



### THE SAMP PROCESS

#### Aspen Assists Comprehensive Planning

Traditionally, planning for growth and resource protection has been undertaken based on city and county jurisdictional boundaries, which often may not represent logical geographic planning units. As a result, planning at the regional and subregional level is frequently fragmented and uncoordinated. **Planning efforts can be better coordinated and more comprehensive when the plan area encompasses a logical geographic unit, such as a watershed.**

**Special Area Management Plans (SAMPs)**, first introduced in the 1980 Amendments to the Coastal Zone Management Act, offer a powerful tool for balancing natural resource protection and reasonable economic growth in the plan area. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has been using this tool since the mid-1980s to **holistically evaluate aquatic resources, interests, opportunities, and constraints** in specific regions and watersheds throughout the United States. This SAMP approach is in stark contrast to the traditional case-by-case approach or reactive permitting that could contribute to the cumulative losses of aquatic functions and values. In preparing a SAMP, the Corps evaluates the entire plan area (e.g., a watershed) to make more informed decisions about

[click here to cont. on page 2](#)

### CARMA

#### Groundbreaking Ceremony

The **groundbreaking ceremony** for the **Combined Array for Research in Millimeter-wave Astronomy (CARMA)** Project was conducted at the project site (Cedar Flat in the Inyo Mountains of eastern California) on March 27, 2004. Attendance included officials representing the Inyo National



CARMA Groundbreaking at Cedar Flat

Forest, Caltech, the University of California Berkeley, the University of Illinois, the University of Maryland, the University of Chicago, the National Science Foundation, and the Norris Foundation. The Forest Service's Record of Decision (ROD) for the CARMA Project passed the 45-day appeal period without an appeal, allowing the project to move forward.

[click here to cont. on page 3](#)

### **ASPEN WINS AEP AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT**

The Association of Environmental Professionals (AEP) recently presented its 2004 state award for the **Outstanding Environmental Analysis Document** to Aspen for the **Jefferson-Martin 230 kV Transmission Project EIR**. Dr. Hamid Rastegar represented Aspen in receiving the award at the Annual 2004 AEP Awards Program on April 17, 2004. Aspen appreciates the work of Project Managers Susan Lee of Aspen and Billie Blanchard at the California Public Utilities Commission.



2004 AEP Awards Chair Lisa Knox Burns and Juror Brian F. Mooney presenting to Aspen's President, Dr. Hamid Rastegar

*"The Jefferson-Martin Transmission Line project EIR provides a model for thoroughness and clarity in the preparation of a CEQA document. The document is extremely well-organized, with a precise and concise narrative supported by excellent graphics. The mitigation measures, in particular, are extremely well-crafted, and cumulative impacts are carefully enumerated."*

Comments by AEP's Jury

### FORESTRY

#### Aspen Selected: USDA Forest Service, Region 5

In February 2004, Aspen was selected to provide **Natural Resources Professional Services** to 18 National Forests throughout California through a 3-year on-call contract with Forest Service Region 5. Under this contract we will supply a wide range of technical and environmental services to the Forest Service, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other Federal mandates. Aspen's team for this contract includes eight environmental and engineering firms and three forestry firms. After last year's disastrous fires, the Forest Service has identified many high priority **vegetation management** projects throughout the state, and we will be available to assist in **timber harvest planning, impact assessment, and NEPA compliance.**

[click here to cont. on page 4](#)

## POWER GENERATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### California Public Utilities Commission

Aspen has provided significant support to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) over the past 12 years, **performing 21 projects under 13 separate contracts** to help the agency fulfill its mission. These projects have included petroleum and water pipelines, fiber optic projects, and transmission lines. Aspen was also recently selected to negotiate to perform the **Environmental Documentation for the Replacement of Steam Generators, PG&E Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant and SCE San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station** project. Many of our CPUC proposed projects required a significant amount of public participation coordination. Recent projects are no exception.

For instance, we are currently supporting the CPUC on several transmission and power line projects. The **PG&E Jefferson-Martin 230 kV Transmission Project** Final EIR (San Mateo County) was released in November 2003, and subsequently was awarded the Association of Environmental Professionals' "Outstanding Environmental Analysis Document" award for the State of California.

