

# MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

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## NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING MERA NEXT GENERATION RADIO COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM PROJECT SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Facilities and meetings comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act. If special accommodations are needed, please contact the MERA Operations Officer at (415) 473-4368.

The Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA), a joint powers agency, acting as the lead agency pursuant to Section 15050 of the CEQA Guidelines, will be preparing a Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (Draft SEIR) for the proposed Next Generation Radio Communications System Project (Next Gen System, or proposed project). The SEIR is being prepared by MERA in accordance with CEQA and the State of California CEQA Guidelines. Pursuant to Sections 15082(a) and 15375 of the CEQA Guidelines, MERA has issued this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to provide Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and other interested parties with information describing the proposal and its potential environmental effects.

The MERA radio system is vital for emergency countywide communications between police, firefighters and public works crews. The emergency communications system is a network of radio antennas and equipment linked with microwave connections. However, the combination of older equipment and recent changes to frequency requirements by the *Congressional Jobs Bill HR 3630* now requires an upgrade of all UHF (T-band), including MERA's, radio communications systems. Funding for the system is generated by a parcel tax that was authorized by Marin County voters in 2014.

The current system includes 15 active communications sites. The MERA Next Gen System would retain and upgrade 10 of the functioning sites, decommission five existing sites and add equipment to eight new sites, which include previously developed infrastructure not part of the MERA system. New sites include communication and water tank sites and a water wellhead site in northern Marin County.

### Existing sites used in Next Gen System:

- Civic Center
- Big Rock Ridge
- Mt. Tamalpais
- Mt. Barnabe
- Point Reyes Hill
- Dollar Hill
- San Pedro Ridge
- Mt. Tiburon
- Sonoma Mountain
- Stewart Point

### New sites proposed for Next Gen System:

- Prime Site (Sheriff's dispatch center)
- Tomales (existing cell phone site)
- Coyote Peak (a water wellhead site)
- Skyview Terrace (an MMWD water tank site)
- Muir Beach (a local water tank site)
- Wolfback Ridge (an existing broadcast tower)
- OTA Mt. Burdell (an existing broadcast tower)
- Mill Valley Water Tank (MMWD water tank)

The five sites to be decommissioned as part of the Next Gen System are: Forbes Hill in San Rafael, Mt. Burdell near Novato, Mill Valley City Hall and Mill Valley Police Station, and the Bay Hill Road site in Sonoma County.

**LOCATIONS:** Figure 1 shows the Next Gen System configuration and Table 1 provides a summary description of the communication sites including assessor parcel numbers and coordinates. A more detailed project description with a list of existing and proposed facilities at each site can be found on the MERA website: <https://www.marincounty.org/depts/pw/divisions/projects/mera>

The Next Gen System would update the current backbone network to utilize new radio frequencies in the 700MHz band to comply with an FCC mandate that public agency radio systems (including MERA) vacate the UHF (T-band) frequencies currently utilized. The Next Gen system would also utilize Project 25 (P25) technology to provide improved public service and emergency radio coverage within the County of Marin.

**PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:** The Next Gen System is anticipated to have similar environmental effects as those previously evaluated in the original MERA EIR (Marin Public Safety and Emergency Communication System EIR, SCH #1999092073), which was certified in the year 2000. The probable environmental effects include potentially significant impacts to biological resources, aesthetics, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, and land use regulations. The Next Gen SEIR will evaluate the new environmental impacts resulting from the proposed MERA Next Gen System upgrades and will define compliance activities needed to address new regulations put into place since the original EIR. All CEQA topics relevant to the project will also be considered in the SEIR, including:

1) Land Use & Planning	7) Biological Resources	13) Aesthetics/Visual Resources
2) Population & Housing	8) Energy & Natural Resources	14) Cultural Resources
3) Geology and Soils	9) Hazards and Hazardous Materials Radio Frequency Analysis	15) Agriculture and Forestry Resources
4) Hydrology and Water Quality	10) Noise	16) Greenhouse Gas Emissions
5) Air Quality	11) Public Services and Recreation	17) Mineral Resources
6) Transportation/Traffic	12) Utilities & Service Systems	

**REQUEST FOR COMMENTS:** To ensure that the SEIR for this project is thorough, adequate, and meets the needs of all agencies reviewing it, MERA requests your comments on the scope and content of the Draft SEIR within the 30-day comment period, which closes **June 18, 2018**. Written comments may be forwarded electronically via email or mailed with postmarks on or before the closing date, to:

