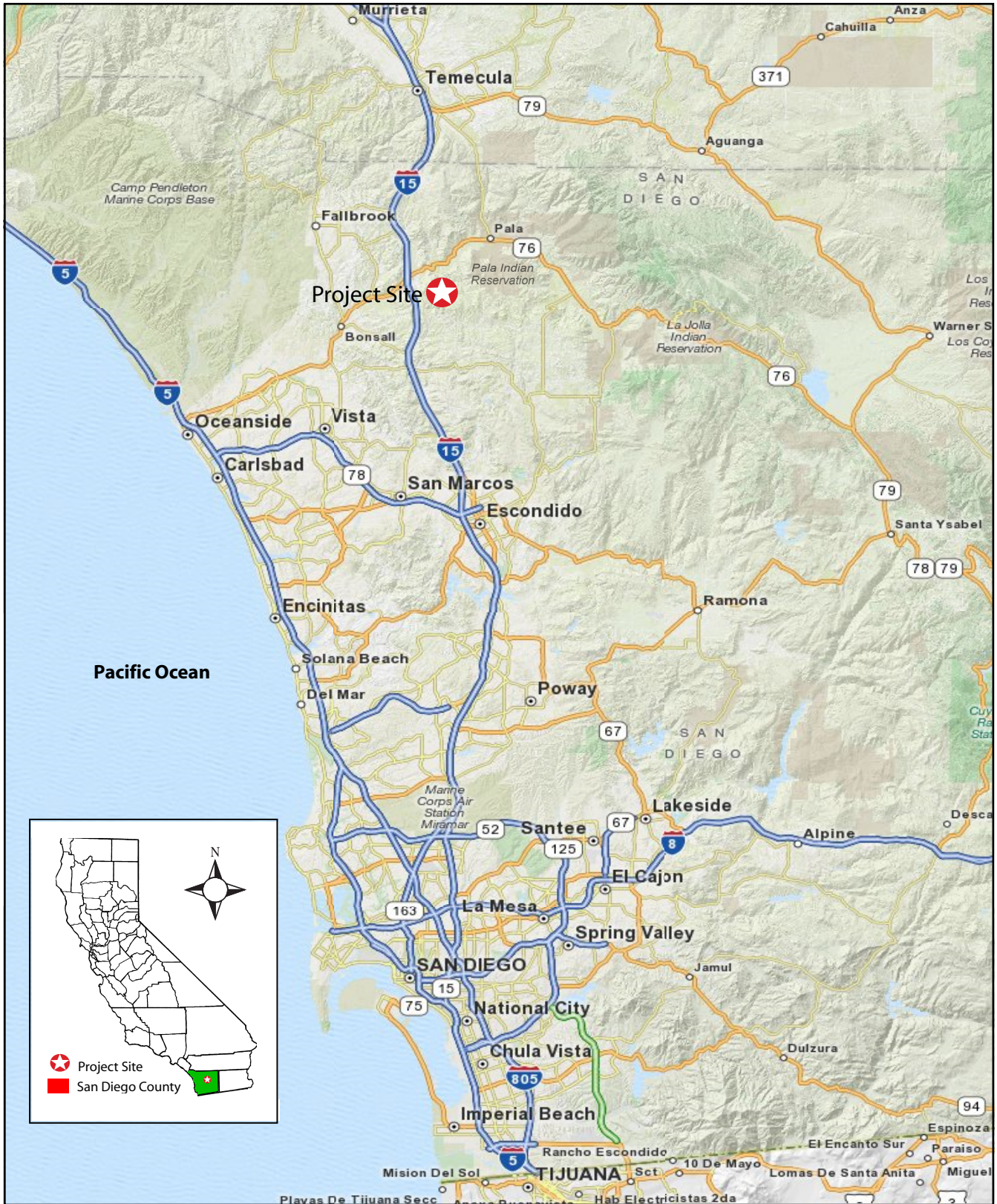
1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

This EA has been prepared to analyze and document the environmental consequences associated with the approval of the fee-to-trust action and the subsequent development/operation of the Gateway Project. The BIA will use this EA to determine if the Proposed Action would result in significant effects to the environment and whether a FONSI is appropriate or an EIS should be prepared and processed. This EA is intended to satisfy the environmental review process of 40 CFR 1501.3, 40 CFR 1508.9, and the BIA NEPA guidance.

1.4.1 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

Based on a review of the project site and the proposed development, as well as consultation with local and federal agencies, the following environmental issues are evaluated in this EA:

- Land Resources (topography, geology, soils, seismicity, and mineral resources);
- Water Resources (surface water, drainage and flooding, groundwater, and water quality);
- Air Quality;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural Resources;



SOURCE: Streets and Trips, 2009; EDS, 2010

Figure 1-1
Regional Location Map



SOURCE: i-cubed, March 2009; Pala GIS, 2010

Pala Gateway Project: Environmental Assessment ■

Figure 1-2
Vicinity Map