

## **CHAPTER 8. PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

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The Investigation is addressing issues of interest and concern to stakeholders engaged in local and regional water resource planning and several Federal and State agencies with regulatory and management responsibilities related to natural resources in the study area. From the inception of Phase 1 in late 2001, the Investigation has maintained a very active public and agency involvement program that has included a wide range of activities. This chapter briefly describes public and agency involvement completed to date and describes how cooperating agencies will be involved as the Investigation proceeds in the Plan Formulation Phase.

### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

A public involvement program for the Investigation was initiated at the beginning of Phase 1 that is designed to provide meaningful opportunities for stakeholder participation and to inform the public about the Investigation. Specifically, the public involvement program is designed to address issues of interest and concern to stakeholders engaged in local and regional water resource planning. The public involvement program will support Reclamation's efforts to work with all stakeholders to develop a community consensus alternative. To date, the public involvement program has been comprised of both interactive and outreach components, including the following:

- Structured series of interactive public meetings and workshops
- Briefings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies and coalitions
- Briefings for tribal representatives
- Coordination with local water resources planning and management groups
- Coordination with agencies
- Interviews with water management agency representatives
- Tours of Millerton Lake and portions of the upper San Joaquin River
- Distribution of informative brochures, fact sheets, and documents that provided background and updates on the Investigation's progress
- Distribution of Investigation documents via a Web site

The interactive components of the public involvement program focused on involving those with a stake in the outcome of the Investigation. Stakeholders in the Investigation study area bring a high level of experience and local knowledge to the process, and provided a variety of recommendations, responses, and reviews that likewise informed the plan formulation process. Outreach components are designed to provide information and materials to a broad group of interested parties. The outreach components disseminate information widely, bring additional stakeholders and interested parties to the process, and enhance coordination with related water resources planning and management groups.

## **Phase 1 Workshops**

During Phase 1, a structured series of workshops and meetings were held at which participants had opportunities to hear presentations by the study team, take part in discussions regarding preliminary plan formulation, and provide input about the planning process, analyses, and project documents. This process included six general workshops and one topic-oriented working session. Workshop participants included representatives of water agencies, counties, State and Federal agencies, water districts, environmental interest groups, and others with an interest in the Investigation. The workshops, which were held in a variety of locations within the study area, and were announced via E-mail, mailed postcards, and the project Web site, were well attended. Each workshop included multiple interactive segments during which participants expressed their concerns, asked questions, and discussed issues central to the Investigation. The workshops are summarized briefly below.

### ***Workshop 1 – Introduction***

The first workshop, held in Fresno on May 29, 2002, initiated stakeholder participation in the Investigation. The workshop included presentations and discussions on Investigation purposes and a review of the origins and authorities for the study. The study team presented the Phase 1 approach and explained the types of water resources problems the Investigation would focus on during analyses. During a brainstorming session, participants described problems they wanted the study to address and noted special considerations for the planning process.

### ***Workshop 2 – Approach and Options***

Workshop 2, held on July 31, 2002, in Modesto, provided an overview of the study approach and clarified the goals of the Investigation. Participants commented on the approach for addressing water quality, ecosystem, and water supply reliability problems and discussed the initial analysis approach. During this workshop, participants identified a need for a separate discussion of Friant Dam release patterns to use in the initial evaluation of ecosystem restoration opportunities.

### ***Working Session – Ecosystem Restoration Flows***

A working session focused on Ecosystem Restoration Flows was held on September 4, 2002, in Madera. Participants provided recommendations on Friant Dam release patterns for inclusion in preliminary analyses to identify the quantity of new water that could be developed to support restoration. Participants suggested modeling a river flow release that was patterned after the unimpaired San Joaquin River hydrograph – an approach that was used in the Investigation.

### ***Workshop 3 – Options***

Workshop 3, held in Los Banos on October 18, 2002, updated participants on Investigation progress and presented preliminary results of option screening and model simulations. Participants were provided draft results of the initial Phase 1 surface storage option screening. A presentation and accompanying discussion centered on the Integrated Storage Investigation (ISI) Conjunctive Water Management Program and integration of conjunctive management in the Investigation.

### **Workshop 4 – Initial Phase 1 Results**

The fourth workshop, held in Fresno on February 11, 2003, reviewed the overall Investigation approach and presented components and working status of the in-progress Phase 1 Investigation Report. The presentation covered a preliminary framework for comparing storage options, and discussions revisited the potential inclusion of conjunctive management options. Assumptions used for the model were presented along with preliminary results of the single-purpose analyses.

### **Workshop 5 – Appraisal Phase**

At Workshop 5, held in Fresno on April 30, 2003, participants were informed that Congress had authorized Reclamation to prepare a feasibility study for new storage in the upper San Joaquin River basin. Screening results for initial surface storage options were reviewed and first cost estimates for retained sites were provided. Participant recommendations included requests for analyses of potential impacts to Millerton Lake residences and upstream hydropower projects.

### **Workshop 6 – Phase 1 Summary**

Workshop 6, held in Modesto August 27, 2003, was the final workshop held during Phase 1. It included a review of all information developed during Phase 1 and a summary of surface storage options carried forward for further study. An update was provided on the formulation of potential groundwater storage options, which generated discussion and questions from several stakeholders. Participants were provided an overview of the feasibility study schedule and activities and encouraged to remain involved actively as the feasibility study continues.