Ernest Klock, MERA Operations Officer  
 3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 304, San Rafael, CA 94903  
 email: [MERa-EIR@marincounty.org](mailto:MERa-EIR@marincounty.org)

**NOTICE OF SCOPING MEETING:** To ensure that the SEIR will address any additional issues that may be of concern to the public for this proposed project, MERA will also conduct a public scoping meeting. Public Agencies, community groups and interested members of the public are invited to attend the scoping meeting and present oral or written comments on the issues to be evaluated in the Draft SEIR. The public scoping meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 31, 2018, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.** at 3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 330, San Rafael, CA 94903.

A more detailed preliminary project description of the proposed Next Gen project and other informative materials including the original EIR (SCH #1999092073) are on file with the office of the Marin County Public Works Department, 3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 304, San Rafael, CA 94903, and are available for public review between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. The information is posted on the MERA website at <https://www.marincounty.org/depts/pw/divisions/projects/mera>. If you have any questions, or need additional information concerning the scoping meeting or would like to request a hard copy of the Summary Project Description, please contact Ernest Klock at 415-473-4368.

Ernest Klock  
 Operations Officer, MERA

**Table 1. MERA Sites and Locations for CEQA Evaluation**

Site Name and Number	APN	Jurisdiction	Coordinates	Previous EIR	Comments
1. Prime Site EOF <sup>^</sup>	165-220-11	City of San Rafael	38.019167, -122.541528	N	New site at Sheriff's Dispatch
2. Civic Center	179-270-11	City of San Rafael	37.999056, -122.531306	Y	Upgrades
3. Big Rock	164-300-04	Marin County	38.059194, -122.604250	Y	Upgrades
4. Mt. Tamalpais	197-120-31	Marin County	37.929006, -122.587084	Y	Upgrades
5. Mt. Barnabe	168-240-01	Marin County	38.026751, -122.716321	Y	Upgrades
6. Bolinas Fire Station	193-030-20	Marin County	N/A	Y	Dropped from original system
7. Bolinas Ridge	197-120-30	Marin County	N/A	Y	Dropped from original system
8. Point Reyes Hill	109-160-23	Marin County	38.079836, -122.866944	Y	Upgrades
9. Forbes Hill	010-261-02	City of San Rafael	N/A	Y	Decommission
10. Dollar Hill	011-051-02	City of San Rafael	37.980262, -122.529354	Y	Upgrades
11. San Pedro Ridge	015-250-21	City of San Rafael	37.990205, -122.500139	Y	Upgrades
12. Mt. Burdell	125-180-17	City of Novato	N/A	Y	Decommission
13. Novato PD	153-061-28	City of Novato	N/A	Y	Dropped from original system
14. Mt. Tiburon	058-261-39	Town of Tiburon	37.890440, -122.464796	Y	Upgrades
15. Mill Valley City Hall	028-014-16	City of Mill Valley	N/A	Y	Decommission
16. Mill Valley Police Station*	030-250-01	City of Mill Valley	N/A	Y	Decommission
17. Bay Hill Road	100-190-07	Sonoma County	N/A	Y	Decommission
18. Sonoma Mountain	136-190-09	Sonoma County	38.261015, -122.903629	Y	Upgrades
19. Stewart Point**	188-090-15	Marin County	38.185833, -122.825167	Y	Upgrades
20. Tomales***	100-050-42	Marin County	38.017000, -122.546000	N	New site with cell tower and equipment
21. Coyote Peak	106-110-03	Marin County	37.863289, -122.585512	N	New site with existing water wellheads
22. Skyview Terrace Water Tank	165-220-02	City of San Rafael	37.851085, -122.498376	N	New site with MMWD water tank
23. Muir Beach	199-262-11	Marin County	38.149888, -122.593239	N	New site with local water tank
24. Wolfback Ridge	200-120-02	Marin County	37.902735, -122.558010	N	New site with existing 100' tower
25. Mt. Burdell OTA <sup>^</sup>	125-160-01	Marin County	38.261015, -122.903629	N	New site with existing structure and tower
26. Mill Valley Water Tank	046-070-03	Marin County	38.185833, -122.825167	N	New site with existing MMWD water tank

