

To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Stakeholders and Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Improvements Project under the San Joaquin River Restoration Program, Fresno and Madera Counties, California

CEQA Lead Agency: California Department of Water Resources

NEPA Lead Agency: The United States Department of Interior Bureau of Reclamation

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) propose to prepare an EIS/EIR for the Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Improvements Project (Project).

Project Description:

Reclamation and DWR are proposing to prepare a joint EIS/EIR, pursuant to NEPA and CEQA, to evaluate the proposed Project. The proposed Project includes the construction, operation and maintenance of the Mendota Pool Bypass (Bypass) and improvements, and the modification, operation and maintenance of the San Joaquin River channel to allow a section of Reach 2B to convey at least 4,500cfs. Reach 2B of the San Joaquin River extends from the Chowchilla Bypass Bifurcation Structure to the Mendota Dam. The planning and environmental review for the proposed Project is authorized under Section 3406(c)(1) of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act and the San Joaquin River Restoration Act included in Public Law 111-11. Construction of the proposed Project is authorized under the San Joaquin River Restoration Act (Public Law 111-11). The proposed Project is a component of the San Joaquin River Settlement.

The proposed Project would include a bypass channel and facilities to convey at least 4,500cfs around the Mendota Pool and reconnect with the San Joaquin River downstream of Mendota Dam. The proposed Project may include a fish barrier placed across the San Joaquin River at its confluence with the Bypass to direct up-migrating adult salmon into the Bypass. The proposed Project may also include constructing a bifurcation structure to convey up to 4,500cfs into the Bypass at its upstream end. The proposed bifurcation structure may also be designed to divert up to 2,500cfs through Reach 2B to the Mendota Pool, as is consistent with the reported design channel capacity of Reach 2B. The proposed bifurcation structure would be designed to minimize or avoid fish passage into the Mendota Pool. Specific alignments, facilities and locations will be determined through the course of this site-specific study.

Proposed improvements to Reach 2B will include modifications to the San Joaquin River channel from the Chowchilla Bypass Bifurcation Structure to the new Mendota Bypass Bifurcation Structure to provide a flow capacity of at least 4,500cfs with integrated floodplain habitat. New levees would be constructed along Reach 2B to expand the channel capacity while accounting for new floodplain habitat. Levee alignments will be determined through the course

of this site-specific study. These alignments will consider fisheries requirements, land uses, subsurface conditions, topography, and the condition of existing levees.

Probable Environmental Effects:

The purpose of the EIS/EIR is to fully disclose the environmental consequences of the proposed Project. The EIS/EIR will examine the extent to which the Project alternatives and alignments will result in environmental impacts including potential cumulative and growth-inducing impacts. In addition, it will discuss actions to reduce or eliminate such impacts.

Environmental resources to be analyzed in the EIS/EIR include the following: hydrology, water quality, and water supply; flood control; land use and agricultural resources; mineral resources; noise; public utilities and power consumption; biological resources including wetlands and rare and sensitive plant and animal species; geology and soils; socioeconomics, population, and housing; transportation and traffic; air quality; cultural resources; aesthetics; flood protection; and recreation. Impacts to resources will be evaluated for both the temporary construction period and the long-term operation of the alternatives. Potential measures to mitigate any potential impacts will also be identified.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed Project will be addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed Project and the EIS/EIR should be directed to the DWR Program Manager as noted below.

Scoping Process:

DWR requests comments from State, Federal, and local agencies with respect to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed San Joaquin River Restoration Program. In order to ensure that the full range of alternatives is included in the PEIS/EIR and that all pertinent issues are addressed, DWR also invites written comments from all other interested parties. All comments received, including names and addresses, will be made available to the public. Due to the time limits mandated by CEQA Guidelines section 15082(b), written comments on the scope of the EIS/EIR must be sent at the earliest possible date but no later than 30 days after receipt of this NOP.

Please send comments to the DWR Program Manager:

Kevin Faulkenberry, P.E.
Supervising Engineer, Water Resources
California Department of Water Resources
South Central Region Office
3374 E. Shields Ave.
Fresno, California 93726

Scoping Meetings:

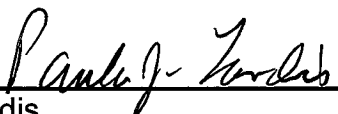
A series of identical scoping meetings have been scheduled to solicit agency and public input on the scope of the Proposed Project and to ensure incorporation of any issues and concerns that should be addressed in the EIS/EIR. Meeting dates, times and locations are as follows:

DATES and ADDRESSES:

- Tuesday, July 28, 2009, 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Fresno, CA
 - Piccadilly Inn Shaw, 2305 West Shaw Avenue, Fresno, California 93711; and
- Wednesday, July 29, 2009, 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Firebaugh, CA
 - Firebaugh City Council Chambers, 1659 13th Street, Firebaugh, California 96322

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Please see the website at <http://www.restoresjr.com> or contact: Ms. Margaret Gidding, Bureau of Reclamation, 2800 Cottage Way MP-140, Sacramento, CA 95825, by telephone at 916-978-5104, TDD 916-978-5608 or via fax at 916-978-5114 or Kevin Faulkenberry, California Department of Water Resources, South Central Region Office, 3374 E Shields Ave. Fresno, California 93726: telephone (559) 230-3300, e-mail: faulkenb@water.ca.gov.

If special assistance is required at one of the scoping meetings, please contact Ms. Margaret Gidding via the phone number or e-mail listed above prior to the meetings.



Paula J. Landis
Chief, SCRO
California Department of Water Resources

7-6-09
Date

