Chapter 1

Introduction

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1.1 Purpose of This Document

This document is a joint environmental assessment/initial study (EA/IS) and satisfies the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This draft EA/IS has been prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), and the San Luis & Delta Mendota Water Authority (Authority) to identify and analyze the anticipated environmental impacts from construction and operation of a proposed intertie between the Federal Delta-Mendota Canal (DMC) and the State California Aqueduct. The Proposed Action will provide operational flexibility for the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) and improve conveyance capacity of the CVP.

This draft joint EA/IS is a public information document prepared to disclose the project's environmental effects and to inform decision makers about these effects in compliance with NEPA, CEQA, and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Adm. Code 1400 *et seq*.). The document describes the existing conditions and the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and a no action alternative. It also evaluates the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. This document also identifies measures that have been incorporated into the design of the project to reduce all project impacts to a less-than-significant level. Reclamation is serving as the lead agency for NEPA, and the Authority is serving as the lead agency for CEQA.

1.2 Relationship between the Proposed Action and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program

The Delta-Mendota Canal/California Aqueduct Intertie (Intertie) is being proposed as a project to implement the California Bay-Delta Program described in the CALFED Programmatic Record of Decision (ROD) issued August 28, 2000. The Preferred Program Alternative described in the ROD is a long-term plan that includes a variety of different potential actions over 30 years by numerous public and private entities to improve the health of the Bay-Delta Estuary. Among the potential actions are several that would change how water is

conveyed through the Delta. The Preferred Program Alternative employs a through-Delta approach to water conveyance, with modifications expected to result in improved water supply reliability, protection and improvement of Delta water quality, improvements in ecosystem health, and reduced risk of supply disruption attributable to catastrophic breaching of Delta levees. The pump and pipeline construction and operational changes that are part of the proposed Intertie were contemplated as part of the through-Delta approach to conveyance in the ROD. However, the Intertie, independent of other through-Delta conveyance actions, can contribute to the overall Bay-Delta Program objectives even if other elements of the Bay-Delta Program change and evolve over time. (CALFED Programmatic ROD, p. 23.)

The Intertie is consistent with the implementation approach in the ROD. The Intertie was developed in the context of the overall Bay-Delta Program and represents one way to achieve the four equal objectives of improving water quality, ecosystem quality, levee system integrity, and water supply reliability. The Intertie meets the policy commitments described in the ROD that each project implementing the Bay-Delta Program will be subject to the appropriate type of environmental analysis and will evaluate and use the appropriate programmatic mitigation strategies described in the CALFED Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (PEIS/EIR) and the ROD. (*Id*., pp. 29–30, 32–35, and Appendix A.)

1.3 Relationship between This Document and the CALFED Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report

The CALFED PEIS/EIR provides a very broad, programmatic analysis of the general effects of implementing the multiple components of the Bay-Delta Program over a 30-year period, across two-thirds of the State. The impacts analysis in the PEIS/EIR was not intended to address any site-specific environmental effects of individual projects. Accordingly, the CALFED PEIS/EIR's direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts analysis is not sufficiently detailed for purposes of this Intertie document, which focuses on a specific project and specific affected geographic areas over a different time frame. The CALFED PEIS/EIR was therefore used to develop background information only. This Intertie Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact (EA/FONSI) and Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) stands alone, and includes an independently developed analysis of the impacts of the Intertie, including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, alternatives, and avoidance/mitigation measures.

Readers who desire more information about the Bay-Delta Program, the CALFED PEIS/EIR, the Programmatic ROD, or the California Bay-Delta Authority may wish to review the following documents and web resources,

which are available from the California Bay-Delta Authority at 650 Capitol Mall, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 445-5511 (http://calwater.ca.gov):

Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (July 2000), including technical appendices

Programmatic Record of Decision, Volumes 1-3, (August 28, 2000)

1.4 Public Participation

Reclamation issued a news release on May 28, 2003, seeking public input on preparation of an EA/IS for the Intertie project. An additional public notice announcing the preparation of an EA/IS was issued in August 2003. Comments were received and incorporated as appropriate into this document.

This draft EA/IS is being circulated for public and agency review and comment, as required by NEPA and CEQA. If the information and analysis presented in the draft EA/IS or information received during the public review period indicates that there is no substantial evidence that the Proposed Action will have significant effect on the environment, a finding of no significant impact/negative declaration (FONSI/ND) may be adopted by the lead agencies. Reclamation and the Authority will certify the adequacy of the FONSI/ND under NEPA and CEQA before action is taken on the project.

1.5 Organization of This Document

The content and format of this draft EA/IS are based on NEPA and CEQA guidelines and evaluate the project's impacts on the following resources:

- Water Supply and Delta Water Management,
- Delta Tidal Hydraulics,
- Water Quality,
- Fish,
- Vegetation and Wildlife,
- Air Quality,
- Noise,
- Power Production and Energy,
- Cultural Resources,
- Environmental Justice,
- Indian Trust Assets, and

- Growth Inducing Effects.

Appropriate setting information and impact conclusions are provided for each resource. Additionally, a CEQA Environmental Checklist developed by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) is included as an appendix (see Appendix A).

1.6 Terminology Used in This Document

NEPA and CEQA are very similar in that both laws require the preparation of an environmental study to evaluate the environmental effects of proposed governmental activities. However, there are several differences between the two regarding terminology, procedures, environmental document content, and substantive mandates to protect the environment. For this environmental evaluation of the Proposed Action, the more rigorous of the two laws was applied in cases in which NEPA and CEQA differ.

Many concepts are common to NEPA and CEQA; however, the laws sometimes use differing terminology for these common concepts. Because Reclamation (the NEPA lead agency) is the project proponent for the Proposed Action, this document will use NEPA standard language where terminology differs between NEPA and CEQA.

NEPA Terminology	CEQA Terminology
Environmental Assessment	Initial Study
Finding of No Significant Impact	Negative Declaration
Proposed Action	Proposed Project
Project Purpose and Need	Project Objectives
No Action Alternative	No Project Alternative
Affected Environment	Environmental Setting
Environmental Consequences	Impact Assessment

With regard to the environmental consequences, CEQA requires that impacts that are regarded as "significant" be identified as such. In this document for CEQA purposes, "CEQA significance criteria" are set forth by resource area. NEPA criteria for significance (as listed in 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1508.27) are broader and generally less stringent than the CEQA significance criteria. For these reasons, identification of impacts as potentially significant under CEQA will encompass all potentially significant impacts under NEPA.

The following terminology is used in this document to describe the levels of significance of impacts that would result from the Proposed Action.

- The Proposed Action is considered to have *no impact* if the analysis concludes that the Proposed Action would not affect a particular resource topic.
- An impact is considered *less than significant* if the analysis concludes that the Proposed Action would cause no substantial adverse change to the environment and that impacts would not require mitigation.
- An impact is considered *less than significant with mitigation incorporated* if the analysis concludes that, with the inclusion of mitigation measures, the Proposed Action would cause no substantial adverse change to the environment.
- An impact is considered *significant* if the analysis concludes that the Proposed Action would cause substantial or potentially substantial adverse changes to the physical environment in the area affected by the Proposed Action even with the inclusion of mitigation measures.