Appendix E
Summary of Project History and Public Involvement

Summary of Project History and Public Involvement

Correction of fish passage problems at Saeltzer Dam have long been recognized by California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other resource agencies as a high priority action to improve habitat conditions for anadromous salmonids on Clear Creek. Section 3406(b)(12) of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA), provides direction to develop and implement a comprehensive program to provide flows to allow sufficient spawning, incubation, rearing, and outmigration for salmon and steelhead from Clear Creek and directs this program to be initiated after Clear Creek has been restored and a new fish ladder has been constructed at the McCormick-Saeltzer Dam. Although the CVPIA specifically states that a new fish ladder would be installed over Saeltzer Dam, the intent of CVPIA is clearly to provide improved fish passage, which subsequent analyses have found can best be accomplished by removal of the present dam.

Improving fish passage conditions has also consistently been identified as a high priority restoration need through out the CALFED public process. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program's Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERRP) Volume 2-Ecological Management Zone Visions, Technical Appendix to the Programmatic EIS/EIR for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, dated June 1999, identifies the need to correct fish passage problems at Saeltzer Dam to improve survival of chinook salmon and steelhead in Clear Creek.

Both the CalFed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the EIS for implementation of the CVPIA have undergone public review and approvals of the respective Record of Decisions are expected in August 2000.

In keeping with the directives of the CVPIA and other Federal and State directives, the Western Shasta Resource Conservation District (WSRCD) began a series of public meetings in October 1994, to obtain watershed information for lower Clear Creek and to ascertain whether adequate public interest existed to justify development of Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP). In January 1996, the WSRCD, working on a grant from the President's Forest Plan administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), completed a Watershed Analysis (WA) for Lower Clear Creek. (Completion of the WA is required under the Forest Plan before resource agencies are permitted to expend funds for restoration activities within the watershed.) This WA identified correction of the fish passage problem and protection of instream flows as the most important factor to restoration of salmonid populations in Clear Creek.

A formal CRMP process was initiated in September, 1996. Over the next two years the Lower Clear Creek CRMP Group held several public meetings to discuss resource management issues, obtain additional information and develop the Watershed Management Plan. Extensive attempts were made to reach and involve the whole of the Clear Creek community and other interested parties, resulting in a mailing list of 1500 names. Discussion of the progress of efforts to remove Saeltzer Dam and improve fish passage through the site occurred during several public meetings and is documented in the CRMP meeting minutes for January 29, March12, and August 6, of 1997, and February 18, April 1, June 17, and August 26 of 1998. The CRMP conducted a field visit of Saeltzer Dam to discuss sediment dredging and fish passage alternatives on April 19, 1997.

In 1997 the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) initiated a preliminary study to identify and evaluate potential alternatives to improve fish passage to Clear Creek upstream of Saeltzer Dam. The study initially identified 9 potential alternatives to improve fish passage conditions at Saeltzer Dam. One of these initial alternatives (Alternative 3) called for removal of Saeltzer Dam and provision of the Townsend Flat Water Ditch Company (TFWDC) with an alternate water supply in exchange for their surface water rights. This consideration was dropped from further consideration because at the time the TFWDC did not express interest in selling or transferring their water right. Of the nine alternatives considered, six alternatives were dropped from further consideration and three alternatives were selected for additional consideration and analysis. The three alternatives selected included: 1) removal of existing dam and construction of another low head dam and fishway upstream of the existing site; 2) demolition of existing dam and construction of a new dam and fishway at the same location, and; 3) construction of new fishway around the south side of the existing dam. The first alternative was dropped when the TFWDC and the agencies failed to agree on the diversion capacity that would be required for the new fish screens. The second and third alternatives were deemed impractical because the current site poses significant difficulties for fish passage and no concepts for a ladder at this site offer sufficient potential for success. The site is inherently difficult because fish would have to pass through some version of a ladder immediately after making the difficult passage through the gorge downstream of the dam. Thus, when a stalemate was reached on the first alternative, work on an EA/IS for fish passage improvements was stopped pending progress in negotiations.

In July of 1997, Norman Braithwaite, Inc., on behalf of the TFWDC, submitted a proposal to receive Category III funding through the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The proposal was selected by CALFED for funding, and in an effort to speed development of this project, CVPIA funds were also committed to the project. The TFWDC's proposal included removing the existing diversion dam and constructing a natural gravity flow side-channel diversion upstream. The natural side-channel diversion included construction of fish screens and a return channel and pipeline that would join the existing diversion ditch. This proposal provided the best solution for improved fish passage, short of removing the water diversion entirely. The CRMP submitted a letter to CALFED in support of TFWDC proposal on August 19, 1997. The letter states; "There is probably no single project or action that can be taken on Clear Creek that will do more to allow the restoration of spring-run salmon and steelhead to the approximately 10 spawning habitat above Saeltzer Dam. This has been consistently identified in all the anadromous fish restoration plans and legislation."

The Lower Clear Creek Watershed Management Plan was completed by the Lower Clear Creek CRMP in September of 1998. During development of the Watershed Management Plan emphasis for improving fish passage had shifted away from construction of a new low head dam to a more fish friendly type natural side-channel diversion structure (no dam) as proposed by the TFWDC with funding from CALFED. The resulting Watershed Management Plan supported this alternative over the construction of a new low head dam as a more effective solution to improving fish passage in Clear Creek. These alternatives still provided water diversion through the Townsend Flat Ditch.

However, as more information became available regarding the environmental benefits and economic costs associated with each of the alternatives considered to that point, the resource

agencies became concerned that any of these alternatives could result in a stranded investment of public funds should TFWDC determine it in their best interest to transfer or exchange their existing water right to a new location. Initial discussions between representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation and TFWDC, during renewed negotiations, revealed that TFWDC would consider additional alternatives that included removal of the existing water diversion in exchange, transfer, or a purchase or a combination of thereof, of their water right on Clear Creek. Removal of Saeltzer Dam and elimination of water diversions from Clear Creek provided the best alternative to improve fish passage, eliminated any public safety concerns, eliminated the potential for creating a situation that could result in a stranded public investment, and eliminated any long term operation and maintenance costs that would be created by other fish passage alternatives that provide facilities to maintain the water diversion at the site. Consequently, early in 2000, the CCSD contacted landowners along the ditch that could be affected by a drying of the ditch that such an event was possible.

In March of 2000, representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation and the TFWDC signed an agreement in principle to pursue the proposed project. A News Release was placed on the Bureau of Reclamations Web Page March 14, 2000.

On April 25 (2000) a representative from the Bureau of Reclamation (Mr. Buford Holt) provided the Lower Clear Creek CRMP with an update on the current status of the Saeltzer Dam Fish Passage and Flow Preservation Project. The meeting was open to the public and announcements for the meeting were sent to the CRMP mailing list.

The Draft Joint Environmental Assessment/Initial Study, Saeltzer Dam Fish Passage and Flow Protection Project (EA/IS) was submitted to the State Clearing House on June 13, 2000. Notices informing public agencies, local stakeholders, and private land owners of the availability of the document were sent to entities or persons identified on the mailing list provided in the EA/IS. A Notice of Intent was posted at the Shasta County Clerks Office on June 14, 2000.

A public meeting was held on June 22, 2000, at the Red Lion Inn (formerly the Doubletree) in Redding to gather public input and comments on the proposed project.

The public review period closed on July 14, 2000.