The CPUC released Aspen's Draft EIR for San Diego Gas & Electric Company's proposed **Miguel-Mission 230 kV #2**



Existing Jefferson-Martin Transmission Line

**Project** (San Diego County) in early April. At approximately 800 pages, the DEIR included an Alternatives Screening Report as an appendix and included evaluation of five route segment alternatives in each environmental discipline. Public hearings were held on May 10 and 11, 2004. Preparation of the Final EIR will begin immediately after the hearings.

In March 2004, Aspen prepared and distributed the Mitigated Negative Declaration for Southern California Edison Company's proposed **Viejo System Project**, which would include a new substation and three miles of overhead power line in southern Orange County. The comment period has closed and comments are being reviewed.

In addition to the CEQA documents being prepared, as

described above, Aspen's mitigation monitors are observing construction at several projects which the CPUC has approved. The first two phases of the **Tri-Valley Capacity Increase Project** (in the Pleasanton and North Livermore areas) are operational, and Phase 3 work (Dublin) will start soon. In addition, construction of the **Atlantic-Del Mar Project** (Placer County) is scheduled to begin soon.

### California Energy Commission

Aspen is continuing to provide technical assistance to the California Energy Commission staff in both environmental review and permitting process as well as planning activities. For example, Aspen is helping the California Energy Commission **evaluate the comparative overall risks** to the public resulting from the selection of either **aqueous or anhydrous ammonia** for use in the equipment that reduces nitrogen oxide emissions at fuel-fired thermal power plants.

In its 2003 Integrated Energy Policy Report, the Energy Commission identified that the state's consumption of natural gas could be reduced by retiring older, inefficient natural gas fired power plants and replacing them with newer, more fuel-efficient units. Aspen was recruited to help the Commission **analyze the role that individual aging power plants play in maintaining a reliable power system**. This includes capacity resources and local reliability services, and how the range of retirements would affect system reliability and efficiency, and the environment. Aspen Team experts will help the Commission identify the comparable **costs, benefits, and reliability issues**, as well as once-through cooling water impacts, to determine whether these plants should be retired or stay in service.

Aspen also continues to support the Commission in topical issues relating to Liquefied Natural Gas. (See Aspen Fall 2003 newsletter for details.)

### **SAMP, CONT.**

acceptable impact and mitigation locations, which can assist the Corps in satisfying their national "no net loss" of wetlands policy.

In southern California, the Army Corps Los Angeles District has been partnering with local entities to prepare SAMPs for the Otay River watershed, San Diego Creek watershed, San Juan Creek/San Mateo Creek watersheds, and San Jacinto River/Upper Santa Margarita River watersheds. As prime contractor, Aspen is assisting the County of San Diego Department of Planning and Land Use in completing the Otay River watershed SAMP. The County is seeking streamlined permitting mechanisms from the Corps (Regional General Permits) and the California Department of Fish and Game (Master Streambed Alteration Agreement) that take into account reasonable economic development and use of the watershed and build upon the considerable resource protection and enhancement programs, such as the Multiple Species Conservation Program, that already benefit the Otay River watershed. ([click here to see photo](#))

## RECENT ASPEN WINS

**Selection by the CPUC to negotiate for Environmental Documentation for the Replacement of Steam Generators at the PG&E Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant and SCE San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station**

**On-call Environmental Compliance Services to the Sonoma County Water Agency**

**Selection by California Department of Fish and Game to Provide CEQA Consultation Services for the Newhall Ranch Project**

## SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Aspen is pleased to announce that on March 10, 2004, we completed the Draft Program EIR for Phase II and future phases of the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD's) New School Construction Program. The Program comprises the largest school facilities improvement project in the country that will provide approximately 200,000 new student seats by 2020. The Program EIR establishes the foundation for environmental review of future individual school projects. It includes the LAUSD's best management practices for site selection, design, construction, and operation as well as identifies standard thresholds of significance and mitigation measures that could be applied to future projects. Aspen conducted six public meetings to present the document findings and distributed the Program EIR to 29 repository sites. The Final Program EIR or response document was issued in May 2004. The response document includes responses to comments presented at the public meetings and in letters submitted to the LAUSD. The Program EIR is expected to go before the LAUSD's Board of Education in June 2004.