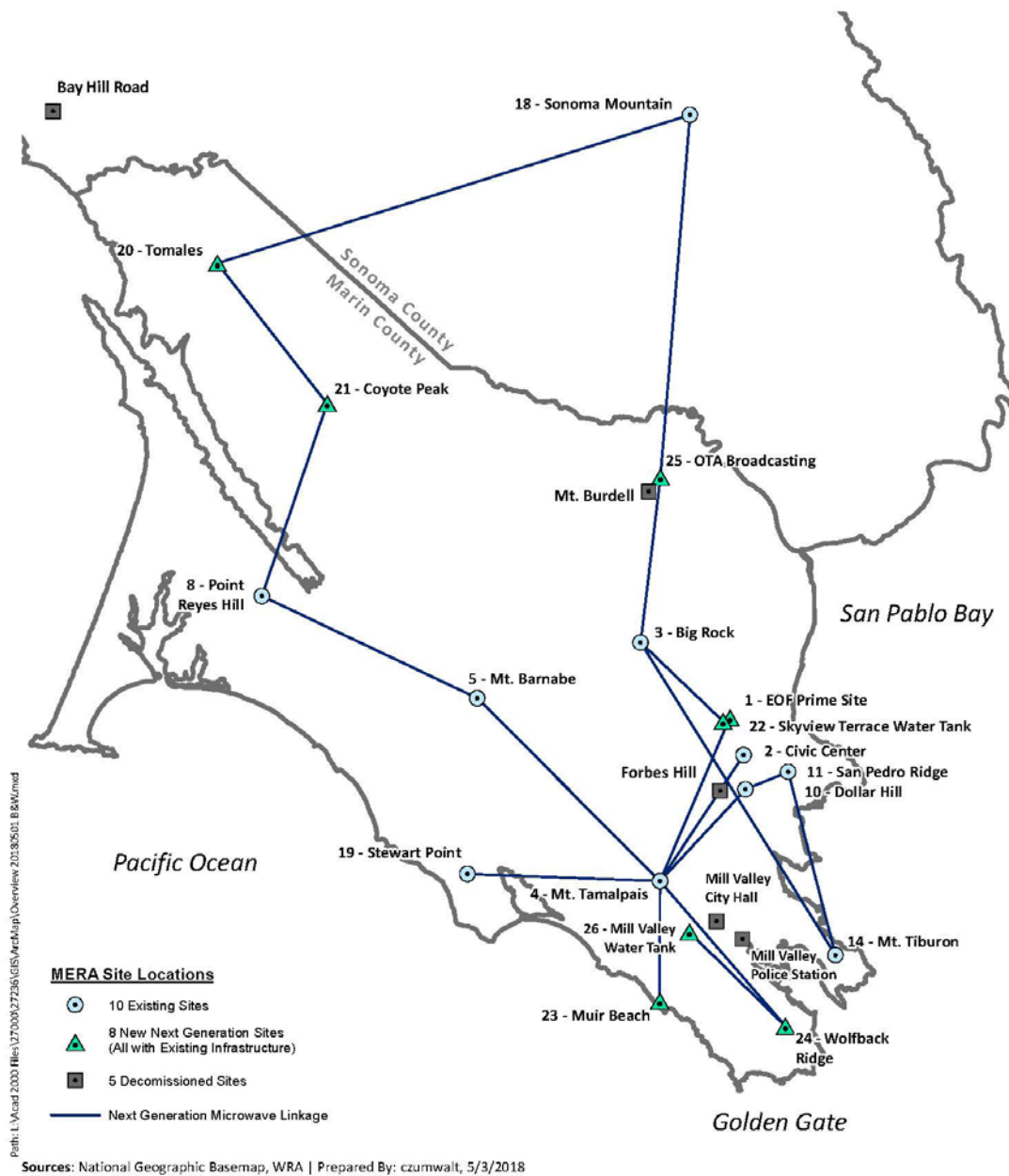
\* Added to original EIR as an adjustment before its publication so signal from Mill Valley City Hall would be detected.

\*\* Added to original EIR with a CEQA Amendment in 2006.

\*\*\*Added to original EIR with a Categorical Exemption in 2012. Incorporated into SEIR to discuss whole action.

<sup>^</sup> EOF = Emergency Operations Facility, OTA = Over-the-Air Broadcasting

**Figure 1. MERA Next Generation System Configuration**



**Figure X. MERA Next Generation System Configuration**