### **Scoping Meetings**

An environmental review process consistent with NEPA and CEQA was initiated in January 2004 when Reclamation issued an NOI and DWR issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP). During the week of March 15, 2004, Reclamation and DWR convened a set of public scoping meetings in Sacramento, Modesto, Friant, and Visalia, California, to inform interested groups and individuals about the Investigation and to solicit ideas and comments.

The scoping process allows stakeholders and interested parties to suggest potential issues that may require environmental review, reasonable alternatives to consider, and potential mitigation strategies to reduce or avoid significant adverse environmental impacts. Scoping also allows lead agencies to clearly set the parameters of the environmental review process by determining which issues will or will not be addressed and rationale for those determinations. Scoping also provides decision makers with insight on the analyses that the public believes should be considered as part of the decision-making process.

Scoping meetings were conducted in an “open house” format. Project team members from Reclamation and DWR and their consultants staffed informational displays and interacted with meeting participants to receive comments and answer questions. Participants provided comments on flip charts at each meeting and on comment cards provided by the project team. The opportunity for submitting additional written comments extended through April 16, 2004. A Scoping Report was prepared consistent with Reclamation guidance and in compliance with NEPA requirements and released in December 2004.

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## **Interviews with Local Stakeholders**

As part of the approach to identify and evaluate conjunctive management opportunities that have the potential to support Investigation purposes, Investigation staff conducted one-on-one interviews with local stakeholders regarding regional, cooperative opportunities for groundwater storage and banking. These interviews identified a high level of interest among the stakeholders. During the interviews, some possible projects were identified that will be considered for their applicability to support Investigation objectives. In addition, many stakeholders made note of significant physical and legal constraints that could affect implementation of conjunctive management options and suggested programmatic concepts to address institutional and financial barriers to increasing conjunctive management.

## **Study Area Tours**

From the onset of the Investigation, staff members have participated in several tours of Millerton Lake, the upper San Joaquin River, and the Friant service area. With the exception of two tours of Millerton Lake that were organized by the Investigation, all other events were organized by other groups with an interest in regional water resources issues. During each tour, Investigation staff provided updates on Investigation status and recent technical findings. The tours provided interested parties a firsthand view of several of the surface storage sites under consideration, the San Joaquin River, and other features of interest in the eastern San Joaquin Valley. As the Investigation proceeds, staff will continue to participate in regional events that address water and other natural resources management issues to the extent possible.

## **AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

During Phase 1, the involvement of Federal, State, and regional agencies in the Investigation was considered informal. Agency representatives attended numerous public meetings and stakeholder workshops, and participated in tours. Following initiation of the NEPA/CEQA compliance process, a more formalized approach to agency coordination and participation was established.

### **Cooperating Agency Technical Teams**

Several cooperating agency technical teams are being formed to focus on specific technical issues of importance in the Investigation. Reclamation is preparing agreements that identify roles, responsibilities and technical team assignments for each cooperating agency. Each technical team will have a defined set of objectives and will be responsible for development of specific deliverables for use in the Investigation.

Cooperating agency technical teams are being formed to address water operations, reservoir area environmental resources, river restoration, hydropower, flood damage reduction, engineering, economics, and conjunctive management. To date, only the engineering, water operations, and power technical groups have been established. The water operations technical group met on three occasions during preparation of the IAIR and provided input on operations scenario development and preliminary results. The water operations technical group also reviewed and provided comments on the draft **Water Operations TA**. The hydropower technical group met on two occasions during preparation of the IAIR to discuss assumptions on hydropower generation at existing facilities in the upper San Joaquin River Basin and to review preliminary results of replacement power generation options. The hydropower technical group reviewed and provided comments on a draft version of the **Hydropower TA**.

As the Investigation proceeds, involvement of other cooperating agency technical groups will become increasingly important. The reservoir area environmental resources group will provide an inventory of existing information related to biological, cultural, and social resources in the potential reservoir areas. These agencies will aid in developing impact analysis methodologies and will provide comments on the results of preliminary findings. The river restoration cooperating agency technical group will provide guidance on incorporating restoration plan information from other sources, aid in developing impact and benefit analysis methodologies, and review preliminary findings.

### **Coordination with Native American Representatives**

Several tribes in the vicinity of Millerton Lake and elsewhere in the study area have expressed interest in the Investigation. Investigation representatives meet regularly with tribal representatives on an informal basis to provide updates on Investigation progress and to receive input on issues of concern to the tribes. Through completion of the IAIR, a total of six briefings and one field tour were held with tribal representatives. In general, tribal briefings coincide with public meetings at key Investigation milestones. As the Investigation proceeds, coordination will continue at the request of the tribes. Formal consultation will be initiated at the request of the tribes and will be conducted in accordance with Department of Interior guidance.

## **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS AND DOCUMENT ACCESS**

An Investigation Web site, hosted by Reclamation at <http://www.usbr.gov/mp/sccao/storage>, contains technical documents prepared for the Investigation to date, presentations used at public workshops and meetings, the Phase 1 Investigation Report, the IAIR and technical appendices, contact information for the study team, and a gateway for contacting the study team. The Web site has been a key feature in outreach efforts and will continue to be expanded as the Investigation proceeds.