Sketch of Proposed LAUSD Site

## ASPEN CONSULTING ENGINEERS -- GROWING

Aspen Consulting Engineers, our Division in Phoenix, has launched a number of projects. Aspen was recently selected for an On-Call Contract to provide engineering annual services to the City of Phoenix over two years, and we look forward to the beginning of an excellent professional relationship with the City. We currently provide the **Town of Marana** engineering services to mitigate problematic drainage issues associated with the Marana Heritage Park Master Plan and anticipated development.

Aspen will assist the **Yavapai County** Floodplain Director with flooding and drainage issues associated with the Big Chino Wash. Aspen's Water Resources Department will design low flow crossings across the wash near the Town of Paulden, providing flooding safety to that community. Aspen will also provide civil engineering services on a new 395 unit **residential development** in Tucson.

Aspen is also assisting in a study of middle Piru Creek to evaluate the effects of natural flow simulation through modification of releases from Pyramid Lake to preserve and

[click here to cont. on page 4](#)

## CARMA, CONT.

The ROD, which approved the project at the site east of Big Pine, California, was signed on October 31, 2003, and was based on the EIS/EIR that Aspen prepared for the Forest Service and the University of California (Draft in March 2003, Final in October 2003).

## ORMOND BEACH WETLAND RESTORATION

Aspen has officially kicked-off the **Ormond Beach Wetland Restoration Feasibility Study** for the California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC). We recently held a meeting with agency and regional experts to identify processes or functions to be restored and enhanced, and we will be meeting with the Ormond Beach Task Force soon to identify their goals for the project. During the next several months, our Team will characterize the physical, biological, and cultural resources, and evaluate the various opportunities and constraints at the several hundred acre site. This work will provide the technical and logistical foundation for our Team to develop and evaluate restoration alternatives and to make fully informed recommendations to the SCC.

Below: Panorama of Reservoir at Otay River Watershed where Aspen is preparing a SAMP



## WATER RESOURCES AND HABITAT RESTORATION

Aspen continues to expand its role in Habitat Restoration of Riparian Ecosystems. We are in the process of developing Restoration and Comprehensive Habitat Mitigation Monitoring Plans for several governmental agencies in southern California. These include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects in the Prado Basin and Reach 9 of the Santa Ana River and the Murrieta Creek Flood Control Project.

Aspen has also developed restoration plans for the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to restore riparian habitat at several repair sites located on Piru Creek in north Los Angeles County. Aspen was recently approved by the DWR to commence work on a study to return natural hydrologic conditions to Piru Creek below the Pyramid Lake Dam. This study is being conducted to provide beneficial impacts to the federally endangered arroyo toad, which is known to occur at several locations below Pyramid Dam. [\(click here to see our efforts in Ormond Beach on page 3.\)](#)

## ASPEN CONSULTING ENGINEERS, CONT.

restore a natural hydrologic and hydraulic regime for the endangered arroyo toad. This study includes a **hydrology, hydraulics and sediment transport analysis** to assess the effect of the modified releases on flow velocities, depths, and bed sediment conditions. As the Division moves into its second year, its client base is expanding and relationships with a variety of Arizona communities are growing.

## FORESTRY, CONT.

Our first task order under this contract will begin in May. We will support the Angeles National Forest in assessment of **biological and archaeological resources**, as well as NEPA and Clean Air Act compliance, for nearly 7,000 acres of Forest lands. Our biological and archaeological survey crews will be in the field through the summer to document resources that could be affected by the vegetation management activities being considered.

### *L.A. Area/Corp. Office*

30425 Canwood St., Ste. 215  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301-4316  
818.597.3407

### *Bay Area & Northwest US*

255 Montgomery St., Ste. 935  
San Francisco, CA 94104  
415.955.4775

### *Sacramento*

1760 Creekside Oaks Dr., Ste. 170  
Sacramento, CA 95833-3632  
916.646.3869

### *Phoenix & Southwest US*

426 N. 44th Street, Ste. 370  
Phoenix, AZ 85008-7694  
602.251.9221

Visit our website: <http://www.AspenEG.com>