

# SECTION 1.0

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## INTRODUCTION

This Supplemental Scoping Report has been prepared because a new proposed casino site has been identified by the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (Tribe). The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC), in cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Army Corps of Engineers, and Sonoma County, is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate approval of a gaming management contract and alternatives to that action. One of the foreseeable consequences of approving such a contract is the development of a casino and hotel with other ancillary uses on an approximately 252-acre site in Sonoma County, California, referred to as the Wilfred Site. The Wilfred Site is adjacent to the formerly proposed Stony Point Site and incorporates the southern half of the Stony Point Site, considered in the previous scoping report. The new location on the Wilfred Site is being considered to avoid environmental concerns discovered on the Stony Point Site, particularly impacts to wetlands.

This scoping report describes the supplemental scoping process, identifies the cooperating agencies, describes the changes in the proposed project and alternatives, and summarizes the new issues identified during the supplemental scoping process. This scoping report supplements the prior scoping report for the Graton Rancheria Casino and Hotel Project dated August of 2004. The August 2004 scoping report is contained in **Appendix A** (minus appendices). Information including purpose and need for the project, and alternatives identified by the public can be found in the prior scoping report. As stated in the supplemental Notice of Intent (NOI) “all the information and comments gathered in response to the earlier NOI remain in the record, and there is no need to repeat information submitted at that time” (**Appendix B**). Given that Wilfred Site is located close to the originally proposed Stony Point Site, the environmental concerns identified in the initial scoping process will be considered for the Wilfred Site.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is the basic national charter for protection of the environment. NEPA provides an interdisciplinary framework to ensure that Federal agency decision-makers consider environmental factors. The key procedure required by NEPA is the preparation of an EIS for any major Federal action that may significantly affect the quality of the environment. Public involvement is an important aspect of the NEPA procedures and is provided for at various steps in the development of an EIS, including the scoping process.

## 1.1 SUPPLEMENTAL SCOPING PROCESS

The “scope” of an EIS means the range of environmental issues to be addressed, the types of effects to be considered, and the range of alternatives to be analyzed. The EIS scoping process is designed to provide an opportunity for the general public and Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to provide input that will help determine the scope of the EIS.

The scoping process began with the publication of a NOI to prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register* on February 12, 2004. The NOI described the Proposed Action and the reasons why an EIS would be prepared. The NOI, which announced the public scoping meeting, was published in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat on February 17, 2004. A public scoping meeting was then held on March 10, 2004 and a scoping meeting with local jurisdictions occurred on March 11, 2004. Scoping comments were accepted until April 1, 2004. A scoping report was issued that describes the scoping process; cooperating agencies; Proposed Action and alternatives; issues identified during the comment period; and expected scope of the EIS (**Appendix A**). The scoping report was made available to interested parties. Public notices, comment letters, a transcript of the public scoping meeting, and notes from the scoping meeting with local jurisdictions were included as appendices to the scoping report.

Since the release of the scoping report the location for the proposed casino/hotel has changed from the Stony Point Site to the Wilfred Site. A supplemental scoping process was initiated to address this change and allow an opportunity for the general public, and Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to comment on the new proposed casino/hotel location on the Wilfred Site. The information gathered in the original scoping process will remain on record. A supplemental NOI was published in the Federal Register on September 29, 2005 (**Appendix B**). The NOI, which announced the second public scoping meeting, was published in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat and the Marin Independent Journal on September 27, October 9, and October 16, 2005 (**Appendix C**). A public scoping meeting was held on October 19, 2005. Scoping comments were accepted until November 4, 2005. Scoping meetings were held with the City of Rohnert Park on October 18, 2005 and Sonoma County on October 19, 2005. Notes from the meetings are included in **Appendix H**.

## 1.2 COOPERATING AGENCIES

The lead agency, NIGC, has requested that other agencies having jurisdiction by law or having special expertise with respect to anticipated environmental issues be cooperating agencies. Cooperating agencies participate in the scoping process and in reviewing preliminary drafts of the EIS. At the lead agency’s request, a cooperating agency may also develop information to be included in the EIS. The NIGC will contact the cooperating agencies periodically and keep them informed of the status of the NEPA process. To date, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Sonoma County, and Army Corps of Engineers are participating as Cooperating Agencies.

### **1.3 EIS SCHEDULE AND PUBLIC REVIEW**

The current schedule anticipates that the Draft EIS will be available for public review in the summer of 2006. The public review period for the Draft EIS will be 45 days. A public hearing on the Draft EIS will be held during the review period. A Final EIS will be prepared, which will include responses to all substantive comments made on the Draft EIS. The Final EIS is currently expected to be available for review in spring of 2007. A decision on the project may be made 30 days after the Final EIS is